**With just under 130 days to go to the 2nd Winter Youth Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway, this coming February (12-21), the local organisers (LYOGOC) presented their final preparations to the IOC Coordination Commission this week. The young team vowed to combine elite sport competition with a festival atmosphere across the cities in a free event that they describe as “rocking the YOG”.**

Chair of the IOC Coordination Commission [Angela Ruggiero](http://www.olympic.org/mrs-angela-ruggiero) said, “The team in Lillehammer should be very proud of what they are developing; this event stands out from other [sports](http://www.olympic.org/sports) competitions as a wonderful combination of elite sport, a festive atmosphere and the opportunity for young people to be inspired and learn through sport. All of this is taking place in a nation with a rich Olympic history and awesome venues. [Lillehammer 2016](http://www.olympic.org/lillehammer-2016-youth-olympics) is innovating and taking the [Youth Olympic Games](http://www.olympic.org/youth-olympic-games) to a new level.”

Final plans for the “Sjoggfest” - meaning snow festival and named after the mascot, Sjogg, particularly impressed the IOC Coordination Commission members as an event that appeals to youth culture while testing new concepts and pushing the boundaries of the YOG. Some 1,100 of the world’s best young athletes and future champions will compete in all of the seven sports on the Olympic programme, with some new youth-focused additions over the 10 days of the Games, while spectators and athletes alike will be able to enjoy a daily programme of film, music and arts festivals that brings together some of Norway’s leading talent.

In close collaboration with the International Federations, the Organising Committee has completed its sports initiation programme, which will allow visiting athletes and spectators to try out different sports for themselves under the guidance of expert coaches. Away from the competition venues, a “Sports Lab”-style concept will take place in an urban environment, allowing new sports to be showcased and enjoyed such as telemarking, ice-climbing, parkour, bandy and icestocksport.

The Organising Committee presented its final legacy plans, which aim to write a new Olympic history for Lillehammer and [Norway](http://www.olympic.org/norway). Twenty-two years after the Olympic Winter Games [Lillehammer 1994](http://www.olympic.org/lillehammer-1994-winter-olympics), all venues are functioning at the highest level for international competition following a series of upgrades for the YOG, including new snow production infrastructure at Hafjell, a new freestyle venue and an updated ski jump profile at the iconic Lysgårdsbakken – the venue also for the Opening Ceremony. The Youth Olympic Village, supported by the IOC’s EUR 13.5 million contribution, has been open since 1 September, and students are already enjoying their new residence ahead of the Games.

For future generations, an Olympic Legacy Centre is being created in Lillehammer, securing its place as the home for international winter sports athletes. In addition, Lillehammer 2016 is already realising its ambition to contribute to the 10-year plan of boosting Norwegian youth sports: 200 young leaders are now fully trained not only to support during Games-time, but also giving them opportunities for future careers in sport. A total of 20,000 children have been invited by Oppland and Hedmark regions to experience a “Dream Day” at Lillehammer 2016, including watching sports competitions and participating in sports initiations, educational activities and festivals.

The Youth Olympic Flame will be lit in Athens on 1 December, to be followed by a Torch Tour that will carry this excitement across the nation with 21 “flame events” taking place across all counties of Norway, organised by young people and highlighting young ”changemakers” who have made a difference through sport in their communities. The start of the Torch Tour will be broadcast live at the annual Norwegian Sports Gala on 9 January.

Tomas Holmestad, Lillehammer 2016 CEO, said, “The Olympic flame may light up Lillehammer for the 10 days of the Games, but that spark is already alive in the city, and the excitement is spreading across Norway. Thanks to the support from our NOC, the national sports federations, government at all levels and the fantastic team in place, we are ready to deliver one big sporting party!”

Almost 7,000 volunteers have signed up to fill the 3,000 places required during Games time and, with close to 70 per cent being under the age of 30 and almost half being  international volunteers, this demonstrates the growing reach and international interest in the YOG among young people.

The fifth and final IOC Coordination Commission visit follows an exciting few days for the host city. Guests from 66 countries gathered in Lillehammer, including the Chef de Mission representatives, 39 Young Ambassadors (YAs), chosen by the [NOCs](http://www.olympic.org/national-olympic-committees) to guide the athletes through their YOG experience, and five of the 15 Athlete Role Models (ARMs) – Olympians and champions who act as sports mentors throughout the Games. The YAs and ARMs took part in the series of workshops, excursions and team-building activities that will be open to the athletes during Games time. This programme, which will be run by leading experts, is intended to support athletes in their future careers on and off the field of play, and covers topics such as healthy lifestyles, anti-doping, illegal betting, injury prevention and life after sport.