

CHALLENGES OF CATHOLIC LEGAL EDUCATION IN CROATIA

The path toward a different approach to studying law

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Abstract

The text examines the current state of legal education in Croatia, identifies its systemic shortcomings, and presents the innovative approach introduced by the newly established Faculty of Law at the Catholic University of Croatia (CUC). The text explains the key elements of modern and innovative legal education, with particular emphasis on the importance of an individual approach to students. The underlying premise is that legal education should not be reduced solely to the transmission of knowledge about positive law and legal regulations; rather, it should aim to shape legal professionals who are also responsible and ethical members of society.

Keywords: legal education, legal profession, practical legal training, ethical values

1. Introduction

This paper was prepared for the Conference *Challenges of Catholic Legal Education in the 21st Century*, organized by the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, on 4 June 2025 in Budapest. During the preparation for the Conference, the author studied John Henry Newman's classic work *The Idea of a University*, and its ideas greatly inspired him in reflecting on what legal education in Croatia should be like.

This paper is dedicated to legal education in Croatia, the problems and challenges it faces, and the specific contributions that Catholic Legal Education brings to the formation of future legal professionals. In order to tackle the challenges of Catholic

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legal education in Croatia, it is first helpful to recall some key reflections on what legal education as such ought to be. Only then can we assess what legal education offers students and clearly identify the challenges we need to confront.

The underlying premise for considering this topic is that legal education should not be reduced solely to the transmission of knowledge about positive law and legal regulations; rather, it should aim to shape legal professionals who are also responsible and ethical members of society. While the acquisition of knowledge is, of course, extremely important, it is not the only decisive element in the formation of future lawyers. Arguably, more important than the mere accumulation of knowledge is to cultivate the minds of students, encouraging critical thinking and deep understanding. It could therefore be argued that the fundamental objective of legal education should be to provide students with comprehensive understanding of the legal system at the national, European, and international levels, while simultaneously developing their abilities for critical analysis and argumentation.

High-quality legal education also entails the systematic development of practical skills, including legal research, drafting of legal documents, communication skills, oral and written argumentation, and solving actual legal problems through practical exercises and professional placements.¹ In addition to its professional dimension, legal education must also include an ethical component, fostering an awareness of professional responsibility, justice, and the protection of human rights. Finally, an individualized approach to students and active faculty mentorship seems important not only for identifying and overcoming challenges during their studies but also for fostering the development of critical thinking.

The paper is divided into five sections. Following the introduction, a brief overview of the history of legal studies in Croatia is provided. This is followed by an analysis of the challenges and shortcomings of the existing system of legal education. The fourth section presents a new approach based on Catholic legal education. Finally, the paper concludes with several key findings.

2. The history of legal studies in Croatia

The tradition of legal education has been present among Croats since the Middle Ages. The drafting of statutes of Dalmatian cities already involved legal experts educated at foreign universities. The proximity of Italian law schools resulted in the presence of Croatian students – and even professors – at some of the most renowned European faculties of law.² The first attempt at public legal instruction on Croatian soil appeared

¹ See: Vesna KOVAČ – Antonija ZUBOVIĆ: *Student-Centered Teaching: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment in Legal Studies – A Handbook for Teachers*, *Providentia Studiorum Juris* – Improving the quality of studying at law faculties in Croatia, Sveučilište u Rijeci, Pravni fakultet, 2021., <https://providentia-iuris.eu/#>

² See: Dalibor Čepulo: *Razvoj pravne izobrazbe i pravne znanosti u Hrvatskoj do 1776. godine i pravni fakultet u Zagrebu od osnivanja 1776. do 1918. godine*. [The Development of Legal Education and Legal Science in Croatia until 1776 and the Faculty of Law in Zagreb from its Foundation in 1776 to 1918.]. In: *Contributions to the History of the Faculty*, Vol. 1., Pravni fakultet, Zagreb, 1996. 51.

in Dubrovnik in the second half of the 15th century, but it left no significant trace. It was followed by several other attempts, none of which had the lasting impact, until the Jesuit order eventually became involved in organizing legal education.³ It is evident from that the beginnings of legal education in Croatia were closely tied to the Church. On September 23, 1669, the Hungarian-Croatian King Leopold I granted university status and privileges to the Jesuit Academy in Zagreb.⁴ Within the Academy, a variety of subjects were taught, including philosophy, theology, and the basics of law—such as canon and civil law.

The Academy remained under Jesuit administration for more than a century, until 1773, when Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Jesuit order. In 1776, Empress Maria Theresa issued a decree founding the Royal Academy of Sciences (*Regia Scientiarum Academia*), which included three faculties: Philosophy, Theology, and Law (*Facultas iuridica*).⁵ Thus, the Faculty of Law in Zagreb was established in 1776 as part of the higher education reform in the Habsburg Monarchy. The University of Zagreb was finally established in 1874. Initially, it comprised only three faculties: the Faculty of Philosophy, the Faculty of Theology, and the Faculty of Law and State Sciences, while the Faculty of Medicine was founded in 1919.⁶

The Faculty of Law in Zagreb began its work on November 4, 1776. The law programme lasted two years, and enrolment was possible only after completing studies at the Faculty of Philosophy. The first professors were selected through a public competition, and their appointments were confirmed by the Empress. Classes were conducted in Latin, although Croatian was also allowed, and in the early years, Austrian and German textbooks were primarily used. The first handbook in Croatian, focusing on the history of civil law, was published in 1819.⁷

During the communist era, canon law ceased to be taught at the Faculty of Law. This situation continued even after the democratic transition. Only recently has canon law been reintroduced into the curriculum of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb, and even then, only as an elective course. Such treatment of canon law clearly reflects the resistance toward Catholic legal education during the long period of communism in Croatia. The

³ Ibid. 53.

⁴ See: Hrvoje PETRIĆ: The Origins of the University of Zagreb. *Hrvatska revija* 4, (2019). <https://www.matica.hr/hr/605/pocetci-sveucilista-u-zagrebu-30249/>

⁵ See: The History of the University of Zagreb, <https://www.unizg.hr/o-sveucilistu/sveuciliste-jucer-danas-sutra/povijest-sveucilista/>; See also: Vladimir BAZALA: Preteče osnutak i razvoj sveučilišta u Zagrebu do 1918. [The Origins of Establishment, and Development of the University of Zagreb until 1918.]. *Zbornik za historiju školstva i prosvjete*, 2. (1965).; Lelja DOBRONIĆ: *Zagrebačka akademija. Academia Zagrabienensis: Visokoškolski studiji u Zagrebu 1633–1874*. [The Academy of Zagreb, Academia Zagrabienensis: Higher Education Studies in Zagreb 1633–1874.] Zagreb, Dom i svijet, 2004.

⁶ See: <https://www.pravo.unizg.hr/fakultet/tradicija/>

⁷ See: Time Capsule: Faculty of Law Day in Zagreb – November 4, 1776, Informator, no. 6495, November 6, 2017. <https://informator.hr/strucni-clanci-vremeplov/vremeplov-dan-pravnog-fakulteta-u-zagrebu-4-studeni-1776>; See also: Vladimir BAYER: Osnivanje Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu (god. 1776.) i njegovo definitivno uređenje (1777. god.). [The Establishment of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb (1776) and Its Definitive Organization (1777)]. *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu* 19, 2. (1969), 232. ss.

treatment of canon law clearly reflects the resistance toward *Catholic Legal Education*, as well as toward the very principles upon which legal education ought to be based.

With the establishment of the Faculty of Law at the Catholic University of Croatia on November 12, 2024, and the launch of the new law programme in Croatia, the study of law has returned to its original tradition of Catholic legal education. The initiative to introduce the new law programme in Croatia faced numerous obstacles. Part of the resistance stemmed from a simple desire among some existing law faculties to preserve the *status quo*, as they perceived the emergence of a new law faculty as competition and a threat to their leading positions. Naturally, the arrival of a new player also meant that, in the future, both state funding and influence will have to be shared among five law faculties, instead of the previous four. However, there was also strong ideological opposition from the so-called left-liberal academic circles, who seem to have a growing concern that the new voices and perspectives in the legal education will emerge, bringing along fresh ideas and alternative viewpoints.

3. Challenges and misdirections in legal education

Legal education in Croatia has for years revealed certain characteristics that have caused dissatisfaction among both students and their future employers. Students are expected to master the knowledge, but have only sporadically been taught how to think critically. The knowledge that students acquire during their studies is not accompanied by practical training aimed at the application of that knowledge in practice and the development of relevant skills. Some of the key skills that students should develop during their studies arguably include communication skills, the use of modern technologies in the judiciary, legal writing, and mastery of legal terminology in a foreign language. Upon finishing the existing law programmes, students seem to lack the above mentioned skills as well as capacity of legal reasoning. Many practicing lawyers today will assert that it is only upon completing their studies that their actual legal training has begun, mostly with their first employment.

Today, law students in Croatia rarely get the opportunity to become familiar with the peculiarities of different legal professions during their course of studies. Consequently, it is extremely difficult for them to choose the profession that best suits their interests and capabilities. One of the fundamental shortcomings of the majority of study programmes of law in the Republic of Croatia is that students have very limited opportunities for acquiring practical knowledge with regard to functioning of the courts, as well as other judicial institutions such as the State Attorney's Office and the Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime.⁸ In addition, law graduates lack practical experience and knowledge on *modus operandi* in law firms

⁸ See: Alan UZELAC – Juraj BROZOVIĆ – Ema BASIOLI: The Impact of Clinical Legal Education at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, on Employment after Graduation. In: Loris BELANIĆ – Dana DOBRIĆ JAMBORVIĆ (ed.): *Proceedings of Co-authored Papers by Professors and Students from the Scientific Conference "Improving the Quality of Studies at Law Faculties in Croatia"*. Sveučilište u Rijeci, Pravni fakultet, Rijeka, 2021. 69–90.

and notary public offices, as well as in different legal positions in private companies where lawyers often play a very important role as in-house legal counsels or managers.⁹ Moreover, law students in Croatia infrequently get an opportunity of acquiring adequate knowledge about the functioning of the public administration (State bodies and local and regional self-government units) and other forms of civil (self)organisations such as trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), where lawyers can often make a significant contribution. Many students seem to lack basic knowledge (let alone practical insight) about functioning and proceedings of different international and European courts (e.g. the International Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union), as well as about the relevance of their jurisprudence for judicial proceedings in Croatia.¹⁰

With regard to the expected qualifications upon completion of the study programme, law graduates regularly demonstrate insufficient competences in terms of the structure of court proceedings, drafting indictments, applications, appeals or submissions. It is only after being employed as lawyers that they attend court proceedings or prepare and draft the court filings or pleadings for the first time. Furthermore, students are rarely, if at all, familiar with modern techniques of communication with courts (for example, the systems of *e-Communication* with Courts of Law, e-Land Registry, e-Enforcements, and e-Company Register are mostly unfamiliar to them).¹¹

One of the most striking problems in today's legal education seems to lie in the approach to and treatment of students – that is, the fact that students are not placed at the centre of legal studies and law learning. It can be argued that several factors contribute to this situation, most notably the high enrolment quotas and the heavy non-teaching obligations placed on faculty members. High enrolment quotas make it nearly impossible to provide individualized attention or proper mentorship to ensure students' progress. Teaching staff often lack the time to mentor students or support those who encounter difficulties in their studies. As a result, students are largely left to steer their education on their own, while faculty members are frequently focused on meeting the criteria for their own academic advancement.

Unfortunately, this problem is not unique to legal education. It is further reinforced by national regulations that set criteria for academic promotion – criteria that largely overlook the importance of teaching. National standards emphasize excellence

⁹ See: Ana Đanić Čeko – Iskra JUKIĆ – Matko GUŠTINI: The Role and Significance of Clinical Legal Education at Law Faculties in the Republic of Croatia, with Special Reference to the Law and Economics Clinic of the Faculty of Law in Osijek. In: BELANIĆ – DOBRIĆ JAMBORVIĆ op. cit. 183–210.

¹⁰ See: Chapter 1.1.2. Justification for launching the Study of Law at UNICATH vis-à-vis economic and social needs, as reflected in admission quotas and needs in the labour market in Initial Accreditation Procedure Application Form – Study Programme for Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate University Study of Law at the Catholic University of Croatia, Zagreb, 2 May 2024, p. 12.

¹¹ During the preparation of the study program, employers were surveyed about the competencies required from future lawyers for the labour market. The survey results revealed the main weaknesses in the functioning of legal education in Croatia. See more: Application Form - Study Programme for Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate University Study of Law at the Catholic University of Croatia Zagreb, 2 May 2024.

in scientific research while losing sight of what truly matters: the formation and development of students.

Law is not value-neutral – it is deeply embedded in questions of ethics and society's moral foundations. The aim of legal education should therefore be to shape lawyers who can think both critically and ethically. The two are not and should not be treated as mutually exclusive. Currently, legal studies do not have focus in developing ethical thinking or the ethical standards of the legal profession in law students. Ethical questions, as well as discussions of justice, human dignity, and moral responsibility, are not included in the existing curricula. This long-term deficiency has had serious consequences for legal profession, as many lawyers arguably lack the ability to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In a society striving to combat corruption, corruption within the judiciary represents one of the key obstacles to social transformation. Therefore, the development of ethical standards among future legal professionals, as well as strengthening of their personal and professional integrity, seems essential for reinforcing institutional resilience to corruption.¹²

In addition, legal profession carries significant power – law students should be equipped to serve primarily the common good, not merely their own careers.¹³ Therefore, a legal education should aim to form not only skilled legal professionals but also socially responsible citizens. During their studies, students should ideally develop awareness of their social responsibility and the importance of participation in societal processes. This, however, is not in the focus of the existing study programs whatsoever.

These are some of the reasons that have led to the negative perception of the current approach to legal studies in Croatia. This negative perception has created a strong need for a different approach – one that, in addition to providing knowledge, also focuses on the development of various practical skills through hands-on learning, as well as the formation of the student's character. More importantly, it calls for a form of legal education that includes an individualized approach and systematic monitoring of students' progress throughout their studies.

4. A new approach to the study of law

The Catholic University of Croatia (CUC) received official approval to launch its law programme on November 11, 2024, the St. Martin's Day. For this reason, St. Martin has been named the patron saint of the Faculty of Law.¹⁴ In developing the new study programme for integrated undergraduate and graduate university study of law, careful consideration was given to models of legal education applied not only in Croatia, but throughout the EU and around the world. Numerous national and international

¹² See: Edita Čulinović Herc – Narda KRNETIĆ: Ethics Education as a Response to the Professional Challenges of the Legal Profession in Corporations and Public Administration. In: BELANIĆ – DOBRIĆ JAMBORVIĆ op. cit. 1–14.

¹³ See: Warren E. BURGER: 'The Role of the Law School in the Teaching of Legal Ethics and Professional Responsibility'. *Cleveland State Law Review* 29, 3. (1980), 377., 377–379.

¹⁴ Learn more about Saint Martin of Tours, the patron of the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University of Croatia, on the website: <https://www.unicath.hr/en/pravni-fakultet/o-fakultetu/misija-strategija>

experts participated in the preparation of the programme. Special attention was given to the perspectives of legal practitioners and potential employers in order to identify as accurately as possible all the competencies required of future legal professionals. Additionally, through discussions with various stakeholders, the shortcomings of the existing approach to legal studies were clearly identified, providing a foundation for the development of the new study programme. In order to understand the new approach to legal studies, it is important to highlight what Catholic legal education entails and what makes the new law programme innovative in its approach.

The mission of the study programme is to prepare students to be able, upon graduation, not only to successfully perform tasks within the legal profession, but also to respond to the increasingly complex legal and ethical challenges of contemporary society. This mission of the university study of law programme is inseparable from the mission of the CUC as a whole, which is grounded in the promotion of values in society and their connection with social morality and justice. The mission of CUC is a continuous pursuit of truth through research, as well as the preservation and transmission of knowledge for the benefit of society, with special emphasis on the formation of the whole person in the Catholic tradition and spirituality,¹⁵ as expressed in the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.¹⁶

There are three key determinants that define the new approach to the study of law, namely, the student-centred education, integration of three main pillars in student formation, and international cooperation.

First and foremost, the new approach to legal education at the CUC Faculty of Law places the student at the very centre of both the academic programme and the learning process. This student-centred philosophy guided every stage of planning and development – from designing the structure of the study programme and sequencing individual courses, to organizing the class schedule for each semester, monitoring each student's progress, organizing campus and campus life, and establishing dedicated student support services. An individualized approach is made possible through small enrolment quotas – only 40 students per year – and a substantial number of hours dedicated to one-on-one mentoring and personalized academic support. In every course, students are entitled to receive mentoring hours equivalent to the number of ECTS credits assigned to that course. The university campus is designed to offer students everything they need for a seamless academic experience in one place. Alongside lecture halls and laboratories, the campus includes a library with dedicated reading and study rooms, as well as a TV studio. In addition, it features a dormitory, a canteen, a café, and various spaces for social interaction, fostering both academic growth and a vibrant student community.

¹⁵ See: Statute of the Catholic University of Croatia, April, 2023, https://www.unicath.hr/sites/default/files/2024-10/Status-Hrvatskog-katolickog-sveucilista_2023.pdf

¹⁶ See: Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html

The second aspect focuses on integrating three key pillars in student formation: knowledge, practical training, and ethical values. Students are encouraged to develop critical thinking and, throughout their studies, to grow into well-rounded individuals who embrace responsibility within their social environment. The aim of this approach is to cultivate students' minds, not merely to train legal practitioners.

In terms of both structure and content, the curriculum represents a significant departure from the traditional way law has been studied in Croatia. The curriculum is structured so that it comprises 7 generic compulsory courses, 22 compulsory core courses of positive law, 6 legal practical training courses – *practicums* (4 compulsory and 1 elective positive law courses, 1 compulsory generic course), 7 elective courses (grouped in seven major groups, by fields of law) and one compulsory foreign language course (taught during the first four semesters). In total, these are 43 courses that are distributed over the nine semesters of the study programme. The final, tenth semester, includes a legal research seminar and drafting of the final thesis.¹⁷

Among the compulsory courses, the study programme covers all the key areas of positive law. It ensures that students acquire fundamental professional legal competencies and a solid foundation of knowledge in essential legal disciplines — knowledge crucial not only for entering the legal profession and beginning a successful career in law but also for passing the bar exam. The core courses, which provide this essential legal expertise, include: Constitutional Law, Family Law, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Civil Law, Civil Litigation, Administrative Law, Labour and Social Law, Commercial and Company Law, Financial and Tax Law, Private International Law, Fundamentals of European Public Law, and International Law. These subjects are also integral components of the bar exam. Additionally, to align with this goal, the programme includes compulsory courses such as Organisation of the Judiciary, Enforcement Law, and a Practicum in Drafting Legal Acts. Notably, this Law programme is the only one in Croatia that, through its mandatory Practicum, trains students not only in drafting legislative acts but also in preparing judicial rulings and judgments – a skill set particularly valuable for the bar exam. Thus, the first pillar of this programme – focused on knowledge – is dedicated to equipping students with the legal expertise required for successfully passing the bar exam.¹⁸

Furthermore, as the quality of a study programme also depends on the inclusion and quality of the general training courses, compulsory programme includes core generic courses (*Introduction to Law, Legal Sources and Methodology of Legal Research, Ethics of the Legal Profession, Legal History, Roman Law, Essentials of Economics for Lawyers, Essentials of Communication Skills in Law*). Unlike all other law programmes in Croatia, the new law programme includes Essentials of Canon Law as one of its compulsory courses.¹⁹

¹⁷ You can see the study program, its structure, and individual courses at: <https://www.unicath.hr/en/pravni-fakultet/prijediplomski-i-diplomski/o-studijskom-programu>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The need for the study of Canon Law derives from a shortage of adequate expertise in the labour market, and a long-standing lack of this course in the study programmes of faculties of law in Croatia so far

The study programme is characterized by a high level of electiveness. Elective courses are gradually introduced in the third year (one per semester) and, thereupon, more intensely pursued in subsequent years. The electives earn 4 ECTS credits each and are grouped according to the following major fields: (1) criminal law, (2) civil law, (3) commercial and financial law, (4) public and status law, (5) international law, (6) ecclesiastical law, and (7) general or generic field.

The second pillar of the study program relates to the development of practical skills and knowledge through envisaged *Practicums* (practical training courses) one of the crucial features differentiating it from the majority of the current university law studies in Croatia. The objective of *Practicums* is to enable students to understand and apply the study programme in practice by means of practical exercises, student internship programmes and educational visits. Six practical training courses are planned during the course of study and are distributed from the second to the fifth year. The curriculum of the study of *Law* at CUC provides four compulsory practical training courses in major fields of law (*Criminal Law, Civil Law, Administrative Law, and European Law*) and one generic course on *Drafting of Legal Acts*. One additional practical training course is elective, in the fourth or fifth year of study (depending on the student's choice). Practicums (on-site training and practical exercises) will be organized in collaboration with a range of stakeholders within the justice system and public administration, including law firms, notary public offices, courts, state attorney's offices, land registry offices, public administration authorities, as well as local and regional government bodies. This approach should enable students to acquire first-hand experience of the professional practice of various legal occupations and to gain an in-depth understanding of the structure and functioning of judicial and administrative institutions during the course of their studies.

The third pillar focuses on the development and acquisition of high ethical standards essential for the practice of the legal profession, as well as for the holistic personal and professional development of future lawyers. Relevant content is embedded both in the compulsory courses specific to the CUC study programme (e.g., *Ethics of the Legal Profession, Organisation of the Judiciary, Human Rights*) and carefully selected range of electives (e.g., *Human Rights and Social Ethics, Rights of the Child, Society and Corruption, Law and Artificial Intelligence*).

Finally, considering that *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and highlights the duty of a Catholic university to promote collaboration and exchange with universities and institutions around the world, especially those that share similar Christian or humanistic ideals, the study programme has devoted particular attention to creating conditions for international mobility of both students and faculty staff. International cooperation is extremely important in order to systematically and gradually create the institutional conditions for both incoming and

(both at present and, earlier, in the former Yugoslavia). At the same time, many relations in society are governed by the regulation of State and Church (e.g. church marriage, property issues related to the Church, foundation of religious nurseries, schools, universities, etc.). See: European Court of Human Rights case *Travaš v. Republic of Croatia*, application no. 75581/13 of 4 October 2016.

outgoing mobility of students and teaching staff. The study programme is designed to enable and facilitate national and international mobility of both students and faculty, particularly within the EU, especially – but by no means exclusively – in cooperation with Catholic universities in other countries that offer similar or complementary study programmes, whether at the European or broader international level. The study programme is structured in such a way that students are encouraged to participate in both outgoing and incoming mobility from the third year onward. In contrast, faculty members can participate in both outgoing and incoming mobility starting from the very first academic year of the programme (2025/26). Incoming mobility can enable participation in teaching at the CUC by faculty members from universities outside the Republic of Croatia. Exposing students to diverse intellectual environments and different teaching methods can undoubtedly foster the development of critical thinking, intellectual integrity, and a deeper understanding of legal matters.

Therefore, the aim of the new study programme is to train lawyers who will be competitive throughout the entire EU. With this objective in mind, the programme includes intensive foreign language courses, and several courses will be taught in English. This applies to compulsory courses such as Private International Law and the Practicum in European Law, as well as to a total of 14 elective courses.

5. Conclusion

Legal education in Croatia was initiated by the Church, specifically by the Jesuits. The Church played a significant role in the development of legal thought until the rise of communism in the second part of the twentieth century. With the establishment of the communist regime, Catholic thought has been systematically removed from legal education. Canon law was eliminated from the curriculum, and similarly, Catholic social teaching and ethics were given no space in the formation of future legal professionals. With the establishment of the Faculty of Law at the Catholic University of Croatia, Catholic legal education is once again becoming part of the Croatian higher education system and of the formation of future lawyers.

With Faculty of Law at UNICATH, legal thought inspired and enriched by the Catholic teaching is once again becoming a part of the legal education in Croatia, offering a new approach that emphasizes the formation of the whole person, rather than merely functioning as a system for the transmission of knowledge. In line with John Henry Newman's ideas, professors should guide students to appreciate knowledge not only as a stepping stone to employment, but as a lifelong foundation for personal growth, social engagement, and legal wisdom. Legal education must aim to cultivate minds and not just train legal practitioners. Legal education must develop a student's capacity to reason, to understand complexity, to make distinctions, and to engage in critical analysis. The focus of legal education should be on substantive understanding, deep reflection, and intellectual integrity. This can be achieved only through the full dedication of professors to their students and by placing students at the centre of legal education. Limiting enrolment quotas to a small number of students allows for an individual approach and full commitment to each student.

The establishment of the Faculty of Law at the Catholic University of Croatia is one of the indicators of successful completion of the transition of Croatian society from communist uniformity to democratic pluralism. It as well shows that the academic community in Croatia is ready to embrace plurality of opinions in its true meaning. Legal education that in future lawyers develops the capacity to reason and to engage in critical analysis arguably contributes to the emergence of fresh ideas and the advancement of society as a whole. We hope that, in doing so, we have contributed to the much-needed diversity in the approach to studying law—an approach that will inspire others to initiate change and bring new value to social and economic progress in Croatia.

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