

## **International project “OPEN WINDOWS OF EUROPE” - Zagreb and Udine**

In this school year, 2024/2025, XVI. gimnazija joined the international project - “Open Windows of Europe” - which has been held for the ninth year in organisation of the Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

The work in the project includes two parts, the arrival of Italian students in March to XVI. gimnazija and a week-long stay in the families of Croatian students and the departure of our students for seven days at the end of May to the families of Italian students in Udine. The students went on a tour and they were learning about the Friuli Venezia Giulia region with other Italian and foreign schools. In the end, they took part in the final event of the project, where all participants held their presentations.

The topic of the “Open Windows of Europe” project was learning about our schools, cities, regions and countries, as well as crossing borders and creating European citizens. Through group activities, discussions and multimedia productions, the students reflected on common European values and cultural differences in countries.

Three students from the Liceo Scientifico Marinelli in Udine, Emma, Cindy, and Caterina, were in our school from 24 to 30 March, and three of our students who hosted them, Mara, Ilaria and Hana from the third grade, stayed in Udine from 19 to 25 May. The project ended with a joint presentation of the “Open Windows of Europe” project at the Palazzo Antonina, where the Friuli Foundation is located. In addition to the students from our school, the project also involved students from the Italian School in Rijeka, together with students from Austria, Slovenia, Spain, France and Albania, and students from several schools in Italy as hosts. Of the ten foreign schools participating in the project, this year the new partner schools were: the International School of Marratxí (Spain), the Lycée Lavoisier from Auchel (France), and XVI. gimnazija from Zagreb (Croatia).

From our part, the project was coordinated by teacher Mirela Hrubí, who, together with teacher Jasna Ferencak, organized the workshops and activities of the project in Zagreb. During the workshops at the school, the students discussed and analyzed the similarities and differences between our two schools, cities, regions and countries, they researched the priorities of the EU and critically reflected on the challenges we face. The Italian students learned about our educational system and the cultural, historical and geographical specificities of Croatia and Zagreb. The students of the XVI. Gymnasium took the Italian students on a tour of the city, visited the Museum of Illusions together, and tasted local cuisine. Teacher Jasna Ferencak accompanied the students on a full-day trip to the Plitvice Lakes National Park, and then in May, she accompanied the students to Italy and participated in numerous project activities in Udine.

In Udine, our students continued working on the project and gave a presentation about our school, city, and country. They visited Venice, Gorizia, and Palmanova. They gained insight into the Italian education system and learned a lot about the culture, history, and other features and specificities of, not only the Italian region but also of other schools and countries participating in the project.

The students wrote the following review about this positive experience:

“Thanks to the “Open Windows of Europe” project, we had the opportunity to travel to Italy and visit the beautiful city of Udine. The trip was interesting and enriching, not only because of the new places we saw, but also because of the experiences we gained. During our stay in Udine, we visited with We also visited Gorizia, Palmanova and Venice. Each city had its own special atmosphere. In Gorizia, we felt the fusion of Italian and Slovenian culture because we visited their border. Palmanova delighted

us with its unusual shape – the city is built like a star. Venice left us breathless, the narrow streets and the magic of the canals were something we will remember for a long time. In addition to sightseeing, we also got to know Italian culture and everyday life. We tasted their traditional food and visited their school. There, we socialized with Italian students and had the opportunity to see what their classes are like. This trip was more than just an ordinary excursion. We met new people, languages, cultures, and broadened our horizons. We are very grateful for the opportunity this exciting and valuable project gave us.”

We hope to participate again in the international project "Open Windows of Europe" next year, with other students and teachers, and continue to open the windows of our school towards other cultures and common European values.

Jasna Ferenčak and Mirela Hrubí, teachers