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## Komparativni prikaz rasprostranjenosti i upotrebe interneta u Velikoj Britaniji, Francuskoj i Hrvatskoj

### Sažetak

Upotreba interneta ima značajan i neočekivan utjecaj kako na pojedince tako i na društvo u cjelini. Usklađena istraživanja o upotrebi interneta provode se u svim državama Europske unije kao i u ostalim državama Europe. Ona predstavljaju mjerodavan izvor informacija za kreiranje odrednica važnih za informacijsko društvo.

Rad prikazuje rasprostranjenost interneta kao i promjene vezane za njegovu upotrebu koje su u tijeku u Hrvatskoj kao i u dvije druge države, članice Europske unije, Francuskoj i Velikoj Britaniji. Budući da među državama Europske unije postoji izražen raskorak s obzirom na upotrebu interneta i njegovu rasprostranjenost u kućanstvima, cilj ovog rada je odrediti poziciju Hrvatske u odnosu na njih. Rad prikazuje podatke o mogućnostima i navikama korištenja interneta, namjeni interneta i osobinama korisnika kao što su starosna dob, spol i njihovo obrazovanje u sve tri države.

**Ključne riječi:** internet, rasprostranjenost interneta, korisnici interneta, namjena interneta.

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# Comparative Outline of the Diffusion and Use of the Internet in the United Kingdom, France and Croatia

## Summary

The use of the Internet has a significant and almost unforeseen impact on individuals and society as a whole. Harmonized surveys on the use of the Internet have been conducted in all states of the European Union as well as in other states of Europe. They represent an authoritative source of information for the creation of policies related to information society.

The paper outlines the diffusion and changes related to the uses of the Internet currently taking place in Croatia as well as in two other states, members of the European Union, France and the United Kingdom. Since there is a pronounced disparity among the states of the European Union, if we take into consideration Internet use and diffusion in the households, special interest of this paper is which position Croatia would hold among them. The paper includes data on the possibility and habits of accessing the Internet, purposes of the Internet and user characteristics such as age, gender and education in the three states.

**Key words:** the Internet, Internet diffusion, Internet users, purposes of the Internet

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## The present role of the Internet

In 2009, the Internet celebrated its 40th anniversary, and the World Wide Web its 20th. In recent years, most stories about the phenomenal growth of the Internet have emphasised its diffusion, as it has reached beyond the first one billion users worldwide. Since their inceptions, the Internet and Web have both moved well beyond their origins. According to Slevin, «compared to the rise of other electronic media, the Internet has expanded at a phenomenal rate, integrating various modes of conventional communication, including radio and television, into a vast interactive network.»<sup>1</sup> Computer scientists and engineers, but also growing numbers of users and providers of Internet products and services, have reinvented the Internet and Web in fundamental ways. Le Glatin claims that «in its present configuration the Internet relies on interaction and invitation to participate»<sup>2</sup> (translated by the authors). It can be seen as a cascading range of innovations. Castells points out that «the openness of the Internet's architecture was the source of its main strength: its self-evolving development, as users became producers of the technology, and shapers of the whole network.»<sup>3</sup> Users and providers tag items, create applications, blog, set up and maintain websites, and search for information as a part of their everyday life and work. Guichard and Lajoie describe the Internet by saying that «the Internet is an inclusive, transparent and universal space for communication in which freedom of expression and development of citizens' responsibilities are expanded»<sup>4</sup> (translated by the authors).

The usage of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) has been one of the main drivers of changes within society and businesses since more than a decade. People are bringing more digital devices and gadgets into the household, ranging from phones to games consoles. The number of ICTs people have in the home has increased. The functions of communication, information and services have

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<sup>1</sup> Slevin, J.: *The Internet and Society*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, UK, 2001., p.1.

<sup>2</sup> «Dans sa configuration actuelle, Internet repose sur l'interaction et l'invitation à participer», Le Glatin, M.: *Internet: un séisme dans la culture*, Édition de l'attribut, Toulouse, 2007., p.14.

<sup>3</sup> Castells, M.: *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003., p.27.

<sup>4</sup> «Internet est un espace de communication inclusif, transparent et universel, où peuvent s'épanouir la liberté d'expression et la responsabilisation des citoyens», Guichard, E., Lajoie, J.: *Odyssée Internet: enjeux sociaux*, Presse de l'Université du Québec, Québec, 2002., p.7.

become unimaginable without the Internet and they make people's lives easier. The use of the Internet has a significant and almost unforeseen impact on individuals and society as a whole. Its use has become an integral part of everyday life. Castells emphasized the crucial role of the Internet by saying that «development without the Internet would be the equivalent of industrialization without electricity in the industrial era.»<sup>5</sup>

Official statistics are vital in order to monitor the development of the Internet. Wellman and Haythornthwaite raise the awareness of the need of surveys on the use of the Internet: «It is time for more differentiated analyses of the Internet that take into account how it has increasingly become embedded in everyday life.»<sup>6</sup> Harmonized surveys on the use of the Internet have been conducted in all states of the European Union as well as in other states of Europe, and therefore the data are internationally comparable. They represent an authoritative source of information for the creation of policies related to information society.

## **Eurostat's division of the European Union states**

Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union situated in Luxembourg. Its task is to provide the European Union with statistics at European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions. Slevin explains that Internet use is in close connection with the characteristics of the social system of a particular state and with its pace of development: «Internet use is always situated within intersecting sets of rules and resources and reflects features of the social system as a whole.»<sup>7</sup> According to the possibilities of accessing the Internet in the households, Eurostat, in its most recent research conducted in 2009, has divided the states of the European Union into four groups (Map 1).

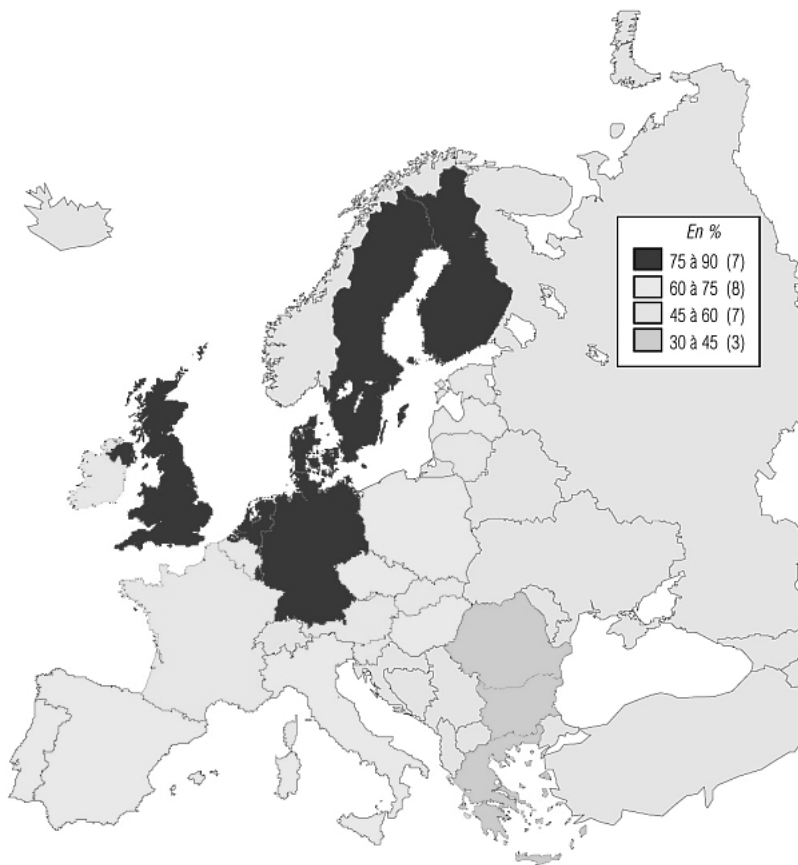
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<sup>5</sup> Castells, M.: *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003., p.269.

<sup>6</sup> Wellman, B., Haythornthwaite, C.: *The Internet in Everyday Life*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., UK, 2002., p.7.

<sup>7</sup> Slevin, J.: *The Internet and Society*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, UK, 2001., p.67.

Division of the EU states by Eurostat (2009)<sup>8</sup>



Map 1

The first group consists of the states in which the habits of using the Internet have been widely adopted (from 75% to 90%). The states forming this group are: Luxembourg, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, the United Kingdom and Germany.

The second group consists of the states which are very close to the European average considering Internet access (from 60% to 75%).

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<sup>8</sup> Deroin, V.: *Diffusion et utilisation des TIC en France et en Europe en 2009*, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication - Département des études, de la prospective et des statistiques, Paris, 2010., p.3.

These states are: France, Austria, Ireland, Belgium, Malta, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia.

The third group consists of the Southern European states (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus), Central European states (Hungary, Czech Republic) and the Baltics (Poland, Latvia). Their position is very similar if we consider Internet access (from 45% to 60%).

The last, fourth, group consists of the states in which the households have only recently started to adopt Internet access and it started to happen only after the year 2000. These states are predominantly situated in the South-East of Europe and they include Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. Internet access in these countries is lower than 40%.

### **Diffusion and Use of the Internet in the United Kingdom, France and Croatia**

This paper outlines the diffusion and changes related to the uses of the Internet currently taking place in the households of Croatia as well as in those of two other states, members of the European Union, France and the United Kingdom. The object of the paper is to determine the position of Croatia in relation to the states of the European Union taking into consideration the four mentioned groups. Two states of the European Union that have been selected for the comparison with Croatia are the United Kingdom which belongs to the first and most equipped group of states, and the other, France, belonging to the European average.

The paper includes data on the possibility and habits of accessing the Internet, purposes of the Internet and user characteristics such as age, gender and education in the three states.

It is chiefly based on the results of the surveys conducted in 2009, a time shaped by the news of a deepening economic recession, balanced somewhat by optimism over the new United States President, Barack Obama, whose Internet-supported election strategy was recognised around the world and to some extent it includes information from earlier surveys from 2008.

### *The United Kingdom*

The Oxford Internet Institute (OII) leading world centre for the multidisciplinary study of the Internet and society conducts the Oxford Internet Surveys (OxIS). The Institute focuses its research on the social shaping and implications of the Internet. It was launched for the first time in 2003 and it has become an authoritative source of information about Internet access, use and attitudes and the difference this makes for everyday life in Britain. In this paper the data from the OxIS 2009 are complemented by the data from the 2009 Eurostat survey.

The Internet has diffused gradually to reach 70% of British households in 2009. 69% of them are using broadband access to the Internet.<sup>9</sup> Almost all users (95%) accessed the Internet at home, 41% from work, 16% from school, 14% from a public library and 8% at an internet café.<sup>10</sup> The Internet can support a wide variety of purposes which lead individuals to use the Internet in markedly different ways. The most common purposes of the Internet in the United Kingdom are as follows:

- communication: it remains the single most common use (sending or receiving email or messages, social networking sites, blogging, chatting, making or receiving phone calls);
- source of information and search engines;
- services: steadily increasing proportions of users employing the Internet to obtain services (online shopping, banking, making travel reservations, paying bills);
- production of content by users (update or create a profile, posting pictures or photos);
- entertainment and leisure activities (downloading music and videos, playing games).

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<sup>9</sup> Lööf, A., Seybert, H.: Internet usage in 2009 - Households and Individuals, Eurostat, 2009., URL: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-QA-09-046/EN/KS-QA-09-046-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-QA-09-046/EN/KS-QA-09-046-EN.PDF), (05.10.2010.)

<sup>10</sup> Dutton, W.H., Helsper, E.J., Gerber, M.M.: *The Internet in Britain:2009*, Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, 2009., p. 44.

On average British users bought something online twice a month. In other words, 66% of respondents used online purchasing services which places the United Kingdom on the first position of all states of the European Union. Despite concerns, most Britons have quite positive attitudes toward technology in general and the Internet in particular. Confidence in the Internet and the commercial services that it offers remained high. Over three quarters agreed that it was easier to order products (88%), that there was a wider choice of goods online (82%), and that prices were lower (77%).<sup>11</sup>

### *France*

Since 2002 the Eurostat social survey on information and communication technologies has been conducted in France with the emphasis being put on a different topic every year. In 2009 the emphasis was put on e-commerce and it was carried out by Insee - *Institut National de la statistique et des études économiques*.

In 2009 the percentage of Internet access became stable in France and it equals 63%. This result is very close to the European average, namely 65%. In France, 57% of households have broadband. That percentage is also very similar to the European average which is 56%.

France realized the most significant progress as far as broadband is concerned between 2006 and 2008. The French just like majority of Europeans prefer accessing the Internet from their homes (60%). At the same time 27% of the French claim to have accessed the Internet at work as well. In 2009 the main purposes of the Internet in France are: communication (60%),

e-banking (40%), tourist information (37%), watching TV shows and listening to the radio online (25%) and reading of newspapers and magazines (24%). Analysis of the activities related to the Internet in the past three years shows an increase of all purposes of the Internet, particularly of those in the domain of getting information and cultural services, and consequently France has reached today the European

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<sup>11</sup> Dutton, W.H., Helsper, E.J., Gerber, M.M.: *The Internet in Britain:2009*, Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, 2009., p. 24.



average. In 2009 Internet shopping concerns 37% of European citizens which means that a significant increase in this domain has been noticed in the past three years. Internet shopping in France has shown an exceptionally strong increase compared to other European Union countries, and French consumers are among the most active ones. In other words 45% of the French shop online, which ranks France firmly above the European average. French consumers prefer making travel reservations and buying computer programs, video games, cultural products such as books, magazines, films, music, educational materials and ticket reservation.<sup>12</sup>

### *Croatia*

Central Office for E-Croatia is charged with improving the level of consciousness and implementing the process of informatization of Croatian society as a whole. The programme E-Croatia was launched in 2003 and defined as one of the priorities of the Croatian government. Likewise, in 2006 the programme named *Strategy of developing broadband Internet* was launched with the aim to accelerate and to promote the development of broadband Internet. Since 2007 surveys have been conducted every year within the guidelines of Eurostat, to determine the usage of information and communication technologies. It provides information on computer and information competencies of the people of Croatia and on the purposes for which they use the Internet. The following data have been extracted from the 2009 survey, conducted by GfK- *Centar za istraživanje tržišta* and the 2009 survey conducted by *Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske*.

In Croatia 50% of households have Internet access. Compared to the previous year an increase of 5% in Internet access has been noticed. 39% of Croatian households have broadband. An increase of 12% in broadband access has been noticed compared to the previous year.<sup>13</sup> The most frequently named access locations for the Internet are:

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<sup>12</sup> Deroin, V.: *Diffusion et utilisation des TIC en France et en Europe en 2009*, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication - Département des études, de la prospective et des statistiques, Paris, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, no.:2.1.9.,

URL: [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2009/2-1-9\\_1h2009.htm](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2009/2-1-9_1h2009.htm) (17.10.2010.)

home (47%), work (16%) and school or university (6%).<sup>14</sup> The Internet in Croatia is the most frequently used for the following purposes: e-mail (77%), reading of newspapers and magazines (76%), information about products and services (70%). There is an increasing number of individuals who use the Internet for the purpose of education and training (56%) or for health information (55%). Relatively small percentage of individuals who used the Internet for the purposes of tourist services (38%) and e-banking (35%) shows that there is still some space for improvement in these areas. The results of the survey demonstrate that Internet shopping is not yet fully developed in Croatia. Only 10% of the respondents have bought goods or services by the Internet. However, a slight increase of 3% can be noticed compared to the previous year. The habits of the buyers are very similar to those of the previous year. That means that books, magazines and clothes still represent the most frequently bought items.

The reasons the respondents stated against Internet shopping are lack of need, lack of face-to-face contact, safety concerns and lack of knowledge about Internet shopping.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Users of the Internet in the United Kingdom<sup>16</sup>, France<sup>17</sup> and Croatia<sup>18</sup>***

Very similar tendencies were noticed considering user characteristics in all three states.

#### Users by age

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<sup>14</sup> GfK Croatia: Gdje smo danas u informatičkoj pismenosti, 2010., URL: [http://www.gfk.com/gfkcroatia/htdocs/public\\_relations/press/press\\_articles/005364/index.hr.html](http://www.gfk.com/gfkcroatia/htdocs/public_relations/press/press_articles/005364/index.hr.html) (19.10.2010.)

<sup>15</sup> Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, no.:2.1.9., URL: [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2009/2-1-9\\_1h2009.htm](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2009/2-1-9_1h2009.htm) (17.10.2010.)

<sup>16</sup> Dutton, W.H., Helsper, E.J., Gerber, M.M.: *The Internet in Britain:2009*, Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, 2009., p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Berret, P.: *Diffusion et utilisation des TIC en France et en Europe*, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication - Département des études, de la prospective et des statistiques, Paris, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, no.:2.1.9., URL: [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2009/2-1-9\\_1h2009.htm](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2009/2-1-9_1h2009.htm) (17.10.2010.)

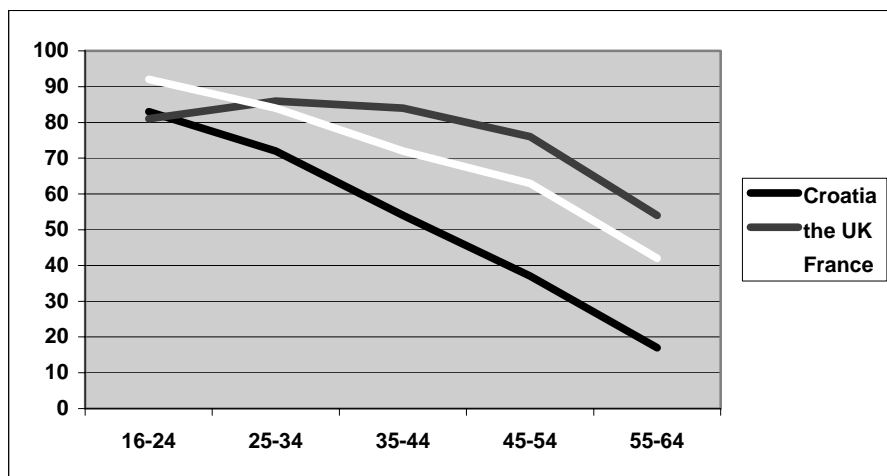


Chart 1

The chart 1 represents users of the Internet by age. It is obvious that younger people are the most likely to use the Internet, and older people are the least likely to use it. In other words the number of users decreases with age. In the past the difference by gender used to be more important (that means that the percentage of men was higher). That discrepancy is not so prominent any more and the percentage of women users is only insignificantly lower. In the United Kingdom 71% of men and 68% of women used the Internet. In France the percentages of men and women using the Internet are almost identical. In Croatia, 47% of respondents were men and 53% women. However, the percentage of Internet users is reverse: 51% of men and 49% of women used the Internet. In the United Kingdom and France as far as education is concerned the most numerous Internet users are those with a higher education diploma, followed by secondary school graduates and by those who only have basic education.

However, in Croatia the highest percentage of Internet users are individuals who have graduated from four year secondary schools. Relatively small percentage of Internet users with higher education diploma in Croatia can be explained by their small number among all respondents (chart 2).

#### Users by education in Croatia

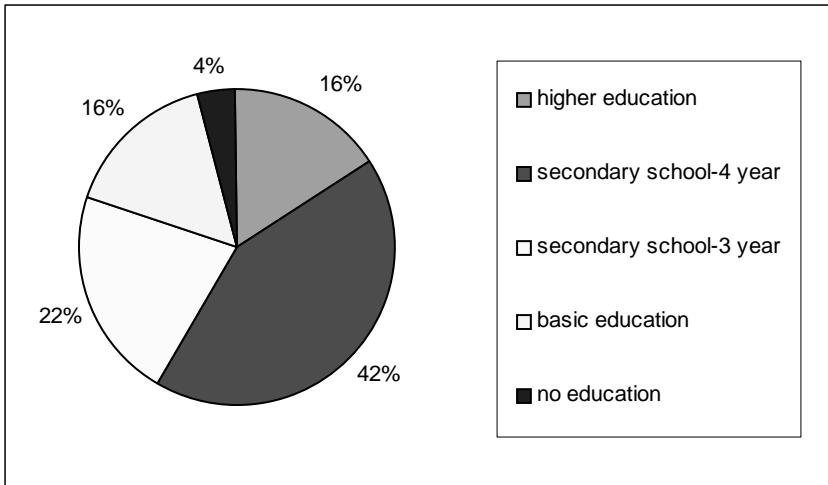


Chart 2

### ***Changes in Internet access and broadband connections by households in the United Kingdom, France and Croatia, 2008-2009<sup>19</sup>***

Comparative presentation of Internet access and broadband connections in the three states gives us a better insight into the changes and tendencies that were going on from 2008 to 2009. As far as Internet access is concerned France showed stability, while increasing tendencies were noticed in the United Kingdom and Croatia (chart 3).

Internet access (%)

<sup>19</sup> Lööf, A., Seybert, H.: Internet usage in 2009 - Households and Individuals, Eurostat, 2009., URL: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-QA-09-046/EN/KS-QA-09-046-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-QA-09-046/EN/KS-QA-09-046-EN.PDF), (24.10.2010.)

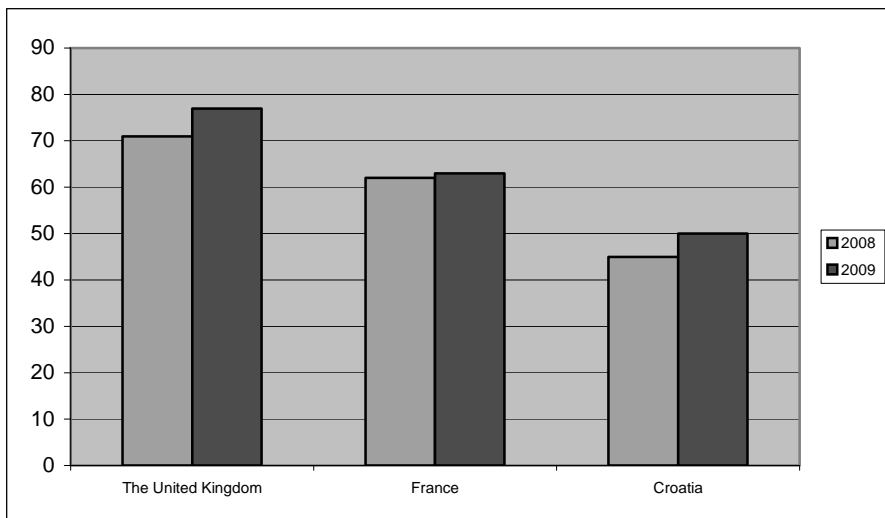


Chart 3

As far as broadband connections are concerned, France is stable again, the United Kingdom showed a slight increase and a more significant increase of 12% was noticed in Croatia (chart 4).

#### Broadband connections (%)

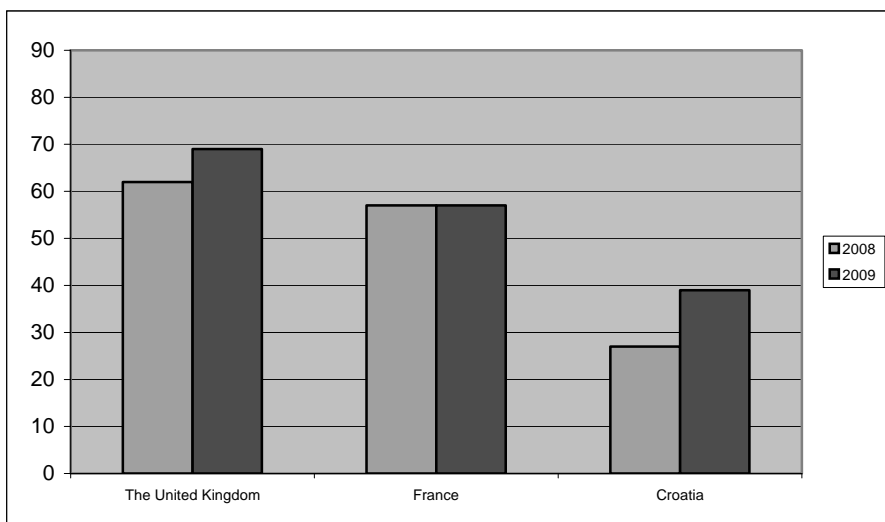


Chart 4

## Conclusion

On European level there is a pronounced disparity among the states of the European Union as far as Internet diffusion and use in the households are concerned and consequently they have adopted different pace of progress. By combining the Eurostat division and the results of the surveys conducted in Croatia, it is concluded that the position of Croatia would be among the states of the third group, and they are Italy, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland and Latvia. The results of the survey demonstrate that the households in Croatia, as far as Internet diffusion and use are concerned, are positioned below the European average, which means that there is still a lot of space for improvement. At the same time strong progressive initiatives exist in Croatia especially in the domain of broadband Internet access.

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