In recent years, just like all the other academic disciplines in Croatia, the discipline of sociology has faced the requirements of the so-called Bologna Process, a wide-ranging educational reform supported by the European Commission, seen by its opponents as a clear sign of the introduction of neo-liberal principles into contemporary European educational and research practices.

The opposition to the Bologna Process is equally or even more pronounced in the countries outside of the European Union, practically forced to implement the reform if they plan membership in the Union. One of these countries is Croatia, which is at present a candidate country but which has joined the Bologna Process already in 2001, and has implemented a thorough curricular reform along the Bologna lines in the academic year 2004/2005.

This curricular reform has confronted the sociological community in Croatia with two sets of controversial issues. One is related to the concrete task of adapting the curricula in such a way that they meet the official reform guidelines yet continue to develop critical thinking. The other set of issues is related to a wider question of the visibility of sociology as a discipline in public life.

This paper can be seen as an attempt to grapple with the questions of autonomy, critical thought and the public role of sociology that the Bologna educational reform has brought to a head, but that have been waiting to be tackled during almost two decades of the period of post-socialist transition. In order to provide some possible answers to these questions, the history of the discipline in the socialist period is revisited and reconsidered, its present-day disciplinary profile and institutional capacity analyzed, and some potentially fruitful directions of its future development sketched.

In this latter context, the role of theoretical sociology is seen as crucial, since it presupposes reflexivity necessary to a discipline that can still be seen as possessing a "first modernity" disciplinary structure although it is increasingly facing social, cultural, and institutional contexts typical of "second modernity".