

## **Lillehammer confirmed as 2016 Winter Youth Games host**

*Matt Cutler*

*The International Olympic Committee (IOC) confirmed on Wednesday that the Norwegian town of Lillehammer, which staged the hugely popular 1994 Winter Olympics, would host the second edition of the Winter Youth Games in 2016.*

Lillehammer had been the only bid on the table for the Youth Games since the Bulgarian city of Sofia withdrew from the race in April 2010. Lillehammer still had to convince the IOC that it could meet the criteria to host the event, and the town's bid was approved by the governing body on Wednesday. More than 1,000 athletes between the ages of 15 and 18 will compete at the Youth Games.

The inaugural Winter Youth Games will take place next month in Innsbruck, Austria. Singapore staged the first Summer Youth Olympics last year and Nanjing in China will host the second summer edition in 2014. Norwegian Minister of Culture Anniken Huitfeldt said that a number of the venues used for the 1994 Olympic Games would be reused in 2016.

IOC president Jacques Rogge said he was excited to be returning to Lillehammer, which staged "unforgettable Winter Games in 1994". Rogge added: "The city, the government and Norwegian National Olympic Committee have shown a great desire and commitment to hosting these Games, and we are confident that Lillehammer will provide a world-class experience for the young athletes in just over four years' time."

Norwegian Olympic Committee president Borre Rognlien added: "It is with great pleasure and pride that the Norwegian Olympic Committee can now invite a new generation of athletes to Lillehammer. We will attempt to build on the heritage of the Lillehammer 1994 Olympic Winter Games, and also create a new legacy - a legacy of young people, by young people, and for young people, as well as for our country and the rest of the winter sports world."

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