



Career Development in Adolescence: Challenges and Support

Toni Babarović & Iva Šverko

Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences, Croatia



Croatian Employment Service

- The national career guidance system began in 1931 when the “Counselling Centre for Career Choice” was founded.
- Its work was later continued through the Croatian Employment Service (CES), which acts on national, regional and local levels.
- CES career guidance activities are mainly oriented towards students with disabilities, students with major health problems, students who have problems mastering the educational program, and indecisive students.

CISOK centers

- Centers for Information and Career Counselling (CISOK) are designed as centers for providing service regarding lifelong career guidance to all interested groups of citizens, especially younger groups (primary and secondary school students, university students), as well as to anyone who is considering career development/change.
- CISOK centers are currently active in 12 cities and towns, and they offer service regarding individual and group career guidance.

Schools

- Primary and secondary schools are the key institutional support for career guidance services, through its own work and/or through the cooperation with other institutions (especially the CES).
- Two research studies funded by Euroguidance:
 - Schools mainly focus on providing information to parents or students, and most activities comprise group counselling; the lack of financial and material support (education in career counseling, tests, additional work tasks) ... (Gregurević and Lukić, 2014)
 - Students in primary schools, and especially those in lower secondary school, have a limited

University

- Career guidance centers have been set up at several faculties.
- The goal is to assist university students when it comes to strengthening competencies for career management and to ease the transition from the current educational level towards further training, internship or employment.

Additional sources

- Euroguidance center, within the Agency for Mobility and the EU Programmes, designs promotional and educational activities intended for those who offer career guidance in education and employment, gives information on news and good practice in the area of career guidance, and encourages career guidance experts' cooperation and mobility on both national and European levels.
- Private and NGO sector provide career counseling for clients
- NGO Razbor and Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences and Law

Challenges in career
development of
adolescents

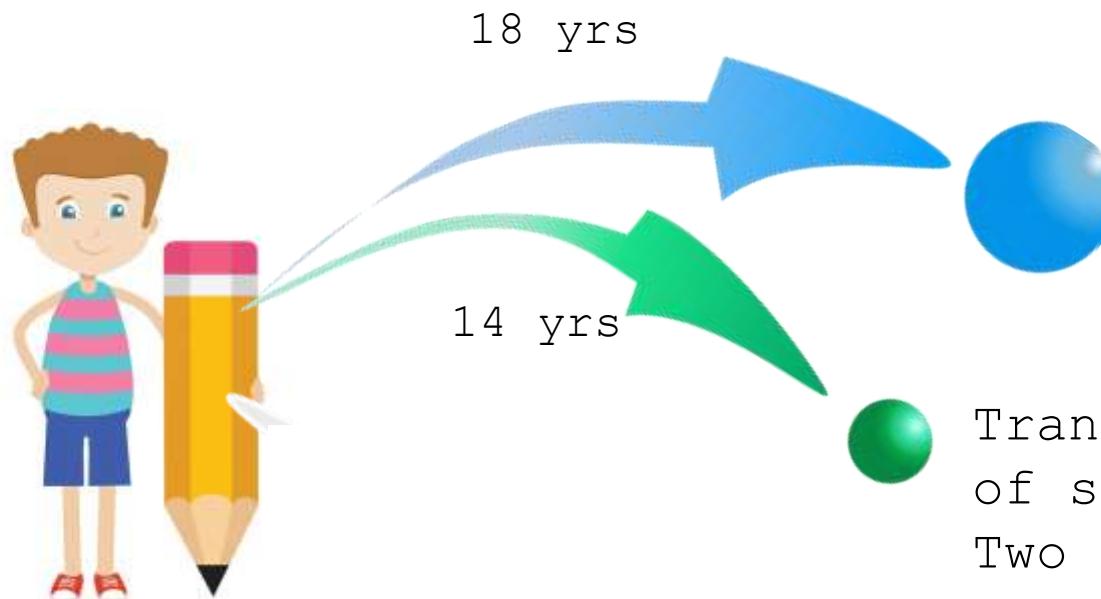
Our research projects

- Students' interests and **vocational high school** programs fit: Measurement, monitoring, causes and consequences of congruence **VETFIT** (2024-2027), NextGenerationEU
- Intra-European Youth Labour Migrations in the Context of **Contemporary Career** Theories **WORKMOBIL** (2024-2027), NextGenerationEU
- The Model of Free Career Choice: The Role of Autonomous Career Motivation and Protective and Risk Factors in Career Development of Adolescents **FREE CAREER CHOICE** (2020 - 2025), Croatian Science Foundation
- 2014-2017 Vocational Development in Adolescence: Setting the Adolescent **Career Transition** Model **ACTM** (2014-2017), Croatian Science Foudation
- Identification of **protective and risk factors in career** (2018-2019), Institute Pilar
- Evaluation of job aspects in career counselling **online systems**: development and evaluation of online system Career Choice (2018-2019), Institute Pilar
- **Career guidance and counselling in** elementary and high **schools**: students' perspective (2017), Euroguidance & Agency for mobility and EU programmes
- **New approaches of CES** in providing career services to clients (2014-2015), IPA & Croatian Employment Service
- Development and implementation of **computer assisted career guidance** system E-career (2009-2013) Bureau for education, culture and sport of City of Zagreb

All our projects...

- Focus on **adolescents** – middle school, high school, students (less), young employees
- Different **approaches** – quantitative, longitudinal, qualitative...
- **Broad** perspective on career development of young people
- Development of **free career counseling tools** for young people
- Foundation for:
 - Identification of challenges and

Educational transitions



Transition after secondary school: Choice of university study or entering the world of work

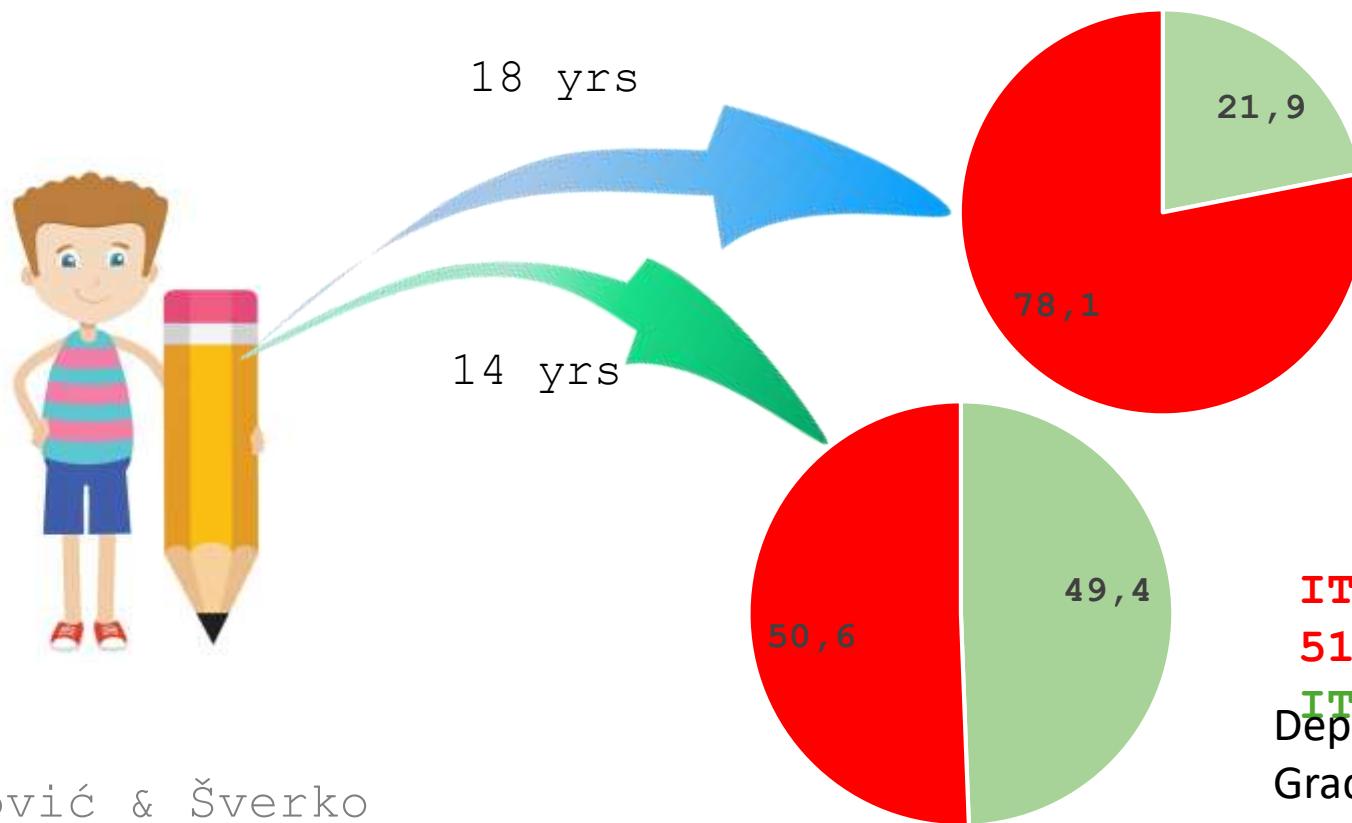
Transition after primary school: Choice of secondary school

Two types of secondary schools:
Grammar schools (general gymnasium)

VET schools (3-5 years)

Very important choice at the age of 14 !!

Is it easy or stressful to make a career decision at that age?



IT'S STRESSFUL

78 %

IT'S EASY! 22 %

Independence in career decisions

Awareness of the importance of this decision
Stress

IT'S STRESSFUL

51 %

IT'S EASY! 49 %

Dependance on parents

Grades limit possible outcomes

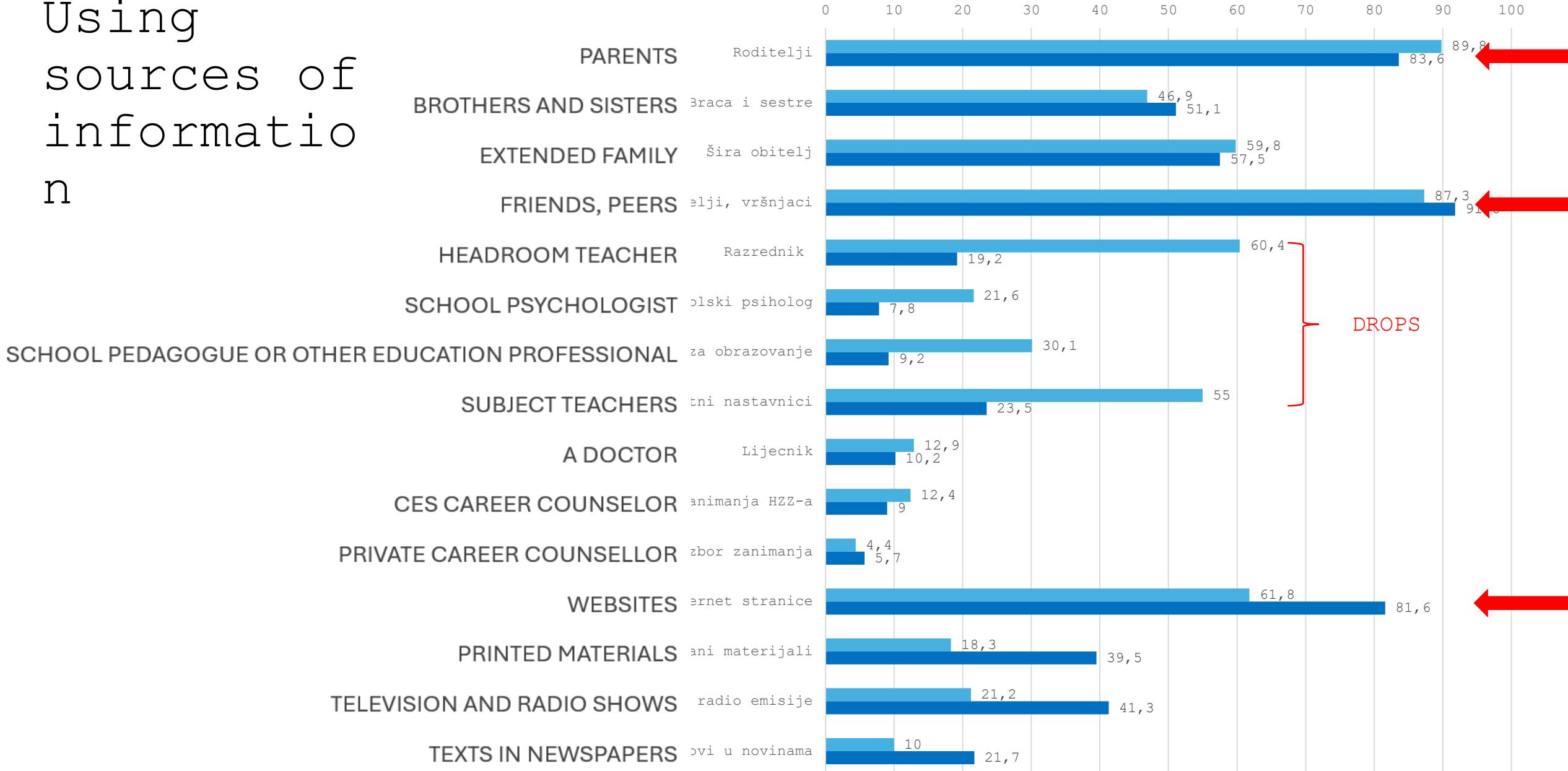
Low personal importance of this decision

Secondary education in Croatia

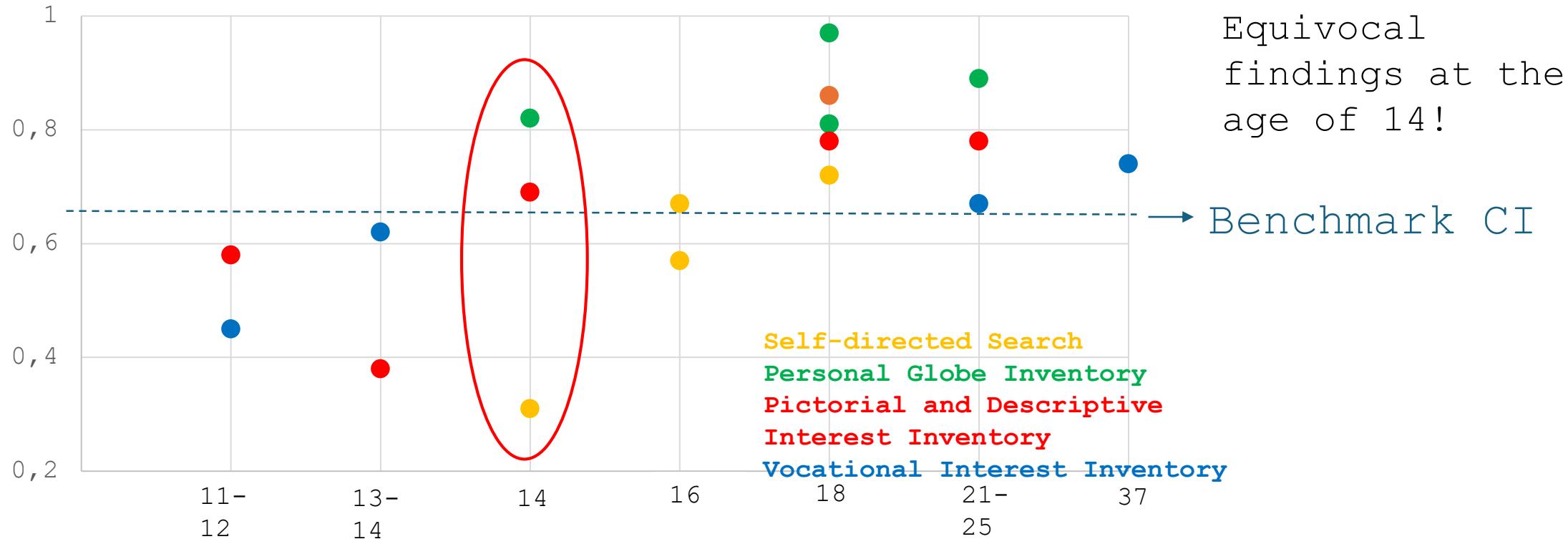
- **Secondary education** enables the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for entering the labor market or continuing education
- Secondary education is not mandatory
- 146.143 children in secondary school in Croatia (2020./21.)



Using sources of information



Vocational interests structure



Šverko, I., & Babarović, T. (2006). The validity of Holland's theory in Croatia. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 14(4), 490-507.

Šverko, I. (2008). Spherical model of interests in Croatia. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72, 14-24.

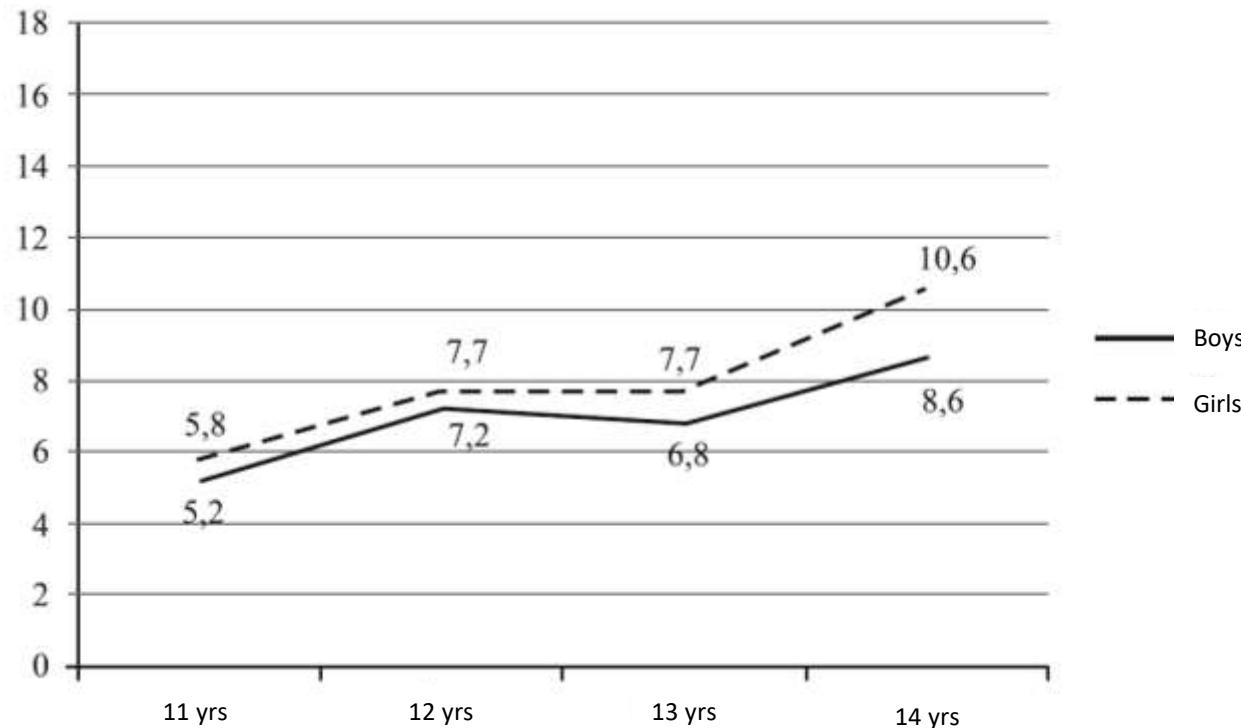
Šverko, I., Babarović, T., & Međugorac, V (2014). Pictorial assessment of interests: Development and evaluation of Pictorial and Descriptive Interest Inventory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 84, 356-366.

Šverko, I. & Babarović, T. (2016). Integrating personality and career adaptability into vocational interest space. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 94, 89-103.

Černja, I., Babarović, T. & Šverko, I. (2017). Mogu li diferenciranost i konzistentnost interesa biti pokazatelji profesionalne zrelosti osnovnoškolaca? (Can differentiation and consistency of interests serve as

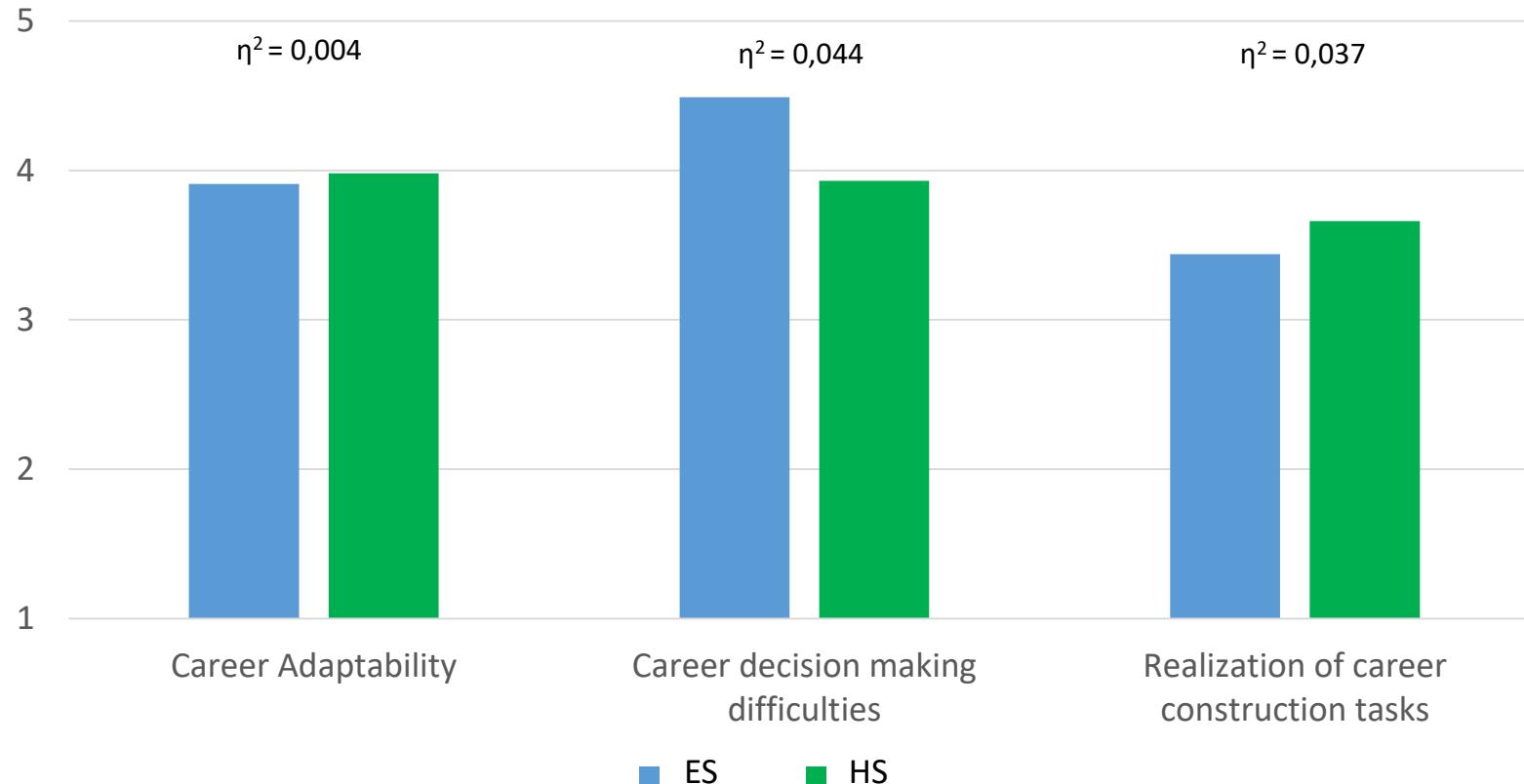
Information about world of work

- Test of occupational knowledge



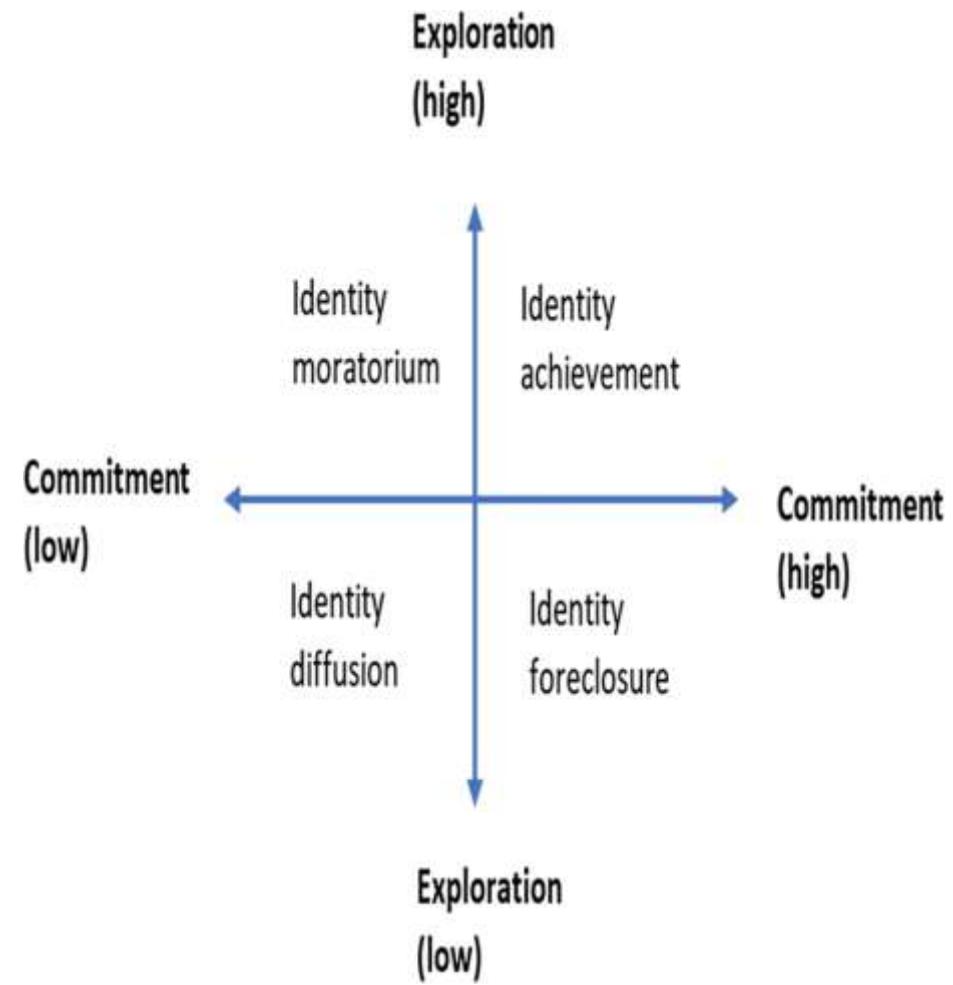
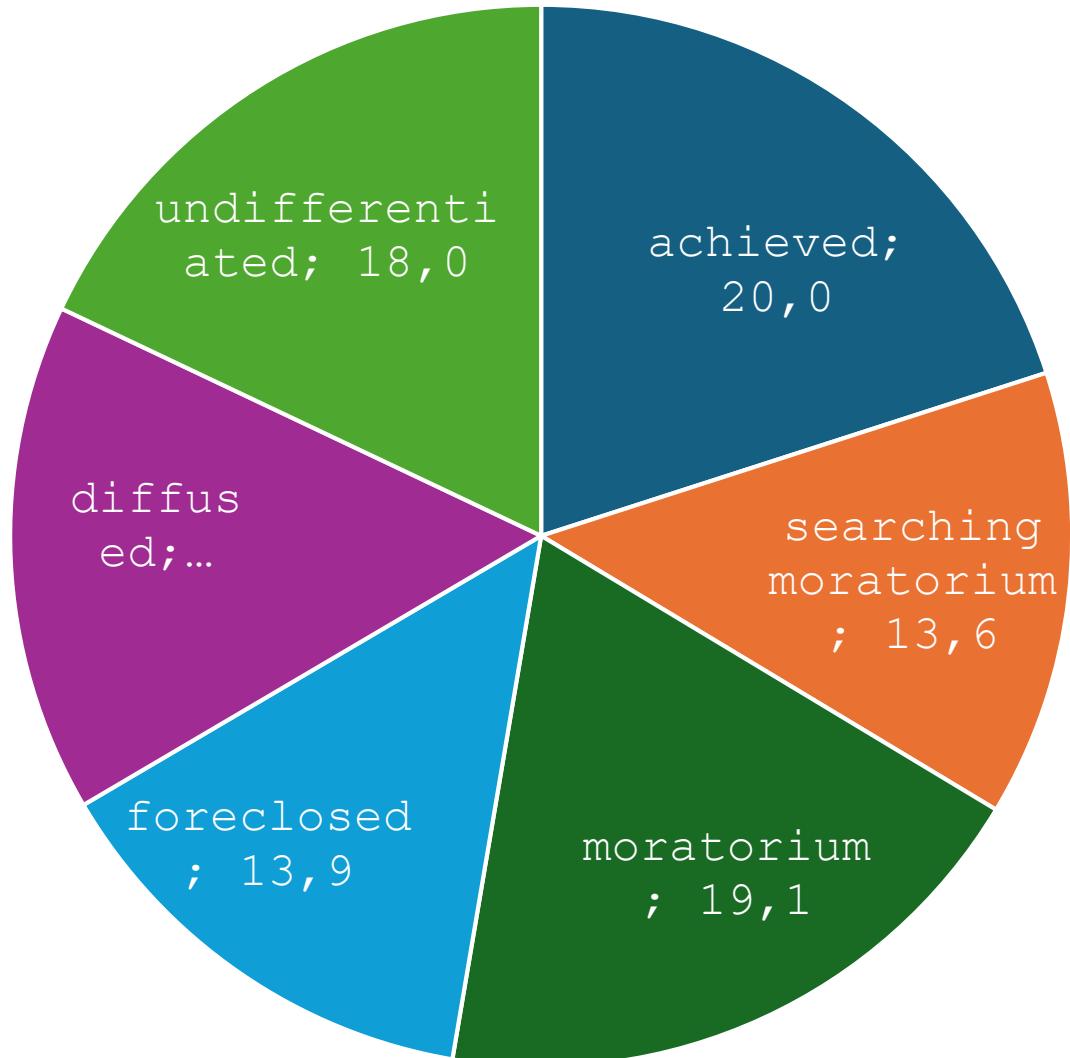
- Elementary school students do not know much about the world of work!
- Girls are somewhat better informed
- The level of information acquired depends on the context

Career readiness – age difference



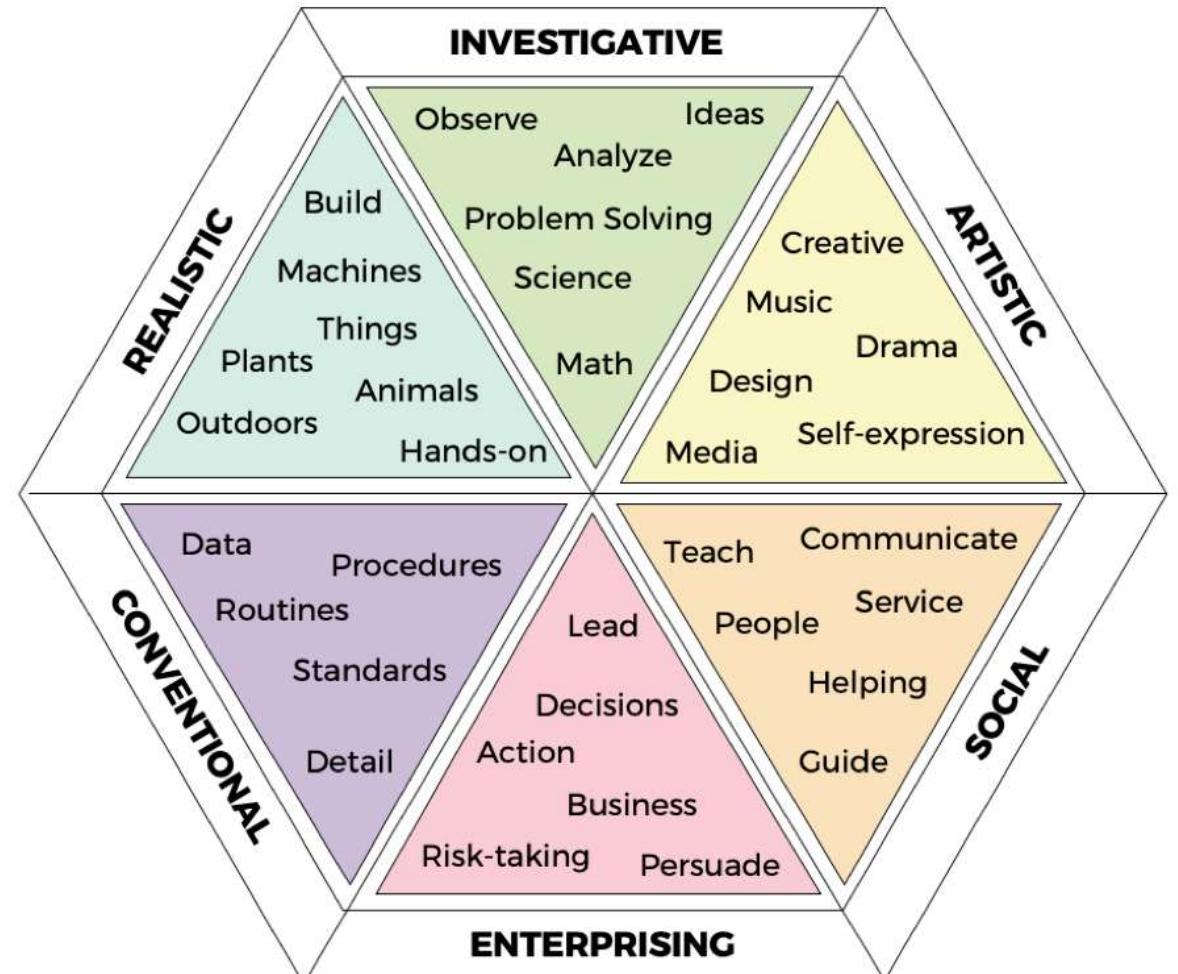
- Increase of career maturity regarding to age
- Small effects (listed only for the total scale scores)
- Career adaptability showed the least changes – the most stable construct, the closest to basic traits (as personality), at least influenced by context

Vocational identity statuses of high-school students (n = 1832)



Congruence of Vocational Interests and Work/Educational Environments:

- Vocational interests represent relatively enduring orientations of an individual towards work activities, jobs, and occupations that they like and believe they would be successful in.
- The most well-known typology of interests is Holland's RIASEC typology which can describe an individual's interests and the characteristics of work environments.
- Congruence represents the alignment of an individual's interests and the characteristics of work environments (P-E fit).
- A higher level of congruence is associated with better work and educational outcomes.
- I.E. congruence is associated with better academic outcomes: grade point average, on-time graduation



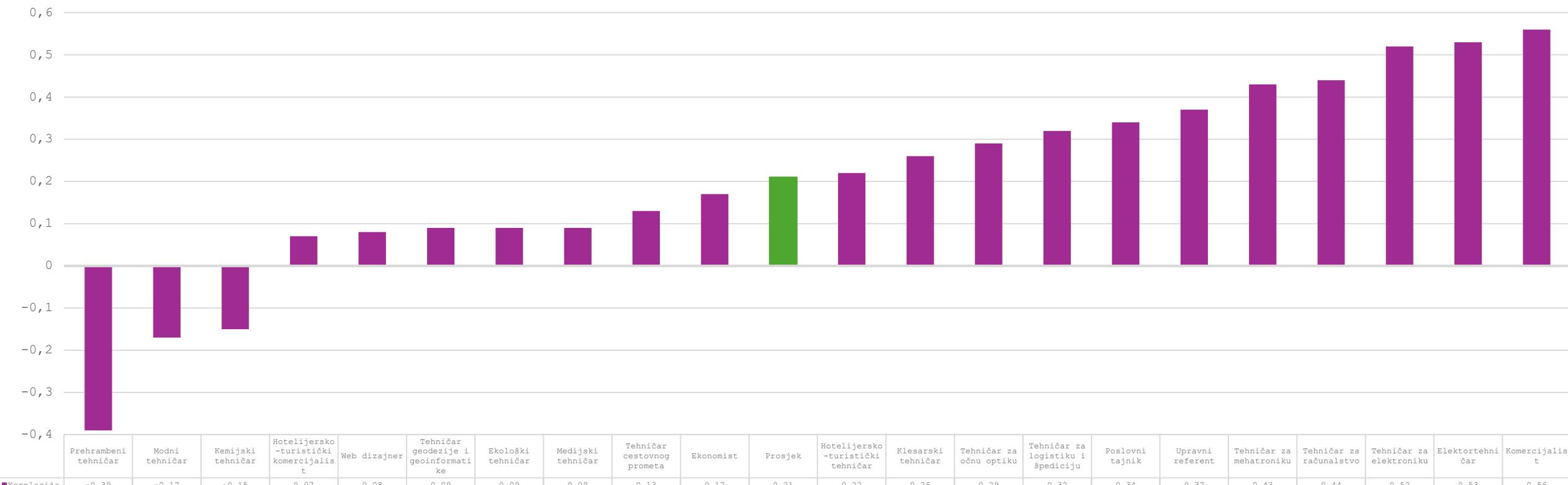
The Problem of Congruence in Vocational Education

- Previous research on the vocational development and career maturity of final-year primary school students in Croatia:
 - The level of career maturity of students is low (Babarović and Šverko, 2011). When making decisions about choosing a high school, they encounter a large number of difficulties; in their decision-making, they primarily rely on their parents, with grades being a key factor in their choice (Babarović and Šverko, 2017).
- This leads to a suboptimal choice of high school that does not align with their interests, resulting in lower motivation for school, poorer educational achievement, and consequently worse career outcomes.
- The situation of relatively low average congruence between the vocational interests of students in Croatian

National Centre for External Evaluation of Education - reports

- According to official reports, the students who choose study programs that are incongruent with the vocational sector they come from who achieve the worst results on the national graduation exams.
- Consequently, a large number of young people in Croatia complete their education within the profession they chose at the age of 14 (at the end of primary school).
- Result - reduced vertical mobility and reduced divergence in university education, i.e., common choices for VET high-school students further education are within vocational n:

VET schools/progams congruence level



[-.39, .56]

The range of congruence

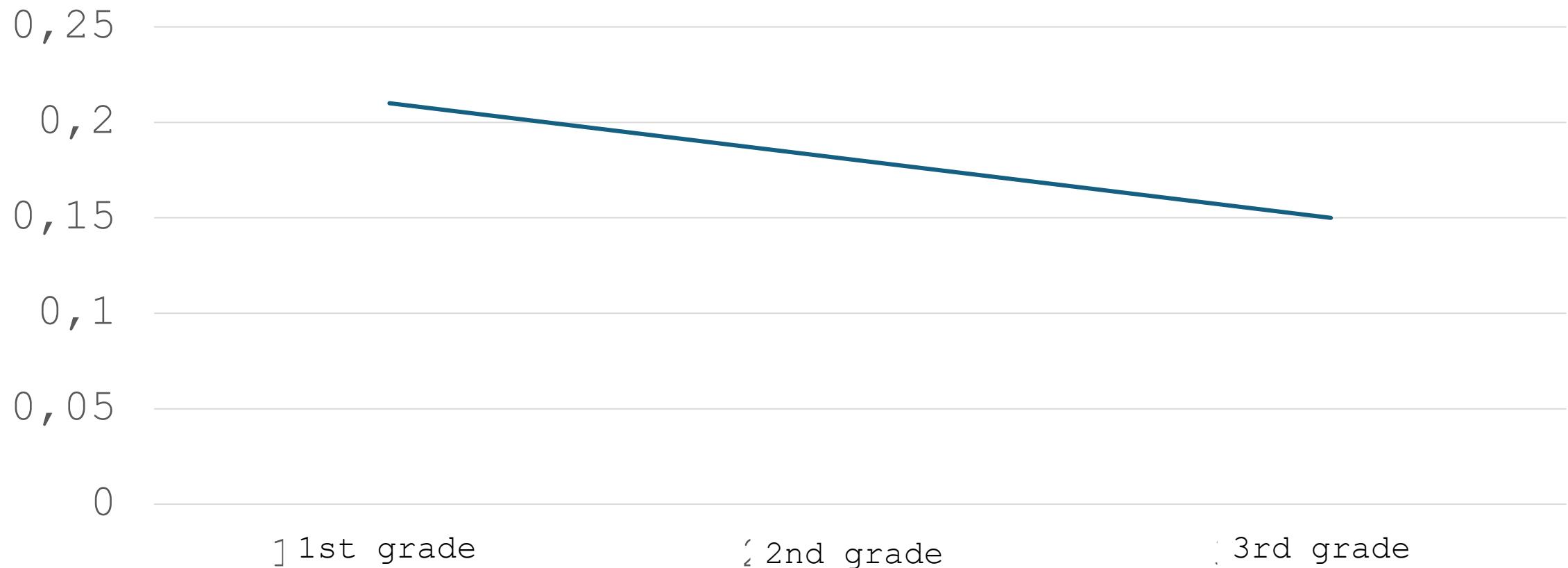
.21

Average congruence

[.43, .53]

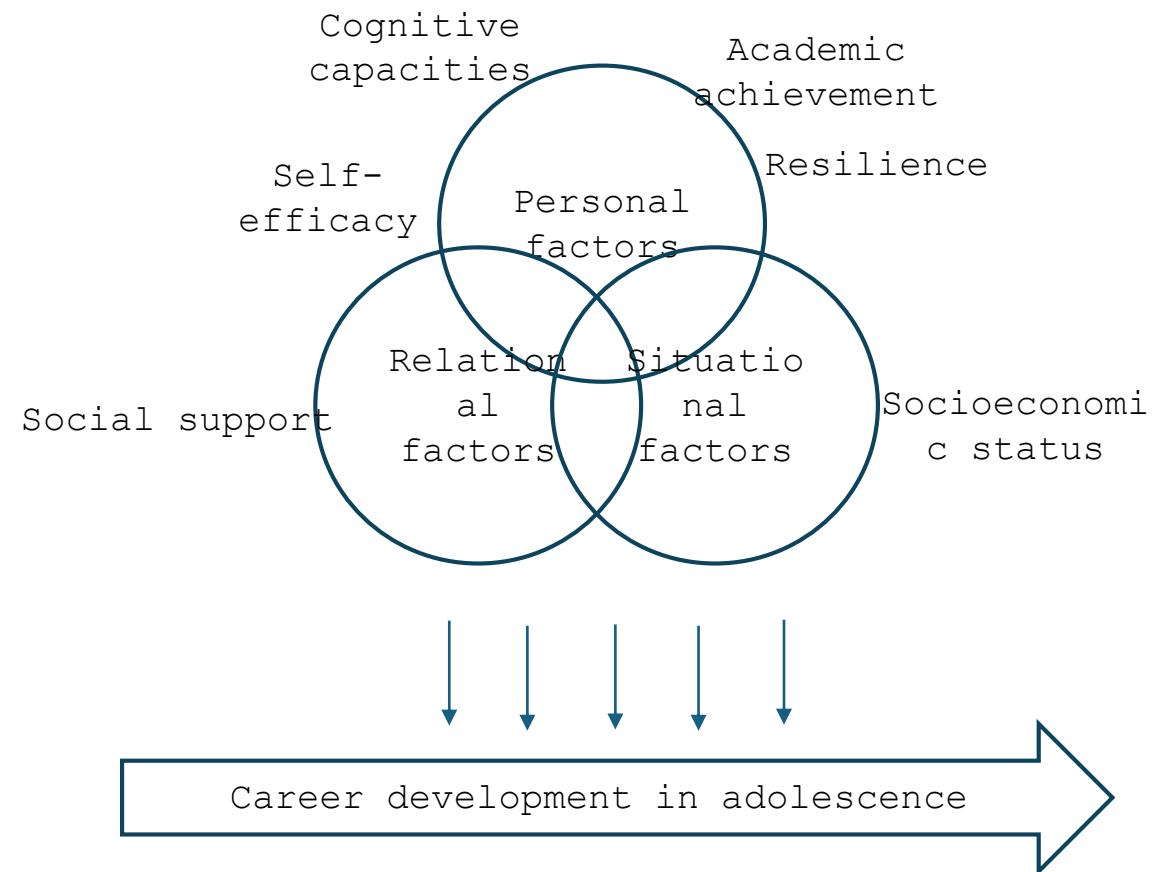
Congruence is highest in
Realistic interests-occupations

Congruence of interests and educational program during the VET schooling



Protective and risk factors in career development

- Cognitive capacities and academic achievement strongly determine adolescents' career choices.
- The belief in personal capacities is crucial for accomplishment of career goals.
- Career choice and career transition place a deal great of stress on adolescents.
- Stress reduces intrinsic career motivation.
- The particular stressor are the fatalistic (dysfunctional) beliefs – I choose career for life & it is necessary to study.
- Parents, peers and school climate play big role in adolescents' choices.
- Socioeconomic factors and lack of educational opportunities in place of **residence strongly limit adolescents' career choices.**



Risk factors

- It is important to recognize individuals exposed to risk factors, and to help them in the process of career construction
 - Those with low grades and who feel incompetent
 - Those who are very stressed by career transition
 - Those who do not have supportive social environment
 - Those who have worse living conditions (SES, educational opportunities)
- These kids likely have narrower career choices and worse career outcomes
- School is the right place
 - It is possible to detect and approach students even if they do not seek help
 - The support in career construction can be provided at no extra costs
- Focusing on students in risk and helping them in career construction is an act of reducing inequalities and a path to a more just and inclusive society

What to do?

Problems and solutions

- The first important career decision is scheduled too early!
 - Existing schooling system isn't in accordance with children's career development
 - It is important to foster career readiness and career identity formation at the younger age
 - Very useful would be to implement career counseling programs in schools
- Entering an unsuitable vocational career track is difficult to change!
 - It is important to screen career choices at the beginning of VET school...
 - ...and to motivate students throughout the educational program
- Students in grammar schools are very stressed by national exams and further studies
 - Important to help students navigate this stressful period – encourage self-efficacy & resilience
 - Rethink national exams as main selection procedure for university studies
- Contemporary world of work is dynamic and changeable, and support is needed
 - Fostering career resources should be integrated in work with adolescents

Incorporation of career guidance in schools

- school psychologists and educational professionals rarely have time and precise knowledge to implement thorough career guidance programs in schools
- school curriculum should integrate career counseling programs
- we developed and evaluated several free of charge counselling resources and materials
- Euroguidance fills the gap by providing educations for teachers from 2013 by now, approximately 4 seminars a year

Approaches (evaluated and free-of-charge)

- Self-directed online career guidance tools
 - www.putkarijere.hr
 - www.razvojkarijere.hr
 - <https://vauceri.hzz.hr/>
- Workshops for primary and secondary school
 - Career Development School Program
<https://www.putkarijere.hr/strucnjaci/skolski-program-profesionalnog-razvoja>
 - Workshops Put karijere
<https://www.putkarijere.hr/strucnjaci/radionice-put-karijere>

Thank you for your
attention!