

Tallinna Linnavalitsus
The Mayor
Mr. Peeter Raudsepp
Vabaduse väljak 7
15199 TALLINN
ESTLAND

Kiel, 17 December 2025

Mayor
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Dear Mayor Peeter Raudsepp,

This year, our traditional end-of-year greetings are coming to you during an eventful period for Kiel. From April 2026, after twelve years, Dr Samet Yilmaz will take the reins as the new Lord Mayor of our city, having emerged as the winner of a run-off election on 7 December.

Dr Samet Yilmaz is taking office at a time in which our cities and communities around the world are facing countless challenges and major changes. At municipal level, we are feeling the impact of geopolitical shifts in the wake of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, which are on all our minds. But we are also feeling the impact of fundamental, structural changes in our societies, such as demographic change and the constantly tense budgetary situation, which also require carefully considered, strategic action and smart decisions in order to future-proof our cities and municipalities.

Scientific findings are an important source for well-founded, well-balanced decisions. Many of our cities are home to universities and research institutions that create relevant knowledge for all areas of life. Yet this knowledge is often not utilised, or only to a limited extent, despite its enormous potential for political decision-makers, administrations and urban societies as a whole.

The year ahead of us in 2026 should provide the impetus to make scientific findings visible and usable in cities. At the start of this year, Kiel, together with its French twin city of Brest and the Croatian city of Split, successfully applied for the EU's "Science comes to town" funding initiative. For a whole year, these three cities will become European capitals of science with the participation of over 70 other institutions.

The International Cities Forum during Kiel Week in 2026 will also be dedicated to this year of science. The theme of our 2026 municipal conference is therefore **"Resilient cities through scientific expertise – unlocking potential for sustainable urban development"**. We want to talk with you about how the academic world and the diverse urban life of our cities can be brought closer together and how trust in science can be strengthened. Once again, we want to network, and this time not just among us municipal players, but beyond.

We look forward to holding inspiring discussions with you at the International Cities Forum 2026 and are eager to hear your thoughts and especially your examples from municipal practice. We are interested in whether and how you already work together with scientific institutions in your cities. Please note the weekend of **19-21 June 2026** in your diary. Official invitations will be sent out at the start of the coming year.

We wish you and the residents of Tallinn a peaceful Christmas season and all the best for the New Year. As Mayor of Kiel, I would like to thank you for your valuable cooperation over the past few years.



Bettina Aust
City President



Dr Ulf Kämpfer
Mayor