BRIDGE, Annual Project Progress Report

Building Research and Innovation in Identity, Diversity, and Governance in Europe

Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, Özyeğin University

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This annual report summarises project activities, achieved milestones, encountered challenges, and future plans. It is intended for dissemination on the BRIDGE website to ensure public access and transparency.

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1. Overview

BRIDGE's first year established a foundation for connecting European governance research with university teaching, civil society, and public dialogue. Activities focused on curriculum development, the Democracy Lab, training, institutional cooperation, and engagement with students and practitioners. A coordinated Horizon Europe application extended this work into a further funding initiative.

The year's principal results were the preparation of a five-course curriculum package, the Democracy Lab kick-off, delivery of professional and student workshops, four institutional MoUs, and submission of the ORDERS proposal. Public events complemented these activities by opening discussions of rights, inclusion, democracy, and global governance.

2. Project activities

During the reporting period, BRIDGE combined teaching, research, training, and public engagement to connect European governance debates with classroom learning and wider societal concerns. The activities below brought together students, researchers, civil-society organisations, and practitioners to explore democracy, inclusion, digital transformation, and sustainability.

2a. Teaching and curriculum development

The BRIDGE curriculum package brings together ECTS course description forms, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and syllabi for five undergraduate courses. The package identifies the ECTS forms as accepted by the Özyeğin University Senate. It provides a common framework for incorporating the Centre's themes into university education.

Code	Course
IR 424	Democracy in the Digital Age
IR 428	Digital Transformations and Society
IR 429	Diversity and Governance in Europe
IR 431	Triple Crisis of Europe: Migration, Technology, and Climate
IR 433	Citizenship in a Globalized World

Together, the courses address the relationship between democratic institutions, digital technologies, diversity, citizenship, migration, and climate. The package contains spring 2026 teaching schedules and syllabus drafts designated for the 2026–2027 academic year, supporting a phased approach to curriculum implementation.

2b. Professional training and knowledge exchange

BRIDGE contributed to the Social Sustainability Summer Camp organised by Özyeğin University's Sustainability Platform on 27–30 July 2026. Its two sessions connected university expertise with organisational practice and brought academic and private-sector perspectives into dialogue.

On 28 July, Alaz Han Canbolat delivered "Improving/Transforming Workplace Climate and Culture". On 29 July, Prof. Deniz Sert delivered "AI, Technology and Social Impact". Each session lasted two hours. The sessions addressed participation and institutional culture, alongside the opportunities, risks, and responsibilities associated with emerging technologies.

2c. Rights based education with civil society

On 11 August 2026, BRIDGE and the Hrant Dink Foundation organised "Rights-Based Living Workshop: Social Memory and Living Together" within IR 314 International Migration. Held at Özyeğin University from 13:40 to 16:30, the workshop brought together 20 verified participants.

The interactive activities addressed discrimination, social memory, pluralism, multiculturalism, empathy, justice, and coexistence. Integrating the Foundation's expertise into a university course connected academic discussions of migration and governance with rights-based educational practice.

2d. Democracy Lab

The Democracy Lab kick-off took place on 7 January 2026. The participant record identifies a research community working on migration governance, protests and autocratisation, polarisation, the radical right, geopolitics and democracy, global governance, and disinformation.

The kick-off roster includes seven researchers, three observers, and two assistants. The Lab provides an organisational basis for interdisciplinary exchange and the development of research, training, and policy-oriented work across these themes.

2e. Public engagement

On 10 December 2025, BRIDGE worked with CineOzu and OzU Diplomacy on an Invictus screening for Human Rights Day. Film and discussion offered students an accessible way to engage with leadership, reconciliation, and inclusion.

On 18 December 2025, Consul General of India Mijito Vinito spoke on "Bridging Democracies: India's Role in Global Governance". Evren Balta opened the event and Samarjit Ghosh moderated a discussion of diplomatic relations and international cooperation.

An event associated with the 4 April Mine Awareness observance examined landmines through Nurcan Baysal's Those Left Behind. Deniz Sert moderated contributions from Baysal, Duy-Der President Özlem Öztürk, and Sinem Paksoy, foregrounding victims' experiences and rights.

2f. Communication and visibility

The institutional BRIDGE website provides information about the Centre's aims, team, education, Democracy Lab, events, and partners. (https://www.ozyegin.edu.tr/en/jean-monnet-centre-excellence-bridge). It serves as the public channel for communicating activities and making project outputs accessible. Event posters and deliverable reports display BRIDGE and EU funding acknowledgements. The project also has a Linkedin page (https://www.linkedin.com/company/109989432/admin/dashboard/) and an Instagram account (https://www.instagram.com/bridge.ozu/).

Collaboration with student clubs, the Sustainability Platform, and the Hrant Dink Foundation extended the Centre's activities beyond individual courses and research meetings. These relationships linked the Centre to students, civil society, and professional audiences.

3. Achieved milestones

BRIDGE reached several milestones during its first year, establishing its teaching and research foundations and expanding institutional cooperation. These included the five-course curriculum package, the Democracy Lab launch, signed partnership agreements, and submission of a Horizon Europe proposal.

3a. Institutional partnerships

Four distinct institutional MoUs were signed in April–May 2026. They provide frameworks for joint research and project development, exchange of expertise, fieldwork, dissemination, and policy-oriented

outputs. The agreements create opportunities for cooperation extending beyond a single funding application.

Institution	Country	Signature dates
SKRIPTA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13 April 2026
Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, EDAM	Türkiye	27 April 2026
Institute for Integrated Transitions, IFIT	Spain	7 May 2026
ODI Europe	Belgium	12 May 2026

The four agreements represent numerical progress beyond the Part B benchmark of three institutional agreements per year and contribute towards the project-wide target of nine. Each institution is counted once, irrespective of the number of copies or versions of its agreement.

3b. Further research funding

Özyeğin University coordinated the ORDERS proposal submitted in September 2026 under Horizon Europe call HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-07. Submission correspondence dated 23–25 September records proposal number 101393430. Evaluation was pending at the annual reporting cut-off.

The application translated consortium development into a concrete research-funding submission and contributes to D5.3, which foresees additional grant applications at months 12, 24, and 36. The outcome reported for this year is the submission of the application.

3c. Summary of documented outputs

Work strand	Result by the annual cut-off
Teaching	Five-course curriculum package prepared.
Capacity building	Two BRIDGE training sessions delivered within the July Summer Camp.
Student workshop	Rights-based workshop delivered with 20 verified participants.
Research infrastructure	Democracy Lab kick-off held on 7 January 2026.
Partnerships	Four distinct institutional MoUs signed.
Further funding	ORDERS Horizon Europe proposal submitted.
Outreach	Human Rights Day screening, diplomatic dialogue, and landmine awareness discussion documented.

4. Encountered challenges

The first year highlighted practical challenges in collecting consistent evaluation data and coordinating BRIDGE's reporting schedule with Özyeğin University's course evaluation calendar. Course evaluations are conducted according to the University's academic timetable, so their results are not always available

by BRIDGE's reporting deadlines. This requires follow-up to incorporate evaluation findings as they become available.

4a. Measuring outcomes consistently

The first-year activities generated different forms of evaluation evidence. The Summer Camp report includes open-ended Day 3 Mentimeter responses. Participants referred to new perspectives on AI and practical questions about organisational AI-use procedures and social-impact planning. These responses indicate engagement and perceived relevance, but do not provide a comparable numerical satisfaction measure for each BRIDGE session.

For the Hrant Dink workshop, implementation and attendance are documented, while the activity report notes that a completed structured feedback dataset was not available when it was prepared. A feedback questionnaire was included for follow-up. This experience identifies a practical need for consistent evaluation immediately after future workshops.

4b. Consolidating participation and delivery records

Activities embedded in wider programmes require careful recording of BRIDGE's contribution. The Summer Camp combined multiple organisers and sessions, while the student workshop formed part of an existing course. Registration, attendance at individual sessions, and unique participants therefore need to be recorded separately. The same distinction applies to curriculum preparation and semester-by-semester course delivery.

A common monitoring record will help the Centre assess reach across courses, workshops, and public events without double counting repeat participants. It will also support clearer reporting of learning outcomes, audience diversity, and the progression from research preparation to completed outputs.

5. Future plans

The next reporting period will focus on building on the Centre's initial activities and partnerships while improving the consistency of monitoring and evaluation. Priorities follow the teaching, research, policy engagement, and dissemination commitments in the BRIDGE work plan.

5a. Teaching and training

Continue implementation of the five-course portfolio, update syllabi, and consolidate enrolment and course-evaluation records. Build on the rights-based student workshop and Summer Camp experience through further educational and professional training activities. Use a short common evaluation instrument alongside open-ended participant feedback.

5b. Research and partnerships

Develop the Democracy Lab's collaborative research agenda and advance the planned journal articles and policy briefs. Translate the signed MoUs into joint research, events, and policy exchange, and continue towards the target of nine institutional agreements. Follow the ORDERS evaluation and develop further funding applications.

5c. Public engagement and transparency

Continue public events and policy dialogue, strengthen student participation, and document the volunteer network. Maintain the website as a public record of the Centre's work, publish the annual report, and track website and social-media reach through dated audience data. The next annual review will report progress against these priorities.