

BUILDING BRIDGES with special STRENGTHS!

The Danube River connects! That is what young people from Germany and Ukraine could experience to the fullest in the project "Let's Bridge". From the Black Forest to the Black Sea, eight young persons (18 – 25) travelled 3000 kilometers by van. By doing so, they built new friendships and bridges amongst each other and with other people they met along the way.



The 15 days of travelling with persons of different origin led to deep insights into the living conditions and perspectives of young people along the Danube River. While the first meeting at Frankfurt Airport was still a bit careful, strangers quickly turned into friends. The activities during the trip required a strong willingness for cooperation and commitment of each individual who contributed with their different talents and preferences to the project goals.

The group was able to make long-lasting experiences - not only in the group but also with the locals they met. Meeting young people as well as decision-makers from politics and academia provided interesting exchanges and great learning experiences. In each destination, opportunities and challenges of young people in the respective countries were discussed. In each

country, youth unemployment was strongly present. Whether in Wenzelbach, Regensburg, Passau, Vienna, Budapest, Backi Monostor, Belgrade, Svishov, Bucharest or Odessa - the project team has left deep traces, gained new insights and set positive impulses. The discussions with the local youth and decision-makers and among the group members themselves evolved mainly around the following topics: democracy, peace-building, remembrance culture, challenges of refugees and migration, political participation of the younger generation and youth unemployment, the advantages and disadvantages of EU-membership.

It is difficult to generalize or summarize the results of the conversations. They only gave minor insights into the different regions and cultures as well as the hopes and fears of the particular local population. One thing, however,

became clear: the youth of the Danube region needs more perspectives and opportunities to discover Europe and the Danube region. Access to intercultural exchange and job orientation can be two possibilities to broaden perspectives of the European youth. The motivated project group gained a greater sense of appreciation of their own opportunities and a better understanding of the responsibility to create opportunities for others.

The highlight of the trip was to reach the final destination, Odessa. A public event was organized together with the partner organization "Social Academy" from Kiev. Prof. Tsvitkov Olexandr from Kiev gave a presentation on the history of the Danube region, the part of Ukraine in the history of the Danube region and the commonalities of the various people who live along the Danube river.



Landing stage on the Danube at the Media Camp, Backi Monostor, Serbia

The various insights were documented daily via social media and, at the end of the journey, the group had created a blog, a Facebook page and eight video trailers. Because of the short but very positive experiences in the different encounters, all participants explained that they would surely return to discover the various regions along their journey with more time at their disposal.

Due to of the positive results of the tour, the newly created networks, as well as the obvious need for extracurricular youth work, there was no doubt that "Let's Bridge" had to continue. With the new Danube project called "Future Lab", Starkmacher e.V. aims to give a space to youth to think about the future of our societies and their possible contribution.

„I will never forget these different meetings and the people, because each visit led to new insights. And really, I had to think and reflect on them a lot. I am so proud of our team, because I know that with small steps we have achieved something great!"

Ruslana Bondarenko, Ukraine



The project is presented in interviews and social media activities.

INFO "Future Lab"

The project provides perspectives for a sustainable and future-oriented society and wants to strengthen young people in their orientation process. In three meetings, young people from all over the Danube region can exchange ideas and learn from each other in different workshops. This multinational platform enables them to overcome prejudices and to build new bridges as well as to find common areas of interest.

In the near future, the topics environment and sustainability are becoming increasingly relevant for our economies and society in general. Therefore, both aspects will be the main focus of the project. The young people will meet experts and visit innovative social projects in different field trips. In the "Future Lab", young people get the chance to gain access to career coaching and to develop their own ideas or projects (e.g. start-ups or communal social projects) that aim to make a difference in social initiatives and social enterprises.

The meetings require a participation fee of 100 €/person, (reduction possible in consultation with Starkmacher). Including travel fees, accommodation and food
The "Future Lab" takes place in:
21.-28/08/2017 in Croatia
28.10.-4/11/2017 in the Ukraine
03.-08/04/2018 in Mannheim (Germany)

The most ambitious participants of the first two events in Croatia und Ukraine will get the chance to participate in the final event in Mannheim for free.

For more information follow this link:
<http://starkmacher.eu/projekte/future-lab/>

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