

## **St. Petersburg Hub for Sustainable Water and Coastal Development**

Friends of the Baltic (St. Petersburg Non-Profit, Non-Governmental Environmental Organisation)  
12-101 Razvodnaya Street, Petergof, St. Petersburg, 198516, Russia  
Olga Senova, +7-921-9117986, [olga-senova@yandex.ru](mailto:olga-senova@yandex.ru)

**Friends of the Baltic** (FB) is a regional NGO, working since 1996 in environmental education/public information and the promotion of small-scale sustainable solutions that are accessible for everyone, thus empowering local environmental action. FB maintains a network of over 300 activists: teachers, active citizens, scientists and university staff, municipals, media, and also works internationally within the Coalition Clean Baltic, CAN (Climate Action network), INFORSE-Europe, Baltic Sea Challenge, international SPARE. Main directions of the work:

- Rivers and the Baltic Sea – River Watch (public river monitoring), promotion of sustainable river basin management, promotion of solutions to reduce the human impact on the river environment, and sustainable coastal development.
- Climate and Energy – SPARE (school project for the application of resources and energy) combines education for schoolchildren and mobilisation of kids and teachers to run practical projects for improving energy efficiency in schools; Climate Ambassador’s project, where we train volunteers (regardless of age or education) to talk to various target groups about climate change and solutions.
- Environmental solutions/lifestyle - Ecosupport project for schools, where “eco-advisors” (teachers and/or supply managers) are trained to choose environmentally friendly options for their schools (energy, resources, water, waste, public procurements).
- We run Ecocentrum, a public information/demonstration centre for green solutions, established in 2007 in cooperation with Geteborg Ekocentrum.

**Goal and aims of the HUB:** Since 1994 FB has de-facto played the role of the proto-hub on the local level, bringing together stakeholders in order to protect local rivers and streams, reduce the human impact on the Gulf of Finland/Baltic Sea. The goal is to establish the St. Petersburg hub on sustainable water and coastal development on the basis of the Ecocentrum public information and demonstration centre. The hub aims to boost our joint activities and increase the capacity of our members and provide them with new materials and ideas for growth. In the short term the hub supports and strengthens the ongoing cooperation and enables collaboration between all the parties involved, in the long term it will help us to steer water protection and coastal conservation policy and practice in our region to be more sustainable.

**Activities and achievements of the HUB:** The main activities of the hub are the following:

1. Communication to select and recruit participants of the hub, and disseminate information on the project results;
2. Seminar for the stakeholders to discuss the key challenges and possible solutions, to plan opportunities for collaboration and joint activities (18 May, 2016). It has been organised as a field trip and helped to kick-start the multi-stakeholder process almost from scratch, focusing on the introduction of different views on the coastal development of St. Petersburg, and was an important step in facilitating the virtually non-existent conversation in this area;
3. Training of River Watch leaders on the public water and coastal monitoring and public involvement in sustainable solutions. This training was organised for 20 participants on 4 June, 2016 and provided methodology/tools for summer investigations/expeditions and to enhance the capacity of RW teachers and improve their level of public monitoring activities. Also, it

gave a boost to the local network of public monitoring nodes and provided reinforcement to the network – in the form of new techniques and materials;

4. Seminar for educators (both school and NGO) on how to introduce sustainable development issues into their educational activities. This seminar was organised on 9 June, 2016 with the participation of Estonian and Finnish partners and experts - Russian scientists, and provided exchange of experience for teachers, find and discuss ways to incorporate SD issues into their work;
5. Produce printed materials that are a translation of the key principles of the BS region network for ESD, publication of the local hub experience.

As a result of these activities, a hub that provides a meeting place for stakeholders to collaborate and an information point with new materials to support the hub's activities, is established.

#### **Target groups of the HUB, structure and collaboration:**

- Educators (both school teachers and NGOs): school teachers who are already involved in RW activities (both teaching specific subjects as well as additional education), as well as educators from the Academy of Post-Diploma Pedagogical Education and fellow NGOs who work on similar topics;
- Scientists: Russian Hydrometeorological State University and St. Petersburg State University, who will help to improve publications, give advice and provide data;
- Municipal authorities: Sennoy Okrug Municipality (where Ecocentrum is located), and coastal municipalities Petergof and Lomonosov (south shore of the Gulf of Finland);
- Water related officials: Neva-ladoga basin department, City Committee for nature use, environmental protection and ecological safety, Russian federal nature inspection (Rosprirodnadzor of NW Russia);
- Journalists: St. Petersburg association of Environmental Journalists, the organisation's network of friendly media;
- Deputies of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly.

Activities have been organised in cooperation with other NGOs - ECOM helped us to develop and conduct the first stakeholder seminar and future participants were free to suggest parts of the itinerary. The River Watch training has been organised with help from Peterhof house of children's creativity (state institution) and Biotop (an NGO based at a state institution). The last seminar involved working tightly with our Finnish colleagues from the Finnish Institute of Environment and Vodokanal of St. Petersburg.

EXAMPLE: Although relationships between NGOs and state authorities are going through a tough phase in Russia these days, the project has given us a good and constructive platform to reach out to the authorities and indicate our willingness to collaborate. Representatives of the State have largely failed to show up for our activities, one of them showing up at the end and explicitly refusing to be registered as a participant. Even if the formalities make it difficult for state authorities to be active participants in public events like this, we saw the willingness and the ability of some to have a discussion, and it is a milestone of sorts, on which to build upon.

#### **Local, national, global and conceptual context of the HUB:**

The implemented activities focused mainly on the local hub in St. Petersburg, yet it worked from both local (regional) and international perspectives. An example of local work would be the River Watch training, which focused on strengthening the network of local public monitoring of water bodies. The final seminar showed a clear trans-boundary perspective.

Link to SDGs: 3. Good health and well-being; 4. Inclusive and equitable education; 5. Empowerment of women and girls; 6. Clean water and sanitation; 11. Sustainable cities and communities; 14. Conservation of marine resources; 17. Global partnership for SD.

Link to the BSRES DN strategy: The St. Petersburg Hub is the first Russian hub to join the network, thus it provides diversity and specific local experience for exchanging.

**Sustainability of the HUB:** Since the hub is intended to upgrade the existing network of stakeholders to the next level, the establishment of the hub is going to be a step towards strengthening collaboration on the local level, and the achieved results will be developed further. The hub activities have a wider impact; they will continue to work on the project issues after the project's end, the team will watch the environmental situation, look for solutions and interact with all of those who can improve the situation, provide information and education to the widest audience.

**Multiplication and publicity of the HUB's initiatives:** The results of the hub will be integrated with FB activities. FB is going to disseminate the hub method and results among partners in North-West Russia, via the all-Russian umbrella union (Russian Social Ecological Union), at the thematically related events of our partners in Estonia and Finland. For publicity reasons the established means of communications will be used: [www.baltfriends.ru](http://www.baltfriends.ru), Friends of the Baltic mailing list, Environmental North-West Line mailing list, FB VKontakte, VKontakte eco-communities, through the organisation's media contact base, by the municipal newspaper issued by Sennoy Okrug.