



PRESS RELEASE

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Mayors call on city leaders – prioritise youth participation !

Mayors and city representatives of the European Youth Capitals (EYCs) have issued a call for local leaders across Europe to join them in prioritising youth participation. The network of cities issued the call at the inaugural #YouthUp Gala, the biggest gathering of European young leaders, hosted tonight (April 20th) by the European Youth Forum and the Committee of Regions in Brussels.

During the ceremony, city leaders from 9 European countries signed a pledge marking youth participation as a key priority for their cities, and committed to investing in local projects for young people. They called on cities across Europe to join them in making this push, and follow initiatives run throughout the European Youth Capitals: participatory budgeting schemes, civic education, strengthened youth council, increased resources for youth cultural and creative spaces, and a clear role for young people in city governance.

Following the Rome Summit marking the 60th anniversary of the European Union, these cities joined the European Youth Forum in insisting that youth must be included in debates on the future of Europe. They pledge to lead this process at the local level - to initiate new, lasting projects to give young voices a say in this debate. The pledge was signed by Torino (IT), Braga (PT), Maribor (SI), Thessaloniki (GR), Cluj-Napoca (RO), Varna (BG), Cascais (PT) and Novi Sad (RS) on 20th April 2017, a coalition of cities that will work together as a Network and with the European Youth Forum to develop and roll out these initiatives.

The #YouthUp Gala marked the start of the European Youth Forum's Council of Members which continues until Saturday 22nd April, during which delegates from over 100 youth organisations will debate and adopt resolutions on various topics.

Luis Alvarado, President of the European Youth Forum:

“Since 2009, the European Youth Capital project has brought through a network of cities that are ready to invest in young people and make youth participation a priority. We’ve seen in these cities what can happen if Mayors are brave enough to hand the reins over to young people and empower them to lead and initiate change. We’re delighted that they’re committing tonight to bring the future of Europe discussions local, and to ensure their city’s young people have a say in these debates. We’ll be working with them every step of the way to make sure it happens.”

Mr. Yiannis Boutaris, Mayor of Thessaloniki:

“During the European Youth Capital 2014 we gathered tremendous experience for the development of a local youth strategy. All this experience leads us today in participating actively in the structured dialogue, the new European youth policies and all the new initiatives for the future actions regarding the young people of Greece and Europe. We invest in Youth and the Municipality is giving

back to the civic society the trust that was given to us. We take great pleasure and pride in cooperating with the youth organizations of the city, activating a significant network of young people and supporting their active participation.”

Mr. Emil Boc, Mayor of Cluj-Napoca

“Cluj-Napoca's development has youth at its core. We are an academic city, with 11 universities that drive our community and thus, we strive to offer young people a city in which they can have the best quality of life in România. This is why we took the challenge to be 2015's European Youth Capital, to be part of creating a youth friendly city label or having a special youth chapter in the city's development strategy. What we do today with the involvement of young people will stay at the core of our city's long-term future. We believe that all our work is valid if we do it not just for young people, but together with them.”

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About the European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. Independent, democratic, youth-led, it represents over 100 National Youth Councils and international youth organisations from across the continent. The Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives, by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations towards the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. For more information, visit www.youthforum.org

About the European Youth Capital

The 'European Youth Capital title is an initiative of the European Youth Forum and endorsed by the Congress of Local and Regional authorities of the Council of Europe. The title is awarded to a European city for the period of one year, during which it is given the chance to showcase, through a multi-faceted programme, its youth-related cultural, social, political and economic life and development and seeks to present a role model for the further development of youth policies in other Europe.

Read the pledge signed by the mayors and city representatives of the European Youth Capital:

“We, the undersigned, as representatives of the European Youth Capitals, pledge to initiate a new, innovative, lasting project to better engage young voices in our cities before the end of 2017. We pledge to ensure that young people have real opportunities to debate and build the future of Europe, and pledge to invest in youth. We pledge to work together as a Network, and with the European Youth Forum, to share and develop these ideas. We call on city leaders across Europe to join us – to hear this call and help us #YouthUp Europe!”