



## YOUNG LEADERS FORUM

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### SUMMARY

The Young Leaders Forum (YLF), in partnership with the Institute of Democratic Politics (IDP) the Atlantic Council of the United States (ACUS), the World Youth Movement for Democracy (WYMD), and the European Institute for Democracy (EID, Poland) ensuring the continuity of the activities started in Vilnius and Krakow in 2010 and achievement of long-term goals set in “Vilnius Declaration”, organized Youth Forum “Young Leaders in Democracy Promotion Process: Challenges and Possibilities” (meeting of the youth dimension of the Community of Democracies, CoD) on June 29-30 in Vilnius prior to the VI Ministerial Conference of the CoD on July 1. The two-day youth event included discussions, workshops, debates and meetings with well-known democratic leaders for about 70 young activists (representatives of civil society, particularly NGOs and independent media) and young diplomats from around the world. The young delegates also attended the official ministerial on July 1. Delegates from the youth meeting adopted CoD Youth Action Plan for Democracy, which was presented to the governmental delegations at the Ministerial Conference.

### I BACKGROUND

Using NED assistance IDP has started the project “Strengthening the Youth Dimension of the Community of Democracies” in 2010, and **continues** it in 2011.

#### Events/Facts:

- **“Democracy Days”** in Vilnius; signing of the “Vilnius Declaration” with the intention to establish an official youth pillar within CoD and stating that youth should be represented and involved at each level of the CoD community; establishment of *YLF* (June, 2010; event organized by the *IDP*);
- **“Young Diplomats for Democracy” (YDD)** Symposium in Krakow (July, 2010, organized by *ACUS* and *EID*); joining “Vilnius Declaration” (Krakow Resolution); the CoD accepted the *YLF* as the youth pillar of the global coalition;
- Participation of youth representatives (*IDP*, *YLF*, *ACUS*) in **Parliamentary Forum in Washington DC** (September, 2010); PF adopted Washington declaration supporting the establishment of *YLF* as an official youth pillar within the CoD;
- Establishment and meeting of the **Core Group of the CoD youth dimension** (November, 2010); the Core Group consists of the coordinators of the *YLF*, *YDD*, and *WYMD* networks;
- **YLF legal registration** (February, 2011) and creation of the *YLF* website (April, 2011; implemented by *IDP*);
- **Vilnius Youth Forum** “Young Leaders in Democracy Promotion Process: Challenges and Possibilities” (June, 2011, *IDP*, *YLF*, *ACUS*, *EID*, *WYMD*);
- Possible participation of youth representatives in Parliamentary Forum in Washington DC on September 15, 2011.

## II PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:

### Event / political context

**The international two-day meeting** “Youth Leaders and Democracy Promotion: Challenges and Possibilities” was held on June 29-30 in Vilnius, at the hotel “Crowne Plaza Vilnius”. Youth forum was organized as a part of the CoD High Level Meeting ensuring further promotion and strengthening of the youth dimension of the CoD. According to the Grant Agreement, Vilnius-based Institute of Democratic Politics using NED assistance organized the forum for the CoD’s Young Leaders Forum. YLF served as host organization in conjunction with the Core Group. The significant objective of the Core Group is to ensure continuity of shared experiences by working with previous, current, and upcoming Presidencies of the Community of Democracies. On July 1, 2011, at the Ministerial Conference of the CoD, Lithuania passed the Presidency of the CoD to Mongolia.

### Participants

\* Using NED assistance IDP brought **29 young activists from Europe and Eurasia** (23 of them were recommended by NED). The final list consisted of 32 participants but due to unexpected circumstances (*force majeure*) 3 of them could not come (Lajla Zaimovic-Kurtovic, Bosnia; Sardar Bagishbekov, Kyrgyzstan; Stephen Gicholi, Kenya). In total, IDP sent invitations to 43 of 52 people recommended by NED. The participant list was composed seeking **proportional regional representation**. The list was coordinated with R. Potocki. (Participant List No.1)

\* World Youth Movement for Democracy selected and brought **6 global activists** to the meeting. One of them is **WYMD Essay Contest Winner** Basem Fathy (Egypt). In order to foster continuity and promote the transfer of lessons learned and best practices, participant from **Mongolia**, Tsevegmid Mandkhaikhatan, also took part in the event.

\* EID invited 3 young activists from **Central and Southern Europe** (Poland, Turkey, and Czech Republic).

\* Prior to the international meeting YLF in cooperation with Lithuanian MFA and Ministry of Science and Education, also a number of Lithuanian NGOs organized the **National Young Leaders Contest**. The winners were invited to take part in the CoD Youth Forum and Ministerial Conference.

\* The coordinators/representatives of the YLF, YDD, WYMD networks – the **Core Group** – topped the list.

\* IDP asked **EID financial support** (coordinated with R. Potocki) to cover travel and accommodation costs of some participants (Participant List No.1). This option was used in order to avoid lack of funds to pay for catering (for all youth forum participants/guests) and transportation because until the last minute we were not sure how many participants at all we will have and how Lithuanian MFA will organize transportation.

\* **112 young people** took part in the event (Participant List No.2).

### Agenda/Program

\* Opened by Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis, and welcomed by Member of Lithuanian Parliament Emanuelis Zingeris, the forum convened leading young activists and diplomats from around the world to discuss **best practices in support of democracy**. This gathering focused on the prospects for sustaining democracy in the **Arab world**, including how to support young leaders who continue to play an active role in the **changes that have swept across the region**. Delegates also discussed efforts to assist and protect **young human rights defenders** to prevent further backsliding in **Europe’s East** and elsewhere around the globe. Diplomats and activists engaged in hands-on workshops to hone their skills in the **use of new technology and social media**.

\* Forum participants prepared and adopted the **Youth Action Plan for Democracy** which was presented at the Ministerial Conference on July 1 by one of the young activists, Ahmed Farag (Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti Violence Studies, Egypt).

- \* Youth Forum participants met the winners of competition for Lithuanian high school and university students on what democracy means to young people. The **final results of the national “Young Leaders” project** were presented.
- \* Closing the forum, young activists and diplomats who were not present at last year’s Vilnius and Krakow events were invited to **sign the YLF “Vilnius Declaration”** on the roles and responsibilities of young people in promoting democracy, and supporting the idea of the establishment of YLF as an official youth pillar within the CoD.
- \* On June 30 Youth Forum delegates took part in **U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society** (unplanned event), and three delegates from Egypt (Basem Fathy), Russia (Oleg Kozlovsky), and Belarus (Enira Bronitskaya) presented directly to Secretary Clinton about the most pressing issues affecting civil society in their countries.
- \* On July 1, **delegates attended the VI Ministerial Conference of the CoD “Community of Democracies: Empowered, Energized, Engaged”**, which included presentations by Secretary Clinton, Minister Ažubalis, President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Baroness Catherine Ashton, President of Mongolia Elbegdorj Tsakhia and Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt. The young activists had the opportunity to meet with members of the official delegations and civil society leaders. During the conference Lithuanian Foreign Minister presented the **National Young Leader’s Prizes** to the students Daniel Ravinskij and Marius Šačikauskas, winners of the National Young Leaders Contest.

### III ASSESSMENT

The **project objective** is to strengthen the youth dimension of the CoD.

#### Summarizing accomplishments (reference to the evaluation plan)

- \* **CoD’s acceptance of the Young Leaders/Youth Action Plan for Democracy:** the action plan was adopted by Youth Forum participants and presented at the official ministerial.
- \* **CoD’s support for strengthening the youth dimension of the CoD and for its main actors (YLF, Core Group) is expressed in the Vilnius Declaration adopted by the Ministerial Conference on July 1.** The 11 article of the declaration states: “We welcome the establishment of the Young Leaders Forum during the Democracy Days in Vilnius on 23 June 2010 for enabling youth representation at all levels of the Community of Democracies, and underline the importance of active engagement of the core group of the youth dimension of the Community of Democracies, which consists of the Young Leaders Forum, World Youth Movement for Democracy, and Young Diplomats for Democracy.” <<http://www.mfa.lt/index.php?150128679>>
- \* **Increase in those signing the YLF “Vilnius Declaration”:** 34 participants of Youth Forum joined the declaration (List No.3); last year during Vilnius and Krakow events 49 young activists and diplomats signed “Vilnius Declaration”; in total, 82 young people have joined the declaration.
- \* **YLF online tools – facebook page and website** (www.y-l-f.org) – are used to disseminate information about the YLF and the CoD.
- \* **New joint programs undertaken by youth within the framework of the CoD:**
  - 1) Possible/Planned participation of youth representatives in the CoD Parliamentary Forum which will be held on September 15, 2011, in Washington DC (seeking further to ensure youth representation and participation at all levels of the CoD);
  - 2) An agreement with Armenian NGO “International Centre for Human Development” to prepare a joint project for the next year.

#### Other indicators of project success:

1. **Continuity of the project**
2. Significance of the project’s **objective / Political support**
3. International Partner **Network / Contacts**
4. **Interest** of young activists/leaders to take part at the event (number of participants).

By developing global young leaders’ (youth) network, by preparing and presenting the CoD Youth Action Plan for Democracy to the governments, by promoting democracy worldwide (using

personal contacts and online tools), and by strengthening the role of the YLF the Vilnius Youth Forum adds to further consolidation of the youth dimension of the CoD.

#### IV OTHER ACTIVITIES

**National project “Young Leaders”** was organized prior to the CoD Youth Forum in March-May, 2011.

\* **The objectives of the project are:**

- 1) To inform Lithuanian society, especially youth, about Community of Democracies and CoD Young Leaders Forum;
- 2) To involve Lithuanian students in YLF activities, and
- 3) To ensure awareness of democracy and strengthen active citizenship among youth.

\* **Organizers:** YLF, National Radio and Television (LRT); **initiators/donors:** Lithuanian MFA, Ministry of Science and Education; **donor:** the biggest informational website in Lithuania DELFI; **partners:** IDP, Vilnius University, European Humanities University, social network “Global Lithuanian Leaders”, etc.

\* **The participants:** high school students and university students (political science students).

\* **Winner selection process.**

1) For university students

March 22 – regional contests;

April 12 – Political Science Students Final Contest; winner – Marius Šačikauskas

2) For high school students

1st stage: students had to fill in questionnaire about democracy, human rights, CoD, youth rights and responsibilities;

2nd stage: to make a video clip on democracy topic – about some problem, initiative, proposal or already implemented project;

3rd stage: the best 12 students were invited to participate and competed in the TV show “Lithuania Millennium Children” on May 10; winner – Daniel Ravinskij.

\* **Media coverage:**

<http://www.jaunieji.lyderiai.lt>

<http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/studentu-zona/karstos-zinios/paaiskejo-studentu-politologu-olimpiados-nugaletojai-234-147113>

<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/education/ieskomi-jaunieji-lyderiai.d?id=4444254>

[http://www.geroszinios.lt/naujienos/lt/laisvalaikis/6334?Lietuvoje\\_paskelbta\\_jaunuju\\_lyderiu\\_paieska](http://www.geroszinios.lt/naujienos/lt/laisvalaikis/6334?Lietuvoje_paskelbta_jaunuju_lyderiu_paieska)

[http://www.inovacijos.lt/lt/naujiena/id/lietuvoje\\_paskelbta\\_jaunuju\\_lyderiu\\_paieska/](http://www.inovacijos.lt/lt/naujiena/id/lietuvoje_paskelbta_jaunuju_lyderiu_paieska/)

<http://www.dialogas.com/naujienos/ieskomi-jaunieji-lyderiai/>

<http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2011-04-18-ieskomi-jaunieji-lyderiai/61502>

<http://www.balsas.lt/naujiena/535679/jaunieji-lyderiai-varzysis-del-keliones-i-vasingtona>

<http://www.globenews24.com/lt/news/jaunieji-lyderiai-varzysis-del-keliones-i-vasingtona>

<http://www.vtv.lt/naujienos/neformalus-svietimas/jaunieji-lyderiai-rugseji-kelias-i-vasingtona.html>

<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/education/balsavimas-isrinkite-geriausia-moksleiviu-vaizdo-klipa-demokratijos-tema.d?id=45345357>

<http://www.rytas.lt/-13063111581304713672-konkurso-jaunieji-lyderiai-nugal%C4%97tojai-va%C5%BEiuos-%C4%AF-va%C5%A1ington%C4%85.html>

<http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2011-05-25-isrinkti-jaunieji-lyderiai/63377>

\* **Telecasts:** YLF chairman Viktorija Bražiūnaitė presented the YLF (its aims, activities) and the project/contest “Young Leaders” on national TV programs “Good Morning”, “Topic of the Day”, “Echoes of the Week”, “Sounds of Morning”.