

On September 24-25, 2018, NEPC hosted the group of primary school teachers and school support staff from Kosovo, who visited Croatia within the framework of the *Council of Europe – Office in Pristina* project “Fostering a Democratic School Culture and Diversity in Schools”.

After the introductory lecture on how the Croatian education system works, by the NEPC Executive Director, Lana Jurko, first day of the visit, the group visited Elementary school *Ivan Meštrović* in the Zagreb neighbourhood of Staglišće - Jarun. Same afternoon, another school and two NGOs had the chance to present their current projects and overall mission and vision, relating to the broader topic of democratization in schools: Marija Roth, psychologist from the Ivan Supek High School in Zagreb talked about encouraging interculturalism through the teaching process; Tamara Banjeglav and Eli Pijaca Plavšić presented their respective organizations, Open Academy Step by Step and The Forum for Freedom in Education (FFE), both prominent CSOs and NEPC members, working on topics of education and education policies in Croatia.

Next day, the group visited two high schools in the eastern part of Croatia, in the town of Slavonski Brod – one vocational and the other comprehensive, *Tehnička škola Slavonski Brod* and *Gimnazija Matija Mesić*. All three schools visited during the study visit are active in the FFE schools’ network.

In *Tehnička škola*, study visit participants found out about the many EU financed projects the school has taken part in, and ambitious plans to renovate a part of the building which will serve accommodation purposes, for tech and engineering labs planned out for the imminent future in the upcoming EU projects. School principal, Vikica Lukić, and other school staff talked about what it meant for them to become the regional center for competencies, how to best benefit from self-evaluation processes, and what it means for a tech-vocational school like theirs to encourage their students to take part in the civic education activities and projects. Many school volunteering projects were presented by one of the school’s 617 students.

*Gimnazija Matija Mesić* boasts a slightly larger number of students this year – 679, and their school and its extra-curricular activities were presented by the school pedagogue, Lucija Brnić, Sociology and English teachers as well. This school faces another challenge – how to adapt to the dwindling numbers of students, a process reflecting the Slavonski Brod county emigration to the West statistics.

Whatever happens in the student’s environment, the study trip showed how these schools remain havens of stability as well as help build a pro-active stance, something that stays with the person forever.