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To ensure the governance of the organisation, it is important to put emphasis on the diversity among Board members, both by representing the various Member Organisations, the knowledge they bring to the organisation but also in terms of skill-set and competencies to ensure that the individual Board members complement each other and come together to become a strong, strategic and effective Board.

For this reason we have divided the application form in different sections.

The first identifies the general information and availability of candidates.

The second one focuses on the individual candidates experience as well as vision for the organisation. Please ensure in this section that no answer is more than a page.

The third section looks at the different skills and competencies that the Board as a whole should have when they come together as one body. This is to ensure that the Board as a body has all the necessary skills and competencies through the various individuals that compose it.

This means that no one individual needs to have all the necessary elements, but by bringing together these 11 individuals the board as a whole would. Good governance starts with a well-rounded board, meaning that the Board skills composite, or Board as a whole, should ideally have strength in each of the areas. The last section is therefore a self-reflection exercise on these skills and competencies.



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FORM TO APPLY FOR THE POSITION OF

President of the European Youth Forum

This form must be filled in and sent back (in pdf and doc format) to the Secretariat (governance@youthforum.org), together with the nomination and acceptance letters by **Tuesday 06 October 2020 (23:59 CET)**.

This form will be published on the European Youth Forum website after the deadline for application and be accessible to Member Organisations and the general public.



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SECTION 1 - General information & availability

NAME	Silja
SURNAME	Markkula
MEMBER ORGANISATION	Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi AND World Organisation of the Scout Movement - European Scout Region (WOSM)
NOMINATING MEMBER ORGANISATION	Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi AND World Organisation of the Scout Movement - European Scout Region (WOSM)
DATE OF BIRTH	9 November 1992
GENDER	female
PRONOUN	she/her

Would you be able to attend at least 25 meetings per year (on average 2-3 days each) on weekends or weekdays – and be available on other occasions on an ad hoc basis?

YES

Are you fluent in English or French, with preferably knowledge of the other language?

YES, both English and French

Are you available to travel extensively?

YES



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SECTION 2 - Experience & vision

1. What is your proudest achievement in the youth space (either individually or as part of a team)? Why is it so meaningful to you?

Through my engagement in the youth sphere in the past several years, a lot of great moments and victories for young people in Europe have taken place. My proudest achievement is the great amount of attention that we have been able to draw to **youth rights**.

When I started in the International Committee of Allianssi, first as a vice-chairperson in 2014, later as a chairperson, youth rights and the rights-based approach were questioned by many, even within the youth field. The focus has now shifted to how we can ensure the realization of the human rights of young people, instead of debating whether or not young people as a group should have specific rights in the first place. This has not happened by itself, but over the years through hard work by both the YFJ and its Expert Groups on Youth Rights and Members of the Youth Forum that I chaired for several years.

Through my work I have contributed to and witnessed a stronger attention to youth rights both within the United Nations, Council of Europe and the European Union. When we started our work, less than 0.25 % of all the tens of thousands of recommendations lodged through the UN Universal Periodic Review concerned youth. This is the UN mechanism to evaluate countries on their human rights situation. It provides Member States with recommendations on how to improve in regards to human rights. Through our close work with Member Organisations - both National Youth Councils as well as INGYOs - we have succeeded in increasing that number. Member States and the OHCHR now openly recognise that youth, as a group, require stronger measures when it comes to our rights. This would not have happened without our advocacy efforts. Youth rights are at the heart of everything we do in the Youth Forum. Seeing institutions starting to recognise that we indeed do have rights and a particular need for their protection is the start of truly embracing our rights.

This is also the approach I would like to bring to all our work: joining forces and advocating jointly, across the Membership of the Youth Forum. By working together as the European youth organisations we can achieve big things.



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2. What do you consider as the most important skills in chairing meetings? Why are they important? How would you handle a conflict in a meeting on a contentious topic?

One of the most important skills in chairing meetings is ensuring organisational democracy and meaningful participation. I have announced my candidacy with a [vision](#) that we should practice what we preach. In leading the board I will strive to live up to the values of transparency, openness, democracy and quality participation that our platform argues for in all its work.

Great chairing of meetings requires ensuring that everyone is able to contribute to the discussion, and share a common understanding about where we are going. It requires great facilitation skills: the ability to drive meetings forward, instead of going in circles, structuring the discussion into meaningful exchanges as well as summarizing the discussion and decision. Great chairing also involves a strong role in planning the meetings together with the team, as well as ensuring the meeting outcomes are delivered, so as to create an impact.

The European Youth Forum is a platform of diverse views and a wide range of political opinions. Board meetings are no exception to this. The chair has a key role in ensuring the meeting happens in a safe space, that discussions, even when heated, happen in a respectful manner. Everybody needs to have the space for expressing their views, regardless of their opinion.

In the case of a conflict in a meeting on a contentious topic, the first step is identifying what really is at the core of the differing opinions. Understanding the different perspectives is key to understanding how to solve possible conflicts and bring the different voices together. Every member of the team has a responsibility in both making sure they express their views and remain respectful to one another even when in disagreement. The role of the chairperson is to facilitate the discussion so that we can move forward. Sometimes solutions are found through thorough conversations, sometimes through a vote. The importance here is to conduct the meeting by democratic means and ensure different perspectives are thoroughly discussed before moving forward.



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3. What quote best describes your approach to leadership? Why did you choose this? What must a leader be careful not to do?

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead

I know we can achieve big things as a platform. We already have, in the past 24 years of the European Youth Forum. The world would certainly be different if it was not for the great work of the YFJ and all our Member Organisations. Change comes through the work all of us do, and jointly our contributions build something bigger: better societies for the youth of Europe.

My leadership approach builds on **values**. For us to change the world, we must base all our actions based on the values that we share. It starts with us as individuals, with our organisations, our platform, and then the institutions and our societies. Recognising and abiding by our values is the recipe for a healthy and trusting working culture. Collaboration is built on trust, shared values and common goals.

As a leader it is important not to substitute one's own beliefs and interests for the beliefs of the platform. The board, and the president in particular, are the caretakers of the interests of the platform, ensuring that we advocate for the policies and views that have been agreed upon by the entire membership.

Furthermore, as a leader it is important to recognise that not everyone works the same way. People have different ways of contributing, and that is okay. As a leader it is important not to tie everyone to one way of working, but bring out the qualities in each person that allow them to contribute. This starts by recognising the skills and limitations of the people in the team. Thriving teams recognise expertise, build on people's strengths and allow people to grow and take responsibility.



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4. What is the best public speech you have ever seen/watched? Why? What is your personal experience in public speaking?

A speech that left an impact on me is one that I heard when I was 17 years old, at a national event of the Finnish scouts. The speech was delivered by the newly elected chairperson of the organisation. She reminded the delegates attending the event that everyone in the organisation, despite their huge differences of opinion and approaches, wanted the best for the organisation.

The same applies to the Youth Forum. Regardless of the different views and political opinions that we might have within our platform, and despite heated political debates at COMEMs or GAs, we all want the best for the Youth Forum and for young people in Europe. For the 17 year old me it was important to hear this, to remember that people with different views might have great reasons for their positions too. Looking back at that now, understanding other people's perspectives has become a core value for me both in my professional life as an anthropologist, but also as a leader in the European youth sector. Our work is to build collaboration and cooperation despite our differences, and bring the views of all the Member Organisations together to something that is more than the sum of its parts. After all, we are all working for the same goal. Trying to understand the other person's perspective is always worth the effort.

I have a wide range of experience in public speaking. During my current mandate in the Youth Forum board I have had public speaking engagements nearly every week since the beginning of the mandate. As Youth Forum president, I will be called to take part in a variety of high profile debates and discussions. It is important that the platform's views are represented effectively and with an impact.

Already before my board mandate, during my involvement as coordinator on Expert Group on Youth Rights and chairperson of the international committee of the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi, I took part in numerous high level speaking engagements. In recent years, I have spoken at a wide range of events, including being a panelist together with the former UN deputy Secretary General as well as the Vice President of the European Parliament. I would be delighted to represent the platform as the President of the European Youth Forum.



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5. What is your vision for the European Youth Forum?

My vision can be outlined in four aspects: our organisations, our planet, our generation, and our platform. For further details on my thoughts and vision, please reach out to me or have a look at my website: <https://www.siljayfj.com/> I am happy to discuss any of these aspects further with you!

Our Organisations. Fighting for youth organisations and safeguarding democracy in Europe. Democracies in Europe are crumbling. The situation was dire in some countries already before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the crisis definitely has not made it easier. I want the European Youth Forum to stand up for democracy, for youth organisations and for civil society at large. This starts by defending organisations that are facing threats from their governments or institutions, by ensuring sustainable sources of funding for youth organisations, as well as working for meaningful youth participation in all decision-making processes.

Our Planet. Amplifying the voices for a sustainable Europe. The Youth Forum must step up its critical work on all areas of sustainability: the climate crisis alongside social and financial sustainability. The climate crisis is the biggest threat of our generation. We must ensure sustainability as a cross-cutting theme in all our advocacy efforts, as well as support collaboration between member organisations where needed, to amplify efforts to fight the climate crisis.

Our Generation. Building a Europe where the rights of young people are realised. Young people have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus crisis. In light of this, ensuring young people's rights is more crucial than ever before. The European Youth Forum must take a strong stance in ensuring youth are not forgotten in the debates of how to rebuild Europe. This means working to ensure young people have access to social rights, quality employment and fair working conditions. Furthermore, we must safeguard funding for youth work, volunteering and mobility.

Our Platform. A collaborative Youth Forum. I want a collaborative Youth Forum that brings together the community of youth organisations from across Europe, a platform that allows and fosters policy debates, cooperation and joint advocacy efforts to ensure the rights of all young people. This starts by reshaping and rethinking our working practices, organisational structures, policy-making processes, and by increasing transparency. For us to succeed, we must practice what we preach, and ensure that the platform reflects our common values throughout our work.



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SECTION 3 - Self-assessment

This section looks at the different skills and competencies that the Board as a whole should have when they come together as one body. This is to ensure that the Board as a body has all the necessary skills and competencies through the various individuals that compose it.

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How to fill it in?

7 competencies are presented and explained in the matrix below. Each candidate is invited to self-assess their competencies by rating from **1 to 5**, meaning:

- 1 - Expert**
- 2- Experienced**
- 3 - Ok**
- 4 - Less experienced**
- 5 - No experience**

The candidate can provide further explanation if needed in the last column.

Competencies	Explanation	Why	Self-assessment	Short justification of your response
Leadership	<i>Ability to provide vision to the organisation and to lead by example.</i>	The Board will have to lead the conversation to develop the next Strategic Priorities.	1 - expert	My leadership skills have been developed through my involvement with youth organisations since I was 11 years old. I have initiated and led a wide range of projects and organisations, in multicultural settings, between organisations from across Europe as well as Africa and Asia. I have shown a strong commitment in all these activities to bring



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				<p>everyone on board and ensure the success of the projects.</p> <p>Before my mandate as a board member in the Youth Forum, I was responsible for leading the international advocacy of the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi. As the coordinator of the YFJ Expert Group on Youth Rights I led the advocacy efforts of the group ensuring stronger involvement of MOs in human rights mechanisms.</p>
Governance	<p><i>Understanding of the principles of good governance, the organisation's structure and functioning & the distinction between the roles of the Board, Management and Secretariat.</i></p>	<p>The Board will need to ensure oversight of the work of the different bodies of the organisation (CBMA, FCC, Secretariat etc.)</p>	<p>1 - expert</p>	<p>I have been one of the board members responsible for the governance review of the YFJ during my current mandate in the board. This is something I was part of initiating, in order to look beyond simply the minimum requirements of changes to be made to be in compliance with Belgian legislation, but truly reflecting how our platform could better function to serve its purpose.</p> <p>Through my involvement in various boards, I have strong skills in strategic thinking and organisational development, which are key aspects needed in the leadership of the Youth Forum.</p>
External representation	<p><i>Ability to represent the organisation and bring key messages to relevant events and meetings.</i></p>	<p>The Board is the public face of the organisation. Board members are invited to attend and represent the organisation at numerous events and meetings.</p>	<p>1 - expert</p>	<p>I have a wide range of experience in external representation from a variety of high level events, panels, conferences, meetings as well as in informal settings.</p> <p>As a board member of the European Youth Forum, external representation has been a big part of my current work in the board. Before my current YFJ mandate, I have also ensured external representation of the Guides and Scouts of Finland, as well as led the international advocacy team of the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi.</p> <p>External representation requires both knowing the policies of our platform and</p>



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				having the skills to present those views in a suitable format depending on the context, as well as debate and argue for the perspectives of the platform.
Financial management	<i>Ability to interpret financial documents and trends to assess financial health of an organisation.</i>	The Board is financially and legally responsible for the organisation and has oversight of the finances.	2 - experienced	<p>I am very familiar with the Youth Forum finances and state of affairs after this mandate and our board work. EACEA managing the funds has caused regular challenges and delays for the YFJ, which I hope we will overcome.</p> <p>Previously, as the board member of the Finnish Association for International Affairs I was responsible for fundraising for the organisation.</p>
Policy & Advocacy	<i>Ability to provide strategic direction to the development of the organisation's policy positions and advocacy actions.</i>	The Board has to provide direction to the development of policy positions (policy papers, resolutions, positions etc.) based on the Work Plan and Strategic Priorities, adopted by the Member Organisations	1 - expert	<p>Policy development is an essential part of the work I have been involved with both within the board as well as during my time as an external representative of Allianssi and the Guides and Scouts of Finland. It requires a deep knowledge of the youth field, the realities of Member Organisations as well as a skill to discuss and find consensus with others .</p> <p>In the YFJ board I was part of the team drafting the current Strategic Plan, and have contributed to the policy papers developed during our mandate. I have also seen other kinds of policy development processes through my involvement in other organisations, including world level decision-making of WOSM, at three World Scout Conferences that bring together representatives from all across the globe to find joint solutions.</p>
Team work	<i>Ability to work in a constructive manner within teams and with different people bodies of the organisation.</i>	The Board is made of 11 volunteers and has to interact with various other actors (other Board members,	1 - expert	<p>As a team member I always try to understand the perspectives of other people in the group. Mediating between different views and trying to find consensus comes very naturally to me as a person.</p> <p>My approach to team work is similar to the approach I have to leadership:</p>



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		Management, Secretariat, working structures, Member Organisations etc.)		building my actions through my values, and trying to understand the values of others. Setting common objectives and building on each team member's strengths and skills is the key to success.
Members & Stakeholders relations	<i>Ability to engage with a wide range of actors with different interests.</i>	The Board is the main interlocutor of the organisation and the main contact point for Member Organisations. It also has to engage with various stakeholders (institutions, partners, media etc.).	1 expert -	<p>I am familiar with both pillars of the Youth Forum, and have both an INGYO and NYC background. Furthermore, I have worked closely with the membership throughout my current board mandate.</p> <p>In regard to external stakeholders, I have worked with various institutions both as a volunteer and in my professional life. I am familiar both with EU, UN and Council of Europe contexts when it comes to youth policy.</p> <p>Building partnerships with other stakeholders is key to succeeding in our work for youth rights. During this board mandate we have developed partnership principles for the YFJ. This work will continue in the upcoming mandate to ensure we have strong allies to work with.</p>