



Apply to become European Capital of Democracy 2026

The third European Capital of Democracy will be designated early 2025, selected by a jury of experts and over 4,000 European citizens. Title-holding cities host a wide range of activities and, designed to improve and strengthen democracy. Barcelona, the first-ever European Capital of Democracy, will hand over to the City of Vienna in November 2024.

Cities: Incubators of Democracy

Taking a stand for our European values has never been more important. The ECoD Initiative has built a strong European City Network with currently 21 members from 13 countries, fostering best-practice exchange and collaboration on pressing challenges of our time.

Cities have long been leading the way in democratic innovation, organising citizens' consultations on issues such as integration, climate action, the preservation of cultural heritage, or improving public transport. Cities both large and small throughout Europe serve as laboratories for new ideas and incubators for democracy.

That's why we've created the European Capital of Democracy — to celebrate democratic innovation, and to bring together like-minded cities who can share their best practices and learn from one another. Together, they will help shape the future of European democracy.

What are the benefits?

- ▶ The title-holding European Capital of Democracy is highly visible as a beacon of European best practice.
- ▶ European citizens enjoy hands-on involvement in developing new forms of democratic politics: as jury members, as participants in conferences and workshops, and as visitors of events.
- ▶ Politicians in Europe draw inspiration from best practices. They participate in an open, personal network of political innovators beyond party lines, across borders, and at all levels of policy-making.

Democracy Year

European Capitals of Democracy design and host a Democracy Year, a series of events and activities, putting citizens' participation at the heart of its activities.

- ▶ The Programme Year begins with opening festivities inviting all inhabitants of the city, giving them a chance to learn about the year's activities and find out more about how they can get involved.
- ▶ Throughout the year, members of the ECoD City Network engage in a fruitful exchange with citizens, civil society and international visitors.
- ▶ Member Cities showcase the very best new projects from all over Europe, providing inspiration to politicians from throughout Europe.
- ▶ Citizens are invited to play a hands-on role in developing new forms of democratic politics.
- ▶ The title-holding City hosts a range of established events, including the annual Innovation in Politics Awards and the ACT NOW International Mayors' Conference.

The Selection Process


How does a city become a European Capital of Democracy?

- PHASE 1 Cities apply for the title, presenting a portfolio of their best democratic practices and new project ideas
- PHASE 2 An Experts' Jury evaluates the projects and decides on a shortlist of up to three Cities
- PHASE 3 Finally, a jury of over 4,000 European citizens selects the next city to carry the title European Capital of Democracy

Cities that submit a full application will be admitted to the European City Network, providing best practice exchange, access to experts, the possibility of participating and showcasing in the ECoD Programme Year, and access to

- exchange & peer-learning
- tailored programmes, trainings & capacity building
- project cooperation as ECoD partners

The ECoD Call for submissions will open In September 2024 for cities over 100,000 inhabitants from all Council of Europe member states enjoying full rights of representation, and Kosovo.



Register Now!

Whether you represent a city you think deserves the title of European Capital of Democracy, or you are an engaged citizen who wants to get involved in helping shape the future of European democracy, we want to hear from you:

- [Apply as a City](#) to register your interest for the upcoming Call for ECoD 2026
- [Register as a Citizens' Juror](#) to select the next European Capital of Democracy

To find out more, and to sign up for regular updates, visit: <https://capitalofdemocracy.eu/>

Who we are

European Capital of Democracy is organised by ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH (ECoD NPO), a non-profit organisation, founded by The Innovation in Politics Institute GmbH.

Based in Vienna and Berlin, with a network of partner organisations in 15 countries in Europe and beyond, The Innovation in Politics Institute GmbH constitutes a Europe-wide organisation dedicated to improving politics within the democratic spectrum irrespective of party affiliation.

We also present the annual ACT NOW Mayors' Conference and the Innovation in Politics Awards. Since 2017, the Awards have honoured hundreds of people at the forefront of political innovation, giving visibility to the best political minds in Europe, providing them with a platform to present their innovative projects, and facilitating best practice exchange across borders.

Contact

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