
CHALLENGE YOURSELF AND JOIN “BRIDGE IT!” IN 2016

We like your ideas!



What is Bridge it?!

Bridge it! is an empowerment programme for young people from Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and the North-West of Russia. It connects people and raises their interest in the Baltic region. The program is based on non-formal educational methods, stimulating the participants to develop critical thinking, diversity awareness and giving them impulses for civic involvement and a space for trying out own initiatives. In the heart of Bridge It! are democratic values that live in our communication, activities and social changes we support.

The Programme is made exactly for you, if you are...:

- At the age from 18 to 28 years old
- Coming from Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania or the North-West of Russia
- Able to communicate in English (basic knowledge for communication)
- Interested in civic initiatives (student councils, NGOs, social activities, volunteering, etc.)
- Maybe having some interesting social project ideas already
- Caring about your local communities and enjoying discussions about social topics
- Willing to challenge yourself
- Fully available to attend all the programme activities



For the bases of our work this year we have chosen the concept developed by Benedict Anderson, professor of international studies. He used the term **Imagined Communities** for exploring nationalism based on a belief that any community so large that its members do not know each other on a face-to-face basis must be imagined to some degree.

Bridge It! is going to look at this topic a little wider, challenging different aspects of our “imagined” community lives. More concrete for this year - our identities in the society and our attitudes towards living “green”.

The Programme Year of “Bridge It!”

Applying for the “Bridge It!” Programme means sticking with it for around 6 months. This period is full of activities, thoughts, exciting ideas, and interesting people. Roughly, it consists of 4 parts - introduction seminar, project meeting, project work, and evaluation seminar.

➤ Step 1: Inspiration (Introduction seminar / July 2016)

Bridge It! starts with a one week long **introduction seminar** that has a specific topic. The main aim of it is to inspire others and get inspired. The seminar will consist of non-formal education methods, int. al., conversations, discussions, presentations in various forms, role games and practical workshops. What we appreciate the most at this stage is your thoughts and exchange with others. At the end of this week, you will develop a specific idea about a smaller or bigger project, devoted to solving of one specific social problem.

There are 2 introductory seminars planned this year. Unfortunately, you may participate only in one of them, so, before choosing think which topic is closer to your heart or sounds more interesting:

➤ **Imagined Communities - Green or Greed?** / 10 - 18 July 2016 / Karelia, Russia

‘Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed,’ said Mahatma Gandhi long time ago... but just think for a second how vibrant it sounds today!

If your heart feels this vibration and you are determined to turn our society to a greener side, our programme is the right place to be. Ecological lifestyle in the Baltic Sea Region is not an abstraction or a complicated concept. It is more about simple rules, which will help us to preserve our nature and beauty. And certainly, it is about you, as long as changes in the region start with your activities and social engagement.

We invite you to join the Bridge It! Programme at the Introduction seminar and elaborate on solutions to ecological problems in your local communities. Let's think and discuss together with the experts such issues as international ecological solidarity, garbage separation, participation of citizens in decision-making process on ecological issues, ways to deal with climate change both locally and globally, and lots of other interesting topics!

Do you consider that talking is boring? No worries about that! First of all, do not expect long lectures as our Programme is based on non-formal education methods. Second, we will contribute to the green lifestyle at the seminar place already by means of our activities. And - last but not least - keep in mind that one day the project ideas born at the introduction seminar will come true!

➤ **Imagined Communities - Us vs Others** / 10 - 18 July 2016 / Pelči, Latvia

People are supposed to belong to various groups and communities. Belonging means identification and shared values with other community members. But how do we know, to which communities we belong? Whom do we consider as “us” and who are the “others”? And when do the “others” become “us”?

We would like to look at what lies beyond community formation focusing on such “usual” and “taken for granted” communities as, for instance, nations. Have you ever thought about what makes you Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, or person of another nationality? How does one nationality differ from another? Do you have to identify yourself with a nation at all? And how belonging to other communities is influencing your identity?

Together we will look at social processes ongoing in our societies in the time of globalisation and migration. We will try to find answers to such questions, whether nations and other communities are only imagined or why differences between them sometimes are more powerful than common things like all being humans.

The Bridge It! Programme is about linking people together, creating connections, and overcoming prejudices towards others. By digging deeper into the construction of imagined communities, we will discover and encourage different ways of cooperation between nations and other communities. You will be guided into challenging your own identity formation as well as the perception of “others”.

➤ Step 2: Receiving tools

(Project seminar / 15 - 22 August 2016 / Tartu, Estonia)

Starting from this seminar participants of both Introduction seminars will work together. When the project idea is clear, you should find ways how to implement it. In the course of this seminar, you will get basic knowledge about project management: teamwork, budget, time management, PR and so on. This week will not make you a professional manager, but it will be enough to handle your planned project activities.

➤ Step 3: Implementing the ideas

(Project work / August - November 2016 / your local environment)

Now it's time to put your plans in action. During the next three months, you'll implement your project according to your own schedule.

During the implementation process each project team gets support from an experienced mentor, who can give advises about practical matters as well as emotional support. In this way, you'll never be left alone because we know how challenging it can be to implement a project.

➤ Step 4: Look back

(Evaluation seminar / 30 November - 5 December 2016 / Riga, Latvia)

Congratulations, at this stage you will have finished your project! In order to understand the real impact and success of your activities, it's important to evaluate them. Here you will discuss the problems and receive advice for the solutions, plan the future cooperation, and simply enjoy. It is a happy reunion and a start of new beginnings!

After the final seminar, the official program year is over but, we hope, nothing is over regarding your personal growth and new experiences. Although it's mostly up to you, we will also have some offers for future actions but...let's talk about it in 6 months! ☺

Conditions

Accommodation and food

Both Introduction seminars will be located in the countryside. Seminar in Latvia will take place in the premises of a boarding school but seminar in Russia - in a tourist camp. Participants will be accommodated in shared bedrooms (2-3 persons) with shared bathrooms. Wireless internet is available at both of the locations.

Participants will be provided with three meals daily.

Location of the Project and Evaluation seminar will be announced separately.



Finances

There is no participation fee. Costs of the accommodation, meals and materials will be covered by the programme.

Participants are expected to buy the tickets for traveling to and from the seminar place on their own. 50% of the travel costs will be reimbursed by the programme during the seminar or no later than 3 days after it.

In case the participant needs to pay for a visa, these costs will be reimbursed by 100%.

Sounds interesting?



Fill out our online application form!

<http://goo.gl/forms/EmyVDBY6kK>

Application deadline: 15 May 2016



www.bridgeit.eu



<http://bridgeitprogram.wordpress.com> (participants' blog)



<https://www.facebook.com/bridgeitprogram/>



<http://vk.com/bridgeit>



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Programme is run by *Orbīta* (LV), *Domus Dorpatensis Academy* (EE), *Немецко-Русский обмен* (RU), and *Theodor Heuss Colleg* (DE)



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