SUMMARY

In 2010, Croatia marked two decades since the independence obtained during the war and after a troublesome period of democratic transition. After that Croatia experienced a turbulent consolidative period, during which it had been intensely preparing for the EU membership as a state-candidate, although with a series of aggravating and decelerating circumstances. At that point, its citizens still did not fully face the proportions of economic and social crisis that had started two years prior to that, both on European and local scale. Those are the circumstances during which the research about Croatian students took place and its results are interpreted in this study.

Scientific information regarding the young generation in Croatia acquired by researches conducted during the last three decades have repeatedly shown the specificities of subgroups of students within the young generation. Students were recognized as the elite part of the young population: both by its social status and sociocultural dimensions. They are observed as future professionals and intellectuals and also as a reservoir of future social elite. During the mid-2000s, a reform of higher education was initiated and it was coherent to the so called Bologna principles, which additionally raised interest about the students as one of the main participants of the educational and social experiment with a vague result.

Taking into consideration the overall social situation in Croatia, multiple expectations from students as the elite subgroup of the young population and new conditions of acquiring academic titles and degrees, a scientific project called The Croatian Students in a European Context: Emerging Social Elite was drafted and realized. Aim of the project was to identify and analyze recourses students have at their disposal as young and future social elite as well as the degree and characteristics of their readiness to be integrated into the Croatian society and European milieu. Empirical research of the same name was conducted during the first half of 2010 on a sample of 2000 students coming from all seven Croatian universities and fields of science, meaning that it included the first five academic generations educated within the reformed system of higher education. Most of the collected data was compared to the data about students collected by youth researches in 1999 and 2004. Analysis of recent indicators and result comparison of the three waves of research allowed a scientifically confirmed insight into the profile of Croatian students. Recognizable outlines of that profile will be presented in a recapitulation of scientific results, which is presented next.

Nearly nine tenths of students live in traditional families that have four members on an average. Significant majority of them is satisfied with their family rela-
tions, while only a smaller percentage of that number perceives family life as the joy of life of togetherness. The number of students that emphasize that joy is decreasing, and the number of students perceiving family obligations as duty and sacrifice is increasing. Nevertheless, students consider a family to be the most important socialization factor, followed by friends and educational institutions. Therefore, we can conclude that family maintains its irreplaceable role in the lives of students and that it mostly fulfills their psychosocial needs. Simultaneously, their interest in family life and aspiration towards peaceful life within the circle of family decreases, even though these values are relatively high on the list. Results of this research also point out the process of changes, which is engulfing the Croatian society more and more, and is promoting detraditionalization and individualization of human relations, including the processes closely associated with the formation of their own families. Judging by the attitudes of Croatian students, it is very likely that there will be an increasing number of families with gender equality in the future, and the more expressed individualism will contribute to divorces and creating families characteristic to the postmodern period. On one hand, when referring to democratization of family, it is expected that the family circumstances modern students live in are going to be transformed during the period of their adulthood and old age. On the other hand, it is obvious that there is not a single social group and/or structure that could or ever will replace a family. Undoubtedly, surveyed students have clearly shown that the traditional families contributed the most to their wellbeing, i.e. families that get, unlike the previous generations, significantly less support from them. By observing the integral results of the research associated with family circumstances and students’ attitudes, it is safe to conclude that, despite more flexible and variable family forms and structures, family maintains its function of support and care for its members, which is expected of it in the future as well.

In addition to being primarily in charge of socialization of its younger members and securing their psychosocial wellbeing, family’s financial support is also irreplaceable, especially when it comes to educational needs of its younger members. The results of this research show that families cover the costs of study in four fifths of the surveyed students and that more than one fifth of the students receive a scholarship. One of the bigger financial burdens are the costs of living in the place of study since about a half of students live in parental or their own apartments, one fifth of students live in a dorm and more than a quarter of them are tenants in rented apartments. Therefore, it is important to remind that the financial status of families of the students participating in the study of 2010 was relatively solid. Those families had a monthly income of more than two average salaries. Still, one seventh of the examinees came from a family that made less than one average salary per month. Relatively good financial statuses of the students can be explained by the fact that they mostly live in urban milieus and that their fathers are high on both the edu-
cational and professional scale. Therefore, we can say that the financial conditions of the students are relatively good and it does not surprise that the degree of their financial deprivation is relatively low. Their biggest constraint, though it hits only around one sixth of the examinees, relates to the financing of outings and vacations. Within that context, it is understandable that only one in seven students are forced to continuously work during their studies and that three quarters of students have at least tried to occasionally earn extra money to fulfill various needs.

Research from 2010 revealed that most of the students had finished gymnasi-ums, even though there has been an increase of students that had finished vocational schools after the late 1990s and these students now occupy around one third of the total student corpus. In relation to gender, we should emphasize that the number of female students is continuously increasing. When it comes to university choice, the University of Zagreb prevails with the three fifths of the student population, half of which come from Zagreb or its surrounding areas. As to other universities, most of their students come from regions that gravitate towards the urban center where the university is located. The number of students living in rural areas is still decreasing, while the number of students living in regional centers is increasing. When discussing residential origin of students’ parents, the trends are similar – the biggest change occurred in the growing number of students whose parents come from bigger cities, while the decrease of parents coming from the rural regions continued.

Changes in social origin of students during the observed period of 11 years occurred in the direction of significantly increased chances of being admitted to universities for children of parents with higher education and significantly lowered chances of being admitted when it came to children of parents with secondary edu-
cation. More specifically, in 2010, the previous statement referred to nine times more children of fathers with higher education and seven times more children of mothers with higher education than it was the case with students whose parents had merely secondary education. Unlike that, in 1999, chances of being admitted into universities were equal. Moreover, it was established that in 2010, 62% of students came from families in which both or at least one of the parents was academically educated. Emphasized tendencies are clear indicators of social reproduction of higher stratum of Croatian population with the decreased possibilities for social mobility of children of parents with secondary education. At the same time, these tendencies show the decrease of higher degrees of education in the generation of parents of today’s students. Total results also show that most of the Croatian students have privileged social background.

Contemporary higher education and academic life are marked with changes that occurred during the implementation of Bologna principles and with the increase of the number of students, which happened at the expense of those who were financing their studies for their own needs. Social benefits, i.e. state care in a form of
scholarships based on needs, did not encompass socially deprived students, meaning that this segment of young people remains deprived of higher education. In order to raise awareness about the social dimension and sensitivity, as well as commercialism of education, a part of the students became proactive in 2009 and organized a class blockade on several universities across the country. This research has shown that students are basically supporting blockade as a method, while standing by the principles of meritocracy when it comes to paying tuition, which was being paid, to a certain degree, by two fifths of the students. This blockage revealed the need to (re)define values, availability of education and the chance to resume education for everyone. Survey results have also shown that the grade students gave to the importance of education increased during the observed period and that most of them are associating it with personal development. However, they simultaneously placed education within the context of securing quality life in the mature age, which means that their expressed attitudes are being submitted to the dominant discursive element of reconfiguration of higher education that rests on the idea of its instrumentalization. In that sense, we cannot ignore the percentage of students who partially perceive getting a degree as a reliable solution to existential problems, even though two fifths of students apply to universities for intrinsic reasons.

Nearly all undergraduates plan to resume their education on a higher level, which suggests that the Bologna intention about reducing the time of studying was not realized, at least not during the first years of reforming the Croatian system of higher education. As for the quality of individual elements of the study, majority of students is satisfied with most of them, especially with team work, availability of literature and choice of courses. They are least satisfied with inter-university mobility. Moreover, mobility – particularly temporary studying abroad, as one of the main ideas of the Bologna process – doesn’t play an important role on a student’s map of activities for the time being, because every fourth examinee is planning some type of activity associated with studying abroad, every eighth student has already realized such plans (mostly staying abroad for a shorter period of time) and every fourteenth has applied for some kind of scholarship that includes a visit to a foreign university. The least obstacle for such type of mobility is a lack of knowledge of foreign languages, considering that four fifths of the surveyed students actively use English language, but most of the students explain that their families could not endure additional financial burden of study visits to other countries. It can be assumed that the interest for partial studying abroad will increase, as well as the percentage of students who already have such experience, which implies that we can expect bigger criticism towards the other elements of studies than it had been originally determined with this research.

Based on the results of research of professional aspirations, it can be concluded that Croatian students lack highly ambitious goals. In other words, the biggest num-
ber of students chooses traditional goals that are directed towards the ‘clean’ and ‘regular’ path of building professional career and life, i.e. getting a degree, finding a job and securing their existence. When it comes to extrinsic professional goals, somewhat smaller – though still a majority – number of students are expressing tendencies associated with creativity, dynamics, work in their own occupation, community service, working with people and resuming their education. Entrepreneurial potential, i.e. desire to start their own business, is expressed by more than half of the students, while one fifth of them want to take over family business and two fifths of them want to engage in scientific work. Less than tenth of the students think that they will not face any crucial obstacles while attempting to achieve their professional goals. Based on this, it is expected that students already have a formed idea, i.e. perception of their future employability. However, it is surprising that half of the students do not have an idea regarding their own employability despite all the information about the educational system and the labor market available to them before university enrollment. Also, surprising is that the smallest percentage belongs to the students who feel they are hardly employable. Attitude regarding the alleviating and aggravating circumstances of employment presents an important component of perception of one’s employability, and insights into the students’ attitudes show that the highly ranked alleviating elements of finding a job are one’s efforts, knowledge and the good ranking of one’s profession. When it comes to aggravating circumstances, the same ranking goes to generally bad situation and high unemployment rate in the country, as well as to the lack of work experience and underestimation of young experts. Affinities of students towards the type of establishments where they would seek employment are divided; collectively speaking, nearly two fifths of them would like to work for employers in the private sector, one third of them in public sector, and a small number of them would like to start their own business. These choices are in line with the public rhetoric about the importance of entrepreneurial initiative and private sector, but the question is how much space do recession circumstances leave for realization of student wishes, which makes the public sector most appealing to students.

Alleviated or aggravated employability also depends on the personal qualities of candidates, especially when it comes to finding a decent job. Research results about the students’ perception of appealing characteristics show a diversified picture of skills. More than half of the examinees mention communication skills. Two fifths of the students chose professional qualifications and ambition, which are followed by quality education and knowledge of foreign languages. Slightly unusual, but only one fifth of them mention knowledge of information technology and team work skills. One tenth of the examinees mention knowledge about the business world, finished internship and good appearance. Interesting is the fact that European employers to a high degree expect both information technology skills and team work
skills from their future employees. These facts suggest that Croatian students lack knowledge about the current trends on the European labor market, which implies their unreadiness for it. In this context, it is indicative that simultaneously two thirds of the students express readiness to go abroad for a longer period of time or forever, which raises a question how many of them will actually realize those tendencies and be successful at it?

Important insight into social profile of modern Croatian students is acquired via information regarding their social capital, which is observed as a socio-cultural characteristic that implies horizontal networking like volunteering, followed by civility and general trust. It is assumed that achieving cooperation via volunteering generates trust and civility, which means that immediate experience referring to reliability of cooperation within a formalized group is transferring to unknown people. Results have shown that volunteering is not too popular among Croatian students since merely two thirds of them have volunteering experience. Civility is relatively high, meaning that almost all students consider bribing to pass exams and unfounded requests for social rights to be unacceptable. Behavior they mind the least includes copying someone else’s seminar papers and homework. General trust is significantly low; nearly all examinees trust their family and friends, every second examinee trusts his colleagues, every tenth examinee trusts his acquaintances and one in thirty three examinees trusts unknown people. These data offer conclusion about the relatively modest social capital of students whose level, according to the available research, probably does not significantly differ from the rest of the younger and older people in Croatia. This conclusion supports the tendency of enhancing the social capital closely associated with the primary groups, having in mind that more important are becoming affiliation characteristics like religion, nation and political views of future close friends and family. Despite those changes, students require permanently primary moral qualities, intellectual capacities, style and life perception of future marital partners and friends to establish close relationships. Conclusively, it should be stated that the analysis has shown that volunteering experience, regardless if it is gained in one or more organizations, is not associated with generating civility and general trust, which leads to the assumption that the latter cultural component of social capital probably forms outside of both formalized and voluntary types of associations.

Despite the growing importance of nationality in cases of making friends or forming marriages, the results of national (dis)association research of students reveal a population that is relatively open-minded towards others. It has been established that the ethnocentric attitudes are located at the bottom of the hierarchy of national association since they are expressed by every seventeenth student. Contrary to that, all the researches reveal that the top of the hierarchy belongs to at least one of the statements marked by cosmopolitanism. However, it is obvious that within
the range of acceptance attitudes of cosmopolitanism are interchangeable with those marking national identification. This brings about the assumption that Croatian students are relatively open-minded towards the world, but it also implies that the dimensions limiting that open-mindedness are set by the mechanism of national identification. It was also revealed that the national identification of students does not imply closed-mindedness towards other nations of their people. Analogously, the ethnocentricity is considered to be more of a personality trait than attitude towards one’s nation, which was confirmed by the results of this research. Examination of the level of ethnic closeness, operationalized as willingness to form intimate human relations with people of other nationalities, is different from the ethnical distance that measures resistance towards people of other ethnic origin or identity. As expected, when questioned about marriage or kinship, the majority of two thirds is turned towards members of same nationality. After the Croats, the biggest degree of closeness amongst students belongs to the Germans, the French, the Americans and the Italians. Students feel relative ethnical distance towards the Montenegrins, the Serbs, the Slovones and the Albanians. It can be concluded that the students feel ethnical distance towards the nations from the region associated with Croatia via geographical closeness and years of common history. They feel significantly less distance towards the new Euro-Atlantic allies. In short, this suggests that although they feel considerable open-mindedness towards the world, which is inevitably increasing due to digital technology, Croatian students remain attached to the traditional model within the sphere of privacy, which makes them choose what is familiar and maintains distance towards the unknown when it comes to making strategic decisions in the life of an individual.

Previously presented research results had already emphasized some values that students accept more or less. Complete view of the tested system of values shows that the same values were located both on the top and bottom of the list throughout the entire period of observation. Values located on the top of the list were material status, identity, privacy and professional success, and the ones on the bottom were religion, nationality, media success and particularly political affirmation. It is intriguing that the latter value was continuously growing, while the high acceptance of all other values in 2010 decreased so much that none of the values gained majority of support. This tendency points out a significant relativization of the most accepted values, although one pluralistic context surfaces in every research and it represents a combination of good material standard, peaceful family life and successful career with the idea of being the master of one’s fate and doing only what they want. In addition to this, the lingering hierarchy structure shows that the dominance of values associated with the private life sphere above the ones belonging to the public sphere is permanent. Similar is the situation with interests in form of terminal values, where the interests for events from the private sphere are continuously taking
the lead role (majority implies interest for friendships and acquaintanceships, family life, marriage and children), while the interests for events from the public sphere are placed on the backburner (especially politics, political events, army and army events). Similarities amongst values are also observed through the comparison with insights earlier than 2010, which suggest that all previously mentioned interests have weakened, especially those associated with art and culture, science and scientific achievements, and technology and technical achievements. This latter trend implies expansion of anti-intellectualism amongst contemporary students, while total results suggest significant decrease of life enthusiasm and interest students have for the world that surrounds them.

Even though students are slightly less distanced from the politics than other subgroups of young people, information about their political participation, values and attitudes gain importance within the context of expectation that the future political elite will be recruited on different levels from their ranks. Results of the research have shown that over two fifths of the students are not interested in politics on a declarative level, even though they regularly monitor news via various media (internet, television or daily press). Unlike other subgroups of young people, nearly three quarters of students express their preferences regarding political parties. In spite of that, the number of students that do not find any of the political parties worth their electoral trust is mildly increasing. The indicative trend of student membership in political parties is rising; in mid 2000s, every twenty fifth student was a member of a certain party, while in 2010, every fifth student became a member of a political party. Simultaneously, their activities in other types of organizations are also increasing; every other student is active in either one or more organizations of civil society and/or a political party. This offers a conclusion that a mild trend of growth connected with social and political participation was recorded during the period of 11 years of research.

The students’ perception of social reality also proved to be pretty stable, which accents the decrease of their sensitivity regarding the problem of social differences and the rising notion of problems such as laziness, lack of discipline, irresponsibility, and particularly bribery and corruption. Simultaneously, bribery and corruption, unemployment and economic issues have been on the top of the list of social problems for years. Data on political goals are complementary to that notion since around nine tenths of students feel that priorities of Croatian government should be the fight against criminal, corruption and unemployment, as well as economic growth and development. Interestingly enough, within the context of perception of political priorities, a growth of importance has been registered with those who are associated with the national identity and traditional values. Over three fifths of students feel that experts and intellectuals are the key to solving Croatia's hardships, followed by three times smaller number of students who feel that the solution is in
the hands of the young generation, after which come the politicians and political parties with an even smaller percentage, while the contribution of the clergy is considered negligible. It is indicative that students started believing less in the role of an entrepreneur and more in the power of politicians and parties.

Students have firmly acquired basic liberal-democratic principles, which is confirmed by the majority accepting the constitutional values. Significantly lower support, but still in nearly two thirds of students, goes to the democratic and multiparty system. Unlike more or less unanimous acceptance of all liberal-democratic values, students are having issues with understanding democratic principles in political practice. It has been shown that they equally accept all attitudes promoting the necessity of freedom of political expression, individual and group action, as well as those that bring that freedom in question by referring to the necessity of subduing individual and group interests to the interests of people and the state. Students demonstrated obvious lack of understanding of conflicts in the democratic society, along with a tendency towards the idea of harmonic togetherness. Symptomatic is the fact that this lack of understanding shows a mild ascending trend. (Non-)acceptance of potentially controversial social phenomena demonstrates a mediocre level of student tolerance that is mildly growing. From nine tenths to three quarters of students accept organ donations and a whole palette of phenomena that testifies about the liberalization of sexual and family relations. Decriminalization of soft drugs and same-sex marriages are leaning towards the acceptance of the majority, which are extremely controversial issues in Croatian public. It is expected that accepting bribery and corruption are at the deep bottom of the scale. (Non-)acceptance of the potentially controversial social groups completes the image of (in)tolerance of Croatian students. Three quarters of them accept anti-racists and environmental activists and nearly three fifths of them accept animal rights fighters, while they find extreme right-wing parties, Islamic fundamentalists, skinheads and terrorists very unacceptable. Even though this did not influence the changes in ranking, it is interesting that the acceptance of environmentalists and animal rights fighters has notably decreased, while the acceptance of feminists increased. It is also intriguing that the acceptance of homosexuals has mildly decreased although the acceptance of some of their rights slightly and simultaneously increased. This contradiction suggests confusion of students while facing the phenomenon of homosexuality, which is coherent with the contradictive signals emitted by the social treatment of these groups.

When it comes to students’ attitudes towards politics, indicators of (dis)trust towards the social and political institutions are present, and there are two reasons for that. The first one is that the institutionalized trust level is extremely low, moving from one third at most (in case of television, press and the President of the Republic of Croatia) to barely 5% (the Croatian Parliament, Croatian Government
and political parties). Second important indicator is that between 2004 and 2010, there's been a significant drop of trust into all observed institutions, particularly in the case of the Croatian Parliament and Government, as well as the organization of the civilian society. Due to these tendencies, the position of political institutions as a component that gains minimal trust of students was fortified, which suggests the process of delegitimizing the authority. It is intriguing that this process was joined by the trend of significant loss of trust towards the organizations that represent alternative forms of social and political undertaking. In short, Croatian students trust (too) little to all those organizations that should be contributing to general well-being, i.e. wellbeing of citizens. Paradoxical situations occur within that distrust: the first one is that complete social activism of students is following an ascending trend, particularly in the form of participation in political parties. The second of such situations reveals that the number of political party members amongst students was three times bigger than the number of examinees who believe to those political parties. Continuously weak placement of political institutions on the scale of trust undoubtedly shows dissatisfaction both by functioning and personal composition of those institutions. This was confirmed by the results of research on the opinions regarding politicians, which revealed that nearly nine tenths to two thirds of students file complains that circulate through the scientific analyses, media and general public: unjustifiable privileged positions, untrustworthiness, corruptions, false election promises, concentrating on personal interests, lack of connection with citizens, non-democratic and irresponsible behavior. Conclusively, it can be stated that these previously explained results show that there are elements of both participative and subjective political culture within the general political culture of students, which draws an assumption that the most responsible agents for the political socialization of young people did not satisfactorily fulfill their function.

The issue of Croatia's integration into the European Union has been permanently present since the country gained its independence, and the issue was extremely popular at the crossing between the past and present decade, during the intense process of Croatia’s adjustment as the state-candidate. Students mostly had a neutral image about the European Union and most of them supported its entry even though they were not expecting great benefit out if it. Still, observed from a perspective of concrete desirable and undesirable economic, political and cultural consequences, it was clear that positive expectations prevail amongst students. It is important to mention that this prevalence significantly decreased over the period of 11 years; the number of those who had hope for desirable changes continued to drop, while the number of people expecting undesirable consequences kept growing. Those changes merged into a unique downward trend, i.e. weakening of the pro-European orientation, which was joined by the decrease of expected wellbeing for all observed social groups (except the politicians). In short, Euro-optimism and Euro-enthusiasm vis-
ibly deflated, but they were still stronger than Euro-skepticism. One of the reasons to this is probably the very perception of students that the European Union is superior to Croatia in terms of political and economical sense. This superiority is mostly recognized on the economic plan, which is simultaneously the source of growing fear that Croatia will not be able to advance in new circumstances. Therefore, it can be said that the students had a basically positive attitude towards the EU, although it was marked by lack of optimism and burdened with relatively significant fears when it comes to prosperity of Croatia in new circumstances.

When discussing perception of the generational political status, students are noticeably dissatisfied. Most of them think that young people are minimally present on the Croatian political scene and that they could be motivated towards a greater social and political engagement with a palette of complementary measures and actions, including young people's opinions in decision making, various citizen initiatives, non-formal gatherings, political education and activities in formal political institutions. Students support positive discrimination that would guarantee political representation of young people (via so called quotas) in the Croatian Parliament. Despite the fact that the majority expressed the need to enhance political engagement of young people, personal willingness to participate in various civil and political activities is below that level because it is reduced to voting and signing petitions. Low willingness to participate in numerous other activities clearly shows that students would rather combine non-formal and formal, i.e. non-institutionalized and institutionalized activities, than completely give up on a specific type of engagement. Having this in mind, their somewhat bigger inclination towards the alternative forms of social and political engagement has to be emphasized.

Contemporary students are more inclined to observe the young generation as a bearer of innovative and creative potential than as a mediator of acquired values whose main exponents are older generations. They notably refuse to accept the paternalistic relationship towards young people, which typically results with their social marginalization. This suggests that students perceive their own generation as a potential bearer of social discontinuity, implying that they are aware of the need to sustain social discontinuity, which serves the function of overtaking and developing (some) achievements from the older generation, as well as respecting their authority. Although students refuse justification of social marginalization of young people, explanations for political inactivity of young generations are recognized the most in their self-marginalization. Concretely, from four fifths to two thirds of students think that the younger people are politically passive because they consider politics to be unfair, and they see themselves as incompetent, disinterested and unmotivated, which is being aided by the political disregard for the generational problems. Nearly every second student states that the young people feel it is natural that only the older people are involved into politics, although half of them support justification of pa-
ternalistic intoned social marginalization. This inconsistency signalizes an ambiva-
lent relationship towards the social status and potentials of one’s own generation, as
well as towards the role of society in creating space for adequate social affirmation
of young people.

Students think that numerous advantageous circumstances are necessary to
succeed in Croatian society: both personal resources (including personal abilities,
academic education, professional responsibility, special type of “adaptability”) and
family resources (connections and acquaintanceships, wealth), with a little bit of
luck. None of the circumstances is expressed via majority and it is clear that students
feel that knowledge and competences are not enough to achieve a certain social goal.
This is confirmed by insights into the perception of social problems of young peo-
ple; nearly every other student suggests that “connections“ are more important than
competences and professionalism, and every third student points out unemployment
and lack of life perspective. Aspiration towards the complementary and combined
acting becomes visible during the identification of actors responsible for the solving
problems of young people. On one hand, every second student believes in individual
effort while two fifths of them rely on the help of their parents. On the other hand,
two fifths of examinees rely on the educational institutions and the Government,
meaning that they have faith into creating such social forms that will help strong
individual orientation bear fruit, i.e. to achieve personal life goals and ambitions.

Not only do Croatian students display a high degree of awareness regarding
the age inequality, but to a lesser degree, also regarding the gender inequality, both
in general and when discussing the political discrimination of women. This is con-
firmed by the data according to which only a marginal number of student popula-
tion considers that full gender equality is present in the society, as well as high level
of acceptance towards the values gender equality implies. However, like in numer-
ous other research on gender topics, a detailed analysis confirms the importance
of gender affiliation to explain gained information. Even though the students are
aware of various forms of inequality of genders in different regions of social rela-
tions, female students are far more aware of unequal position of women in the so-
ciety, including the labor market, political and public decision making, family and
education. They express far bigger expectations from the Croatian government to
improve the social position of women. Female students consider significantly more
that women are not represented enough in the politics, they are more supportive of
introducing quotas and are more aware of the role and influence of political parties
and patriarchal traditions on the reduction of possibilities of introducing women
into politics. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that merely around
one third of the students think that there is inequality between men and women and
that women are adequately represented in the political life of Croatia, which, with a
high degree of ignorance and disinterest, reveals that female students cannot expect
greater support from their male colleagues in their further professional and political ambitions. These findings confirm justification of demands contained in the number of strategic documents of international organizations that promote importance of including men into various politics to establish actual equality of genders. Seeing that a part of the examinees is not familiarized with the legal prohibition of discrimination or/and actual number of women in political bodies, it is important to emphasize the role of education for democratic citizenship and the rights of women in promoting gender equality.

Leisure time is an important segment of everyday life due to its emancipating and developmental potentials, especially when talking about students as the elite subgroup of young people that is the source of the future elite of Croatia. Results have shown that two thirds of students have more than three hours of free time on a daily bases and they mostly engage in activities typical to all young people. From four fifths to half of the examined students use their leisure time to socialize with their friends, visit coffee shops and bars, watch TV and listen to rock music, while a negligible number of them are active in political, humanitarian and volunteering work. Intellectual activities such as reading books (a bit more than quarter of students), going to theatre (one fifth of the examinees), visiting the exhibitions and public discussions are represented with a very small number of examinees. Two fifths of the students are satisfied with the way they spend their spare time, while the lack of free time bothers every fourth examinee and every sixth one is bothered by the lack of money. These findings indicate that leisure is primarily used for activities of hedonistic and entertaining character, and very little for activities that contribute to cultivating and development of one’s personality. Not many changes occurred during the past ten years of observing the patterns of leisure time within the student population. One of the few changes was the increase of number of people who could not afford a vacation trip in the year prior to this research. It was established that in 2009, more than a third of examinees could not afford going away on a vacation, and since that students were really interested in various forms of entertainment, recreation and travelling, it was obvious that the crisis had already started taking its toll within that socio-economic privileged group of people. Second important change happened in the form of a lowered student participation in most of the observed activities despite the fact that their hierarchy and structure had remained stable. This decrease of participation intensity in various forms of leisure activities proves the appearance of passivation and lethargy within the modern generation of students. Perpetuation of the already known patterns of leisure activities in the lives of contemporary generation of students shows that they do not use the full potential of leisure as the domains of everyday life that offers a broad specter of content. Usage of such activities can contribute to self-achievement and fulfillment, development of critical spirit and a more successful integration into the society.
Research of students’ leisure time has given weak suggestions that the possibilities offered by modern technology – including social networks – influence the decrease of participation in various other leisure activities. However, students use computer technology on a daily basis, regardless if it’s for study needs or private reasons. It is expected that the findings of this research reveal increase of possession and usage of computer technology amongst students between 1999 and 2010, meaning that at least half of the examinees own a laptop and a somewhat smaller percentage of them own a personal computer. Students use computers primarily for internet access, studying and writing. Programming, as a highly specific activity demanding higher level of computer literacy, is the least represented activity. When it comes to internet, students use it the most for surfing, checking e-mails and communication. The least common usage of internet is for drawing, graphics, web-design, phoning and watching TV channels. Video games and virtual social networks have won a diametrically opposite positions according to frequency of use because over half of the examinees are using social networks on a daily basis, while over two thirds of students never participate in virtual video games. High homogeneity of students when referring to the computer technology and the frequency of its use, suggests a conclusion that this type of technology is both an inseparable and important aspect of students’ lives and that its dynamics is deemed to drastic changes.

Leisure time is one of the best foundations for manifestation of potentially risky behavior of young people. When it comes to risky behavior amongst students, it has been shown that the high risky behavior is a choice of every thirteenth student, while some aspects of risky behavior (more or less frequent) occur with at least every second student. Furthermore, there isn’t a student that hasn’t ever been involved with any types of risky behavior because experimenting with such behavior is the essential part of growing up. Most often risky behavior manifested by the examined students includes consumption of legal means of addiction – alcoholic beverages and tobacco. Tobacco products have never been consumed by nearly every second examinee, drunkenness every fourth, and every seventh student has not tried a hard alcoholic beverage. Vast alcohol consumption is supported by social values emerging from the idea that alcohol reduces social differences and enhances group connections. Moreover, it can be said that this is an extremely accepted pattern of behavior that is rooted deep in the culture of Croatian society, as well as the youth culture, meaning that it is unreal to expect more significant changes in terms of students’ attitudes towards consumption of alcoholic beverages. Bearing in mind the existing social norms, traditions and the research findings, merely some forms of alcohol consumption can be considered extremely risky and they are usually associated with risky traffic behavior, risky sexual behavior, violent behavior and affinity towards gambling. Based on obtained results, it can be stated that there is a smaller group of students that has been exposed to great risk of social exclusion that causes fre-
quent manifestation of numerous types of risky behavior, constantly low academic achievements and low educational aspirations, which diminishes their chances of becoming a true part of social elite. On the other hand, most of the students are within the borders of low to moderate risky behavior. Differences between these two levels of risky behavior are determined by the frequency of practice of such behavioral patterns. It has been shown that involvement into the process of education, which is the basic characteristic of student population, especially when it's associated with adequate academic aspirations, is considered an effective factor of protection against the high risky behavior patterns of students.

Even though students have expressed dissatisfaction with numerous social phenomena and processes, their satisfaction regarding their own lives is extremely high. More precisely, over four fifths of them are mostly or fully content with their present lives, and it seems that a part of that satisfaction is covering the optimistic expectations regarding their own future. Namely, in spite of the obvious worry regarding their (in)ability to achieve their professional and life goals, three fifths of the students are still optimists about their own future, even though this optimism has been gradually decreasing. At the same time, the optimism regarding social future has decreased to a one fourth of the examinees, while the pessimism regarding that same future can be found in nearly every second student. These tendencies once more demonstrate that the students are mainly relying on their personal and family resources, both in the present and the future.

According to the sequence of social characteristics, results of this research have confirmed that students are a relatively homogenous group of young people. They are all included into the tertiary level of education, most of them are former gymnasium students, they are of close age and mostly of higher social background observed through urban provenance and domicile, as well as level of parents' education. Based on these characteristics, particularly when associated with specific indicators of material standard, students had already been identified as socio-economic privileged youth subgroup in the previous researches, and the same conclusion was drawn in this one. Relative social homogeneity of students is additionally exposed when it becomes known that there is significantly bigger heterogeneity within the young population, which emerges from the differences in maturity level, academic achievements and social background. There is one consequence of notable uniformity of social backgrounds of students within the context of this research and that is the growth of importance of other characteristics for their differentiating as well as weaker discriminatory action of some social characteristics whose value is still being re-confirmed in certain sociological researches. Many cases showed that there are no significant differences between the observed subgroups of students or that they are sporadic.

The biggest number of relatively systematic differences amongst students has been created by the characteristics exclusively associated with this population, and
that is the students’ field of study. As it had been established in the earlier researches of students, it should be assumed that the choice of study is a resultant of various socialization influences both acquired throughout one’s childhood and adolescence. This implies that the choice regarding the field of study includes acquired knowledge, experience, affinities, world view elements and that all of these previously mentioned influences are conditioning the systematic and layered differentiating of students when it comes to their behavior, attitudes and systems of values. That said, it can be assumed that even after acquiring the degree, students of different profiles will perceive the world that surrounds them in a different manner and make adequate professional and life choices.

Second biggest influence on the differentiation of students is also a quality that is relevantly exclusive for this population – the university of student’s choice. Network consisting of seven universities in Croatia greatly matches the regional division of Croatia, and these universities all differ according to their size and age. The University of Zagreb is the oldest university with its three and a half centuries tradition, and it is also the biggest university according to the number of faculties and study programs and the number of students. Due to this, it attracts not only students from the nearby geographic region, but also from entire Croatia, which manifested itself only as a minimal deviation of the University of Zagreb students from the average results. Universities of Osijek, Rijeka and Split were founded during the socialistic period, they are of medium size and they are mostly attended by students living in the regions around them, which means that the deviations in result of these students can firstly be interpreted as a reflection of regional specificities. Universities of Dubrovnik, Pula and Zadar were founded during the post-socialistic period and they are mostly located in the coastal regions, i.e. they belong to the Mediterranean circle. The number of study programs on these universities is significantly smaller, as well as the number of students attending them. Students of these universities are, out of methodological reasons, grouped together. In their case, deviations from the average results partially reflect the differences in regional characteristics and the represented fields of study. Having this context in mind, it is necessary to ask if there is a special micro-climate on each of the seven universities, i.e. in regard to the faculties, that could influence students’ attitudes. If there is, it is very likely that this micro-climate disappears upon students’ departure from the university/faculty. In short, the differences between students that occur depending on the university of their choice firstly mediate influences of regional specificities (which have proved relatively important in researches of young people in Croatia) and in some cases, influences of field of study.

In this research of students medium influence on their differentiation in the perspective of tested phenomena was achieved by the religious self-identification, gender and the type of high school they had attended. These characteristics un-
doubtedly point out the specific socialization influences during the process of students’ growing up. They also suggest that families of higher social status maintain religious influence that forms children’s world view, that certain generic matrixes are perpetuated in children’s upbringing and that gymnasium programs still provide children with better educational and generally social competencies of young people. In addition to this, it should be stated that the influences of these characteristics are turned towards a familiar direction, identical to the one appearing in the total young population.

Relatively weak influence on differences in behavioral patterns, attitudes and values of students has been registered in the cases of fathers’ education and residential status of students, and especially in terms of academic success and the years of study. Limited influence of social background was expected because students were portrayed as a socio-economically selected group according to those characteristics. It is also not surprising that better or worse grades acquired on tests do not play a crucial role because these are regular students, i.e. they all managed to fulfill academic demands, meaning that different passing grades have sporadic and subtle influence. Minimal dependability of differentiation of students on their year of study can be explained with their more or less equal age because the difference between freshmen and the oldest students is 4 to 5 years. More interesting, it is indirectly confirmed that these studies are drafted and realized in the function of acquiring professional knowledge without any space or desire of entering the broadest sphere of upbringing. Therefore, it is not logical to expect that academic institutions can compensate for the eventual lacking of socialization elements from the period when students were in their intensively formative life phase.

Drafted sociological portrait of Croatian students reveals several tendencies of broader character that, along with several new indicative trends, fit into the already known image of Croatian society and its young people.

Pragmatism and individualization in various life areas are noticeable among students, and this is the most obvious in the context of achieving life goals. In this context, contemporary generation of students is primarily relying on their own abilities, as well as the economic, social and cultural capital of parents, i.e. family. Process of social reproduction is intensifying, which, in the conditions of recession and social crisis, leads to additional fortification of the existing social layering with the trend of rising social inequalities. Despite the relatively privileged status, modern Croatian students leave an impression of somewhat resigned and disillusioned generation, whose faith in social institutions and other people is decreasing. They also seem to be relativizing recent unquestionable values of individual and social life; they seem to be losing interest for phenomena that surround them; they participate in various activities with less enthusiasm – leisure activities included. Simultaneously, even though modern students remain focused on privacy, unlike previous generations,
they exhibit less distance towards the social and political engagement. Placing this trend into a more general context of the results of this research raises a question – how strongly are the students motivated towards overcoming social problems and how strongly are they motivated to ensure personal benefit?

Contemporary students are, with a mild trend of increasing, moderately tolerant towards the potentially controversial social phenomena and groups and they are cosmopolitanically oriented, but only to the point that doesn't invade the domain of their potential intimate relations to members of ethical groups outside their own. Moreover, some traditional values amongst students have roots so deep that they clearly reveal that radical changes in the established system of values of Croatian society should not be expected sometime soon. In addition to that, synchrony of modernization and re-traditionalization in the transitional Croatian society has resulted in noticeable polarization that divided students into modernistically and traditionally oriented. However, seeing that there are leads that even the most accepted traditional values have become the subject of reexamination, it is obvious that detraditionalization of student population is happening. On the other hand, having in mind the actual social surroundings marked with social crisis and recession whose ending is not yet near, it is possible to expect that modernization process becomes decelerated or even blocked, for a shorter or longer period of time.

Conclusively, previously mentioned trends and assumptions, as well as the integral research findings, demand problematization of initial attitude about the eliteness of the student population. The shortest conclusion would be that contemporary Croatian students have proved to be the elite within the young population, but more due to their socio-economic status and resources than to their socio-cultural capacities. This undoubtedly means that most of the students come from privileged social backgrounds and good material standards. Previous research findings also show that students are more harmonized with the (post)modern values on a socio-cultural and ideological level than other youth subgroups. However, this complementarity appears more in a shape of a tendency than it actually confirms the existence of socio-cultural, competent and modernistically oriented generation of students that would suit social needs and expectations from a population that should produce future social leaders. This thesis suggests that it is necessary to respect and reexamine the conditions in which the modern generation of students has been socialized, and these conditions do not seem to be particularly stimulating nor do they seem to be changing for the better sometime soon. Social responsibility for errors in forming students as the young and future social elite is divided between all elements of socialization, although not evenly. The socialization role of parents cannot be ignored, and neither can the important influence of peers, media and other factors. However, the role of educational system should be emphasized from a point of view of constructed and aimed social action. In this context, the eventual
deficits of academic education according to the Bologna rules are merely one part of the issue whose source should be located on the secondary, and even on the elementary level of education. This states that knowledge, skills and values that were (not) acquired in elementary school or high school can be compensated or corrected on the tertiary educational level. That is why the results of this research suggest that significant reform needs to be realized in lower levels of education, which should offer adequate foundation for building socially competent young generations, especially for those segments that are observed as the elite part of the population and are expected to take greater responsibility for development and advancement of Croatian society.