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Mayor Vytautas Grubliauskas,

Municipality of Klaipėda

Brussels, 7 December 2018

**Dear Mayor Vytautas Grubliauskas,**

The European Youth Forum would like to sincerely congratulate Klaipėda on the city's selection as the European Youth Capital (EYC) 2021. The European Youth Forum would like to thank you for your support for this process, and commend the Klaipėda EYC team on an excellent application, which outlined ambitious but workable plans to boost youth participation and empower young people in your city. We were delighted to welcome the Klaipėda delegation to the announcement ceremony at the European Youth Forum's General Assembly in Novi Sad, Serbia, on November 21<sup>st</sup> 2018.

As you know, the European Youth Forum convenes an independent Jury to assess the applications for the EYC title each year. Representatives from the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the European Economic & Social Committee, the International IDEA, the Open Society Initiative for Europe, the European Movement International, the Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe, EURACTIV, ARUP, and the European Youth Forum composed this Jury, carefully analysing and debating the applications over the course of the year. It selected Klaipėda as the European Youth Capital 2021 at its final Jury meeting in Brussels on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Of all the applications considered, the Jury felt that Klaipėda was the strongest candidate for EYC 2021 title, selected from a shortlist of five outstanding finalist cities. The European Youth Forum would therefore like to express its warmest congratulations again to the City of Klaipėda on this excellent achievement!

**Next steps**

The European Youth Forum is very excited to begin the process of working together towards Klaipėda EYC year in 2021. In January, two vital years of preparation will start, and we will look to work closely with you and the supporting youth organisations through this period. One of the key elements of this cooperation will be reflecting on the final Klaipėda's application, and working on concrete plans for implementation and areas for improvement. As



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such, further to the detailed recommendations provided to the EYC team throughout the competition, the European Youth Forum would like to include the constructive feedback from the final Jury meeting below.

## **FEEDBACK FROM THE JURY**

The Jury was unanimous that this was an outstanding candidacy, presenting Klaipėda as a courageous applicant that is not afraid to state the problems that the city and its young people are currently facing and turning it into an opportunity, a youth movement.

The huge amount of time and effort going into the EYC 2021 push was always clear, and there was a real sense that the bid has already further galvanized partnerships between the youth sector, municipality and broader civil society – it seemed that this was a collaborative bid, built from the ground up with the idea of the change beyond 2021. The focus on strengthening the involvement of young people into defining their city and making it more youth friendly was highly commended, as well as a strong focus on the involvement of LGBTQI and ethnic groups, and young people with disabilities. A clear European focus, especially with the aim of reaching to Baltic Sea region and Kaliningrad was also praised, and developing this over the next two years will be crucial to the EYC's success.

One of the most impressive elements of the application was admitting that young people in the city are not enough involved into youth policy development processes and expressing a clear aim to change the situation in various means e.g. strengthening the Youth Affairs Council. Youth as stakeholders in the city will be an essential element of Klaipėda's EYC year – working to strengthen local youth structures and open up the core EYC team as much as possible, to ensure that every young person in the city has the opportunity to participate, through an amazing youth Ambassadors initiative and other forms. It will mean creating strong channels for youth input on the programme, and establishing a democratic EYC governance structure with young people at its heart. It will mean working with the local youth council as a key partner and representative body for young people. The Jury has no doubt that youth empowerment will be at the forefront for the EYC 2021. The Jury also praised the attempt to discover and use new forms of participation for young people to be more actively engaged in the decision-making processes. It would encourage all young people to find a way that suits them to express their views. However, the Jury noted that the title gives an opportunity to be more ambitious and Klaipėda could see how to engage young people not only in developing local youth policies but going beyond that: giving an opportunity for young people to have a say in the development of all areas of the city, would it be infrastructure, transport, cultural activities or sports, just to name a few, to really transform the city as the most youth friendly one in the region.



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The application was highly praised for the focus on inclusion of disadvantaged or marginalized groups. The Jury was happy to see that it is not only about accessibility in terms of infrastructure but truly including young people from disadvantaged backgrounds into the process: specifically targeting young LGBTQI, young people with disabilities, ethnic minorities etc. The point on the involvement of the LGBTQI community and bringing the topic to the spotlight of the application seemed particularly important and very potential for the Jury: the topic that is still a taboo in so many former USSR countries taken forward in Lithuania brings a lot of added value and can serve as an example. The European Youth Forum would highly encourage you not to lose that focus and it is ready to support the city and its young people in this endeavor. This will be a key aspect of the EYC year's overall inclusivity and will benefit the society of Klaipėda and European community at large. This aspect was not very well reflected in the proposed legacy of the Capital year, however, we believe that Klaipėda will change significantly if broader inclusivity of young people is developed throughout the activities and initiatives.

European dimension definitely was strengthened in the last application round: building the network across the Baltic Sea region, reflecting on major European processes throughout the proposed programme and planned activities, show a clear dedication to make it an important year not only for the young people in Klaipėda but also all across Europe. The European Youth Forum believes that cities can lead by example decision makers on different levels and Klaipėda now has a chance to bring in its professionalism and its contribution to the change.

The proposed management structure is also commendable and interesting (selecting the director through an open international competition). The most important thing is that the structure allows young people to lead the process; this is the true spirit of the European Youth Capital title! The Jury would encourage Klaipėda to keep firm on that track.

In terms of the Municipality's role, the most important aspect is that the EYC year is run in a supportive partnership with the city's youth organisations. Through a process of co-management, the municipality can provide the support needed for the EYC year to flourish, while delegating responsibility to young people and empowering them to take the lead. Striking this balance is always a challenge, but the Jury was convinced that Klaipėda is ready to meet it. Through the application, it's clear that there is an inspired youth movement ready to initiate change in your city, and this can only be a massive asset. During the Jury meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November Klaipėda managed to convince the Jury that the municipality is extremely supportive for the matter and will back up young people and their ideas for the EYC 2021 both politically and financially.



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We hope that you find this feedback useful, and look forward to working with you ahead of what we are sure will be a ground breaking EYC year. Our secretariat will be in contact in the New Year to work towards signing the Cooperation Agreement between the Youth Forum and the City of Klaipėda, which will structure our cooperation and further plan for 2021. I would also like to take this moment to again draw your attention to the legal terms and conditions governing the EYC title, which were signed and submitted by Klaipėda.

Should you have any questions relating to the Jury feedback, next steps or the EYC process in general, please contact Rita Jonusaite at the European Youth Forum Secretariat: [rita.jonusaite@youthforum.org](mailto:rita.jonusaite@youthforum.org)

We remain at your disposal to discuss the information above, and thank you for your application and attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anna Widegren".

**Anna Widegren**  
**Secretary-General**  
**European Youth Forum**