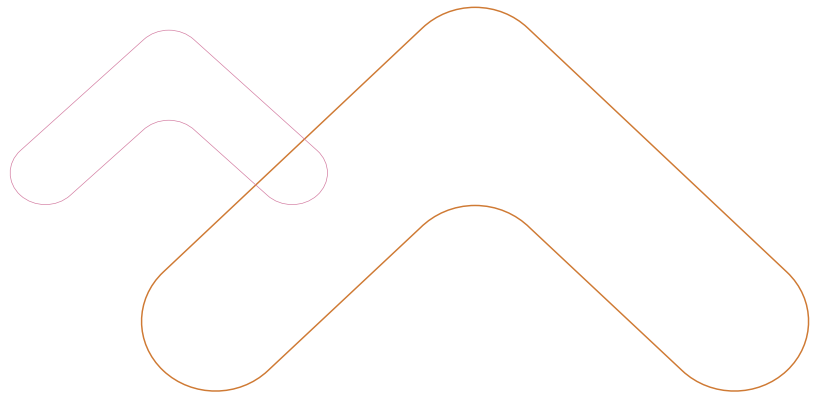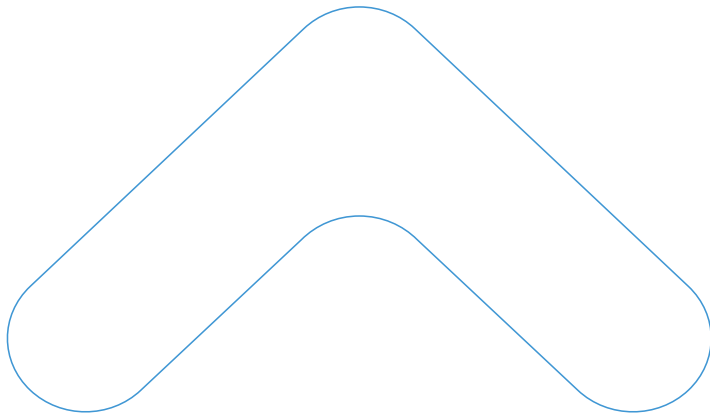**European Capital of Democracy**

European Capital of Democracy 2026

Call for Applications

Version 1.0, 19. August 2024

Table of Contents

1. About the Initiative

Taking a stand for our European values has never been more important. The European Capital of Democracy (ECoD) Initiative[1] has built a strong network of Cities fostering participation, exchanging best practice and boosting the adaptation and implementation of successful Democracy Projects across Europe. Together with citizens, politicians, and institutions, we innovate and improve our societies.

Multiple crises and a full-blown war have challenged Europe. After a tough decade for liberal democracies, citizens are more conscious today that they have to demand – and fight for – their freedom, peace and economic perspectives. Local democracies are proving to be strongholds, increasing democratic resilience and empowerment at the regional level, and providing a plethora of opportunities to be seized and best practice to be shared. **Democracy does work, and we want to act now to spread the word.**

Cities are incubators for democracy. They are best placed to safeguard and develop our self-government, protect the rule of law, and uphold human rights. This is because city administrations are closest to the needs, talents, and dynamics of their populations, and their scale makes them agile and flexible. They can tailor programmes, policies, infrastructure, and spatial development to fit their goals and budgets effectively. Cities and their Citizens can create opportunity and innovation for improving quality of life.

To identify, address and interlink these spearheads of Democratic Innovation, **ECoD gemein-nützige GmbH[2] (hereinafter "ECoD NPO") has created the European City Network (ECN).** By joining forces for democracy, these Cities share their expertise and their most innovative best practices in democracy promotion at the municipal level.

Each year, one Member City is selected by over 4,000 Europeans (the members of the Citizens' Jury) to carry the torch for a year. **Barcelona is the first ever European Capital of Democracy 2023/24**, to be **followed by the City of Vienna** in November 2024. European Capitals of Democracy attracts leading thinkers, highly motivated visitors, state-of-the-art technology developers, pre-eminent artists, and renowned journalists. Cities, after all, are the historic cradle of democracy. Joining the network and curating projects as a part of this process will in and of itself serve to enhance democratic practice:

---

[1] For specific terms and definitions, please consult the Glossary.
The capitalised terms shall have the meaning as defined in the Glossary.
[2] ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH is a non-profit limited liability company established under Austrian Federal Law and registered under FN 568933t in the Commercial Register of the Commercial Court of Vienna.

- **Citizens of Europe** have the opportunity to play a hands-on role in developing new forms of democratic politics: as committed representatives in civil society organisations, as jury members, as participants, and as visitors.
- **European politicians at all levels of government** are inspired by best practice. They participate in an open, personal network of political innovators. An international, non-partisan network encompasses all levels of policy-making.
- **Partners of the ECoD Initiative** participate in launching a sustainable institution built to last for decades, which will make a substantial contribution to securing our European way of life.
- **Cities joining the network** deepen the reach and impact of Democracy Projects through a fruitful exchange with Citizens and international visitors. High-level events lay the groundwork for lasting cooperation and co-creation.

ECoD NPO, supported by the Innovation in Politics Institute GmbH (hereinafter "the Institute") and its partners, will in addition host high-level international events. Significant networking events bring together leading politicians, experts, and representatives from the world of arts and culture and media from across Europe and beyond. A thriving active civil society engages in a deeper dialogue with the city administrations.

The ECoD Initiative was launched in 2020 under the patronage of Ms Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission, and under the auspices of Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe. ECoD NPO is a non-profit limited liability company established under Austrian Federal Law supported by the Institute. Based in Vienna and Berlin, with partners in 15 countries, the Institute constitutes a Europe-wide network dedicated to improving democracy across borders and beyond party lines.

2. Why become a Capital of Democracy?

A City holding this title enjoys a wide range of benefits, such as an enhanced international reputation as a centre of democratic innovation. European Capitals of Democracy get the opportunity to co-host prestigious flagship events like the Innovation in Politics Awards and the ACT NOW Mayors' Conference.

The European Capital of Democracy hosts and presents a year-long programme comprising various projects aimed at strengthening democracy in Europe and beyond. All Citizens are invited to participate and contribute to this endeavour together with city councils, scientific and academic institutions, NGOs, businesses, and associations. Visitors from all over Europe – politicians, experts, artists, citizens, and members of the media – are invited to observe and to participate. Selected by a network of over 4,000 European citizens – the Citizens' Jury – the European Capital of Democracy hosts a lively programme, featuring established projects and events. Together with its cooperation partners, various organisations, foundations, and institutions, it bundles initiatives on topics vital to democracy, such as **Community, Empowerment, Participation, Sustainability** and **Technology**.

ECoD NPO invites the title-holding city to co-design, co-finance and co-host its flagship events with the aim to attract large audiences, sponsorship support, and media interest – in addition to presenting and expediting its own outstanding projects:

> **The Art of Democracy Festival** (artofdemocracy.eu), a participatory art event
> The **ACT NOW Mayors' Conference** (innovationinpolitics.eu/actnow/conference), where international mayors, local innovators and young changemakers meet to tackle global challenges at a local level
> The annual **Innovation in Politics Awards** (innovationinpolitics.eu/awards) which showcase up to 90 best practice projects in 9 categories (e.g. Climate Protection, Social Cohesion, Democracy)
> **Truth, Lies & Democracy** (capitalofdemocracy.eu/truth-lies-democracy), a two-day game jam on identifying and tackling fake news, connecting this vital democratic issue with Europe's community of 350 million gamers

To facilitate the management, coordination, and preparation of the Democracy Year and accompanying events with the City-Designate, a Steering Group will be established eight to nine months prior to the official opening of the Democracy Year. Representatives of ECoD NPO and the City will coordinate with the relevant stakeholders to plan and monitor the implementation of the individual activities, elements and projects. A regular meeting with the political leadership (Mayor or responsible City Councillor) every three months after the announcement of the City Designate. The City Designate is invited to contribute to and participate in selected Democracy Year events of the current title-holding City (see above).

3. European City Network

All cities joining the European City Network (ECN) profit from mutual exchange of knowledge and experience, access to international expertise, and cooperation – a strong network of already twenty-one cities that fosters participation and provides a platform for cities to showcase how we can change our world for the better.

The ECN is an exclusive group of dedicated cities that are frontrunners in democracy promotion. All participating cities have successfully submitted applications for the ECoD Call. Cities nominate representatives from departments dealing with questions of democracy and civic participation who actively participate in network activities. Our twenty-one ECN members come from thirteen countries across Europe: Antwerp (BE), Barcelona (ES), Bologna (IT), Braga (PT), Bratislava (SK), Brussels (BE), Burgos (ES), Cascais (PT), Durrës (AL), Gdańsk (PL), İzmir (TR), Kyiv (UA), Leipzig (DE), Linz (AT), Metz (FR), Opole (PL), Rzeszów (PL), Sarajevo (BiH), Tirana (AL), Valongo (PT), and Vienna (AT).

ECN members benefit from:

> **Collaboration:** Network members host regular in-person meetings, as well as online workshops, which foster and strengthen pan-European collaboration.
> **Training:** Knowledge sharing, peer learning and capacity building enables our members to gather new skills and provides opportunities for professional development.
> **Access:** International expertise for mutual exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as ECoD Democracy Year events to showcase their work.
> **Exchange:** Sharing best practices creates a supportive environment which inspires the development of impactful interventions in their communities.
> **Participation:** Contributing and being a part of the Democracy Year in the title-holding ECoD City, as well as the online and in-person City Network meetings.

4. Stages, Timeline and Contributions

The third ECoD Call for submissions is open from 1 September to 31 October 2024.

The following stages ensure a fair and open selection process for the title of European Capital of Democracy 2026:

STAGE 1   **Application – Cities**
Interested Cities submit their Call applications, including a mission statement and project descriptions, together with an organisational, technical and democratic self-evaluation.

STAGE 2   **Admission – ECoD NPO**
ECoD NPO screens Applications and documents for admissibility and completeness, including a check of the prerequisites, and informs Applicant Cities about the admission to the Call and ECN.

STAGE 3   **Evaluation – Experts' Jury**
The Experts' Jury evaluates all Call submissions, visits the most promising contenders and draws up a Shortlist of max. three Nominee Cities.

STAGE 4   **Selection – Citizens' Jury**
The Citizens' Jury selects the European Capital of Democracy from the list of Nominee Cities.

Interested Cities enter the process by submitting a full application by 31 October 2024. For details, please refer to 5.2 - Prerequisites. ECoD NPO then conducts a formal check of all complete Call submissions. All applications are treated confidentially by our organisation. Accepted Member Cities will be published by ECoD NPO in November 2024.

The Experts' Jury will draw up a Shortlist of up to three outstanding contenders (the Nominee Cities) by mid February 2025. The Citizens' Jury will then select the European Capital of Democracy, to be publicly announced in March 2025. Over the subsequent nine months, the next European Capital of Democracy will prepare for the Democracy Year 2026.

All Member Cities are invited to contribute to and be a part of the Democracy Year in the title-holding City. Member Cities can stay in the European City Network to contribute, coach and mentor newcomers.

Timeline of the ECoD Call

01 SEPTEMBER 2024	ECoD Call opens
31 OCTOBER 2024	Application phase for Interested Cities ends
NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2024	Experts' Jury evaluates Call submissions and presents the Longlist of Cities to be visited
JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2025	Experts' Jury visits the most outstanding contenders
FEBRUARY 2025	Experts' Jury presents the Shortlist of Nominee Cities
MARCH 2025	Citizens' Jury reviews Shortlist and selects the European Capital of Democracy 2026
18 MARCH 2025	European Capital of Democracy 2026 is announced in a joint press conference
APRIL – DECEMBER 2025	The Democracy Year is prepared, coordinated by a Steering Group
BEGINNING OF 2026	Opening ceremony of the third European Capital of Democracy

Contributions

The title-holding city is invited and expected to join the ECoD Consortium (EUR 50,000 per year to support the Democracy Year preparation, implementation and communication), to be formalised in the Steering Group meetings). Financial and organisational support for the co-organised events - Innovation in Politics Awards (innovationinpolitics.eu/awards), ACT NOW Mayors' Conference (innovationinpolitics.eu/actnow/conference), Truth, Lies and Democracy (capitalofdemocracy.eu/truth-lies-democracy) and Art of Democracy (artofdemocracy.eu) – needs to be decided 3-4 months before the launch of the Democracy Year.

ECoD NPO provides a mobile Democracy Year app/website, serving as a central information and contact hub. ECN members support the ECoD Initiative by a membership fee of EUR 5,000 per year[3], covering the participation in physical meetings (including all related costs), contributions to monthly webinars and other activities. Furthermore, ECN members are invited to continuously apply for European and other project funding, and to implement resulting activities together.

---

[3] Special conditions for smaller cities with limited financial capacities or special economic circumstances are possible.

5. Prerequisities

5.1 Eligibility

This Call is open to Cities with a population of over 100,000 within the members of the Council of Europe enjoying full rights of representation, and Kosovo. Find out if your City can become a European Capital of Democracy!

Currently, we accept applications from Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Kosovo.

Cities are defined as local administrative units with forms of legal self-determination and budgetary autonomy and with an elected or democratically appointed executive leadership, including metropolitan areas and conurbations. In individual cases worthy of special consideration, ECoD NPO may also admit Cities with a population of just under 100,000 to the Call. In particular, the Applicant Cities must confirm that it meets the following three criteria relating to the fundamentals of democracy:

> Multiple parties compete in free and fair elections that are held on a regular basis in the City.
> Elected municipal governments can operate without interference from unelected bodies.
> State institutions, e.g. the legislature, the judiciary and specific oversight agencies, oversee the local government to ensure checks between institutions and to prevent the abuse of power.

Cities with scheduled elections on the local, municipal or city level, directly affecting the Mayor and/or body entrusted with the resolution and implementation of European Capital of Democracy in the title-holding City between the designation as title-holding city in March 2025 and the start of the Democracy Year in January 2026, will be subject to case-by-case assessment by the Experts' Jury and ECoD NPO. The ECoD team is available to discuss the matter at any point in time, ideally as early as possible in the process. Please refer to the **Exclusion Criteria** (see Annexes) before submitting a proposal.

5.2 Prerequisites

In order to fully benefit from holding the title of European Capital of Democracy, Applicant Cities need to be prepared for the challenges that come with implementing the year-long series of events and activities. A non-partisan

approach as well as strong and broad political support are the best basis for a successful implementation of the Democracy Year.

Becoming a European Capital of Democracy is a unique opportunity for Cities to showcase democratic milestones and innovative ideas that take democracy to a new level. A European Capital of Democracy therefore needs to have a City government with a clean track record regarding democratic processes. The **Democracy self-evaluation** (see Annexes) element of the process is based on the Council of Europe's "European Label of Governance Excellence" (ELoGE). Please note that Cities which have ELoGE accreditation are not required to complete the Democracy self-evaluation.

The Innovation in Politics Awards and the ACT NOW Mayors' Conference will take place in the title-holding City to ensure a Europe-wide impact. To successfully host these events, provide a vibrant stage, and foster international exchange, the City needs to meet specified technical and organisational prerequisites. The following overview will help Interested Cities to identify whether they have the necessary facilities and infrastructure. The self-evaluation of technical and organisational prerequisites covers, in particular, the following aspects with regards to the Democracy Year:

> **Regular (major) events**
  Provide a complete list of events which are regularly held in the City and which could be relevant for the Democracy Year and their connection with the ECoD projects and event formats.
> **Other titles**
  Similar titles or events the City has been currently awarded, have applied for or will be holding in the near future (e.g. European Capital of Culture, European Youth Capital, Green Capital, Manfesta, iCapital etc.).
> **Facilities and infrastructure**
  > **Venues**
    Provide a list of between three and five relevant event venues of different sizes and their availability for each month for the Democracy Year.
  > **Transport**
    Describe your City's transportation situation with regard to both ease of accessibility for national and international visitors and transportation within the City.
  > **Accommodation**
    State the direct (within the City area) and indirect (within the local area) accommodation capacities for 3 and 4 star rooms.
  > **Significant construction projects and road works**
    If applicable, provide an overview of the most relevant and substantial urban and infrastructure projects scheduled for the ECoD Democracy Year.

This self-evaluation will help assess how well the City's infrastructure can cope with set maximum visitor numbers with respect to transportation and accommodation during given time frames.

6. Call Submission

In order to compete for the title of European Capital of Democracy and to convince the Experts' and the Citizens' Jury, Cities have to submit a strong mission statement, a convincing selection of three proven and innovative Democracy Projects, and three pitches for new projects in the pipeline, to be presented and advanced further during the Democracy Year.

The ECoD Team checks if the Applicant City is suitable for participation in the process, fulfils the formal criteria and meets the organisational and technical prerequisites to join the ECoD Initiative. Until that time, the process results are kept confidential from outside parties. All Cities completing the Call submission become members of the European City Network. In order to assess the fulfilment of the formal criteria, we ask Interested Cities to upload the specified documents using the Participant Portal. The Applicant City nominates a representative responsible for providing the following documents:

> Evidence of support for participation in the European Capital of Democracy Call from the City's highest political representative, e.g. (First) Mayor

> **Democracy self-evaluation** (online questionnaire), including co-operations with and contacts to Civil Society Organisations

> Self-evaluation of the technical and organisational prerequisites (online questionnaire)

> Adoption of a City Council resolution (or similar) for the participation in the ECoD Call

> Establishment of a representative (single point of contact) by the City

> Establishment of a project team and its responsibilities

> Mission statement and selected existing Democracy Projects and project ideas for the Democracy Year and beyond[4] including images, videos and website URLs (in the predefined form and structure), including an executive summary

All Call submissions that have been in full and on time will, after screening by ECoD NPO, be forwarded to the Experts' Jury for evaluation by December 2024. The most outstanding Applicant Cities will be visited in January and February 2025.

Preparation and Implementation Phase (applies to European Capital of Democracy 2026 only):
> Confirmation of the representative's power to act and sign on behalf of the City
> Designation of representatives for the ECoD Steering Group
> Regular meetings with political leadership (Mayor or City Councillor)

---

[4] All information must be provided in English (with certified translations provided where necessary), and must be correct and complete, readable, accessible and printable. Proposals must not contain classified information, and must comply with ethical principles, including compliance with the highest standards of research integrity, in particular, avoiding fabrication, falsification and plagiarism.

6.1 Mission statement

Before laying out the individual proposed activities for the ECoD Democracy Year, the City should provide an outline of its aspirations, presented in a compelling mission statement. Where does the energy for Democratic Innovation and drive for engaging more Citizens come from? Who is the City competing with, where does it draw inspiration from?

The mission statement is a declaration of what makes your initiatives important. It is intended to guide the actions of the administration and draw in Citizens by explaining what the City sets out to accomplish:

> Keep it short and concise – provide a summary of the City's mission in just a few sentences

> Think long-term – the mission statement is an investment in your City's future

> Do not make it too limiting – your plans could be relevant to other cities in your country or abroad

Cities should focus on the following four key considerations when preparing their mission statements:

> Value – what is the value to both Citizens and public administration?

> Inspiration – why should Citizens want to participate in these projects?

> Plausibility – make it sound reasonable

> Specificity – tie it back to the City's activities

The mission statement should include:

> A title and a teaser

> A brief summary

> The City's ambitions with regards to Democratic innovation and participation

6.2 Democracy Projects

The projects submitted by the Cities should make a substantial contribution in the five areas targeted by ECoD Initiative. All projects must therefore tackle issues related to one or more of the five **Dimensions of Democracy** (see Annexes): **Community, Empowerment, Participation, Sustainability** and **Technology.** Please note that at least one of the projects must tackle the issue of climate change.

6.2.1 Current and completed projects

By presenting three of their most ambitious and successful Democracy Projects, Cities make a valuable contribution to the European City Network, and provide the basis for the Democracy Year's content. When choosing the projects, it is essential that the projects and their

accompanying activities have potential for application on a larger scale elsewhere with a sizable impact. These projects can either be on-going, in an evaluation phase, or successfully completed with defined follow-up measures.

The City must provide the following information for each Democracy Project, paying particular attention to their degree of Collaboration, Exchange, Innovation, Organisation & Output:

> **Title**
> Informative and compelling

> **Project type**
> Best practice, event, information campaign, strategy, or tool

> **Description**
> Concise summary and detailed description of the project.
> Who are your partners in the development, financing and implementation of this project?

> **Contribution**
> How does the project contribute to the overall mission statement?
> How would it be integrated / featured in the ECoD Democracy Year?

> **Target group(s)**
> Who is this activity targeted at? How many people will it reach?
> Does the project have potential for application in other parts of the country or abroad?

> **Communication**
> Description of the measures for advertising to and communicating with the target audience.
> How are these measures monitored and evaluated?

> **Project setup**
> Which departments and employees are part of the project team?
> Which external partners are on board and in what roles?

> **Civil Society Organisations**
> Are Civil Society Organisations or representatives involved in the project?

> **Duration and time frame**
> Is it a one-off, regular or permanent project? When is it running?

> **Budget**
> Please provide an estimate of the project budget, including city resources, personnel costs, internal costs, external costs etc., and an indication of how it has been funded.
> Please get in touch in case of unclarities.
>> **Planning costs**
>> How much did you spend on planning and preparing the project?
>> **Operating costs**
>> What are the yearly costs for running the project?
>> **Communication costs**
>> How much is spent on communicating the project on a yearly basis?
>> **Extra budget**
>> What budget can the City assign for additional measures in the Democracy Year?

> **Funding**
>
> Did the City fund the project with additional funding sources (regional, national, international, third parties...) and to what extent?
>
> **Democracy Year integration**
>
> How will you showcase this project during the ECoD Democracy Year? How can it be featured or integrated in an event?

6.2.2 Project ideas

All three Project ideas must have the support of the City council (or equivalent) and be included in the city budget. The City provides a short written pitch for each project idea, including a self-produced video. The pitch should be structured as follows:

> **Challenge**:
> > Description: What challenges are your Citizens facing? Are they unique to your city?
> > Pain point: Of these challenges, what is the single most significant challenge that your Citizens face?
> > Key trend: What democratic trend is your project connected with?
>
> **Solution**:
> > Benefits: What do Citizens stop losing out on?
> > Advantages: If Citizens decide not to participate in the project and opt for taking the conventional route, what will they miss out on?
>
> **Impact**:
> > Target: When would Citizens use the services that your project provides or become a part of your project?
> > Size: What level of engagement among the inhabitants of your City and the surrounding area could be achieved (how many people)?
> > Traction: What existing data shows there is a need for your project?
>
> **Execution**:
> > Rollout: How will you distribute and disseminate your project to your citizens?
> > Financing: Can the project be implemented within existing budgets at the planned scale?
> > Future milestones: What is the nearest, most exciting accomplishment that you are aiming for?
>
> **Support**:
> > What does the project need, e.g. in terms of consulting, financing and partners?
> > How can the implementation of the project idea be assured?

Please note that the current and completed Democracy Projects, as laid out in the City's application, have to be financed, organised and implemented by the City. ECoD NPO will aim to support the title-holding City - if requested - to develop these project ideas during the course of the Democracy Year, using innovative and structured methods and tools such as design thinking, local labs, or other co-design and co-creation methods/formats (note: financing via the City, third parties and/or institutional partners is required).

7. Democracy Year

European Capitals of Democracy host a whole series of activities to celebrate democracy, debate pressing challenges, and showcase best practices in order to create an engaging, diverse, and inclusive programme for a Europe-wide audience. Therefore, the City will contribute activities to make its projects and project ideas visible and include other existing events into the programme.

The city invites local stakeholder and international partners and networks to contribute to the Democracy Year. The City is expected to support activities and events during the Democracy Year by facilitating, liaising and/or providing venues and services, especially for civil society and non-profit organisations.

In addition to the City's efforts regarding its own projects, events and activities, ECoD NPO will showcase the most outstanding European participation and citizens' projects within the scope of its established events/competition formats, which will foster international exchange. To generate interest in the core elements of the Democracy Year, a lively launch event should take place, co-designed by the City and ECoD NPO to kick off the series of events, conferences, workshops, and exhibitions.

Successful implementation of the projects, events and activities, the smooth operation of the events, and close cooperation with the Institute and third parties is therefore essential for the launch and implementation of the programme. A joint Steering Group, including representatives of the City Designate (representatives from the Mayors' office, ECoD contact person, communications and other relevant departments, e.g. International Relations), ECoD NPO and relevant stakeholders, will be set up to plan, coordinate, and monitor all aspects of the ECoD Initiative.

The Democracy Year in the title-holding City forms the heart of the ECoD Initiative, and provides each year with a unique setting and character. Once the City has been designated, it is expected to provide:

> their vision for the Democracy Year, with a special focus on the opening festivities and a closing ceremony
> a list of all events to be featured and showcased
> resources for a joint communication team
> a plan of communication and marketing measures to make Democracy Projects visible
> support for a presentations to local partners and stakeholders
> contacts to international networks and initiatives who could bring events to the City
> lists of possible supporters and help with acquiring funds
> a call for local, regional, and international organisations to contribute to the Democracy Year

8. Selection by the Juries

The unique selection process is designed to ensure methodological credibility as well as the adherence to the rules and procedures of the ECoD Initiative.

8.1 Experts' Jury – Shortlist selection

The Experts' Jury is made up of highly respected experts and practitioners in the field of academia, civil society, arts, and business. Its members will assess the level of ambition, innovation, and creativity of each City's Democracy Projects based on the fair and transparent selection process, taking particular account of the respective local objectives, circumstances, and priorities of the specific City. Acting as a pre-selection panel, the members of the Experts' Jury audit all of the Cities' Call submissions, conduct on-site interviews, and draw up a Shortlist of up to three Nominee Cities.

The Experts' Jury will evaluate the organisational capacity and infrastructure required for the implementation of the City's Democracy Projects in the following areas:

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Collaboration	Active partnerships with other organisations, institutions and stakeholders
Exchange	Communication, dissemination and sharing of local initiatives
Innovation	Ambition and appeal of the programme and its main activities
Organisation	Management capacity, project and budget resources
Output	Planned activities and dissemination measures, and how effectively they will reach the target audiences, media and citizens

Performance in these areas compared to the ambition and scope of the City's mission statement will be crucial in the overall assessment of the Call submission. The Experts' Jury will seek to make contact with the City if further clarification is required on important aspects relating to the criteria. The Cities are therefore asked to provide relevant references and contacts via the submission platform. To find out more about the current members of the Experts' Jury, visit the ECoD Initiative website (capitalofdemocracy.eu).

8.2 Citizens' Jury – Final selection

As a living example of participatory practice, a jury of over 4,000 Citizens – from all member states of the Council of Europe enjoying full rights of representation and Kosovo – will make the final decision. The Citizens' Jury will select a City from the Shortlist based on its members' considered judgement. The selection takes place online in English via a secure platform, based

on the Applicant Cities' mission statement and selected Democracy Projects in easy language, including a video statement by the Mayor. The Citizens' Jury consists of a cross-section of society and it is designed by ECoD NPO to be as representative as possible so that the decision of the Citizens' Jury is transparent, objective, and fair.

9. Legal Notice

By submitting the Applications, the Participants declare that they are aware of all the contents and legal conditions of the present ECoD Call and its Annexes, which form an integral part of this Call, and that they accept them as unrestrictedly binding at each stage of its participation in the ECoD Initiative.

10. Miscellaneous

10.1 Advisory Board / Consortium

The Advisory Board serves as an independent sounding board for ECoD NPO and contributes by providing the experience and know-how of its members in the first years. It provides advice, suggestions and recommendations regarding the programme and its projects and consultation on all relevant ECoD Initiative activities and collected suggested learnings for upcoming European Capitals of Democracy. For details, please refer to ECoD NPO's website under capitalofdemocracy.eu.

10.2 Monitoring

In addition to measuring and tracking all actions and output related to the Call internally, ECoD NPO will appoint a partner institution to provide academic assistance and will constantly monitor and evaluate the European Capital of Democracy Initiative over the years.

10.3 Points of Contact

When contacting ECoD NPO's Office, please use the email address office@capitalofdemocracy.eu for all requests regarding the Call and the ECoD Initiative. For reasons of professional conduct and impartiality, please refrain from getting in touch with members of the Jury and/or Advisory Board directly.

10.4 Sustainability

We recognise that a healthy planet is a prerequisite for upholding our values of human rights, social balance, and democracy. We, therefore, aim to reduce our carbon footprint by pursuing the objective of net carbon neutrality. All members and partners of the European Capital of Democracy initiative shall join us on this mission by:

> making sustainability an important factor in all purchasing decisions and communicating to all suppliers that we seek climate-friendly options;
> avoiding unnecessary travel, choosing low carbon means of transport where feasible; and compensating for emissions from air travel;
> using renewable energy to power offices and reducing energy use as far as possible;
> offering carbon-neutral options as a default;
> reducing the amount of waste to a minimum;
> making all events, activities and formats as green and resource-efficient as possible.
> For more information, please see the Institute's Sustainability Guidelines.

10.5 Other Guidelines

Partners of the ECoD Initiative undertake to comply with all company policies and guidelines, in particular Compliance Guidelines and general Code of Conduct, Diversity & Inclusion Guidelines, Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. All relevant guidelines are included as Annexes. Current versions can be found at capitalofdemocracy.eu/guidelines/.

11. Annexes

Any form of participation in the ECoD Initiative, regardless of the stage of participation and including the present Call, is only possible subject to the binding conditions contained in the following enclosures:

- Auditing Guidelines
- CI/CD Guidelines
- Compliance Guidelines
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Declaration of Intent
- Democracy self-evaluation
- Exclusion Criteria (incl. Conflict of Interest Declaration)
- Data Processing Agreement
- Data Security Guidelines
- Dimensions of Democracy
- Diversity and Inclusion Guidelines
- Factsheet: ECoD NPO
- Factsheet: Innovation in Politics Institute
- Factsheet: ECoD City Network
- Legal Framework
- Safeguarding Policy, Annexes: Forms of Violence Definition | Risk Assessment | Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Sustainability Guidelines

12. Glossary

Advisory Board	An independent sounding board for ECoD NPO, contributing with the experience and know-how of its members - for details, please refer to the ECoD website
Applicant City	A City applying for the title of European Capital of Democracy Call by submitting a full application
(ECoD) Call	The Call invites Cities to apply to join the ECoD Network and submit their application to become European Capital of Democracy for a year
Citizens	All inhabitants of a city, regardless their age, gender, socio-economic and legal status
Citizens' Jury	A Jury of over 4,000 citizens[5] from all Council of Europe member states enjoying full rights of representation, to select the next European Capital of Democracy
City	Local administrative unit with forms of legal self-determination and budgetary autonomy and an elected or democratically appointed executive leadership, including metropolitan areas and conurbations
City Designate	The next City selected by the Citizens' Jury to carry the title European Capital of Democracy
Civil Society Organisation (CSO)	Any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organised on a local level, independent of the municipal administration
Democracy Project	An initiative, project or policy planned or implemented by a City which strengthens democracy
Democracy Year	Period during which the selected City holds the title of European Capital of Democracy, showcases Democracy Projects, and hosts events and activities by ECoD NPO, partners and third parties, starting with official opening festivities early 2026 and ending with a closing ceremony in winter 2026
Democratic innovation	An innovative (re-)design of political institutions that increase and deepen participation in the political decision-making process
ECoD Initiative	European Capital of Democracy is a non-profit initiative to strengthen and innovate Democracy in Europe of which this Call forms an integral part. The term ECoD Initiative covers all stages of participation
European City Network	A group of Member Cities sharing their experiences and best practices in the most relevant fields of democracy and participation, inspiring each other and multiplying the reach and impact of their innovative projects
ECoD NPO	ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH is a non-profit limited liability company established under Austrian Federal Law and registered under FN 568933t in the Commercial Register of the Commercial Court of Vienna
ECoD Team	The team that leads the ECoD Initiative
European Capital of Democracy	The title-holding City during its Democracy Year as a European Capital of Democracy
Experts' Jury	Group of experienced practitioners in the field of democracy, innovation and participation evaluating submissions and creating a Shortlist for the Citizens' Jury - for details, please refer to the ECoD website
Longlist	Pre-selection of a maximum of six Applicant Cities to be visited by the Experts' Jury to inform the Shortlist decision
Member City	A City that has successfully completed the Call application and submission and has been admitted as a member of the ECoD Network. Please consult our website (capitalofdemocracy.eu) for details on the documents and information required for a complete Call submission
Monitoring	Active City support and monitoring during the preparation phase of the upcoming European Capital of Democracy, coordinated by the Steering Group
Nominee City	A City that has been added to the shortlist by the Experts' Jury
Participants	All Interested Cities, Member Cities, Nominee Cities or City Designates, regardless of the stage of participation. Participants also include legal entities acting in the name of and on behalf of Cities in connection with the ECoD Initiative including the Call
Shortlist	Selection of a maximum of three outstanding Applicant Cities by the Experts' Jury
Steering Group	Project management group for the current ECoD term with representatives of ECoD NPO, relevant stakeholders and the City
The Institute	The Innovation in Politics Institute GmbH is a limited liability company established under Austrian Federal Law and registered under FN 461215 h in the Commercial Register of the Commercial Court of Vienna

---

[5]as of August 2024