

European Capital of Democracy 2027

Frequently asked questions

Which Cities are covered by the ECoD Call?

This Call is open to Cities with a population of over 100,000 within the member states of the Council of Europe enjoying full rights of representation (currently *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.

What is the definition of a City?

A 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. Special cases need to be evaluated on an individual basis. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

What are the benefits of competing for the ECoD title and joining the European City Network?

When applying for the ECoD title, Cities are joining the European City Network to strengthen deliberative and participatory democracy in Europe. By applying for the ECoD title, Cities share their most innovative best practice and expertise. Members profit from mutual exchange of knowledge and experience, access to international expertise and cooperation. The aim is to multiply the reach and impact of their innovative projects. Cooperation with universities and think tanks carrying out research into democratic activities and projects is fostered under the umbrella of the initiative. Member cities collaborate on pressing issues and engage with citizens, experts and other relevant stakeholders to find the best solutions and master implementation challenges.

What awaits the designated European Capital of Democracy?

A City holding this title will enjoy a wide range of benefits, such as an enhanced international reputation as a centre of education and innovation, and of course a boost to civic pride. Capitals of Democracy co-host international events like the ACT NOW Mayors' Conference or the Innovation in Politics Awards, attract leading European politicians and meetings of international organisations. Furthermore, Capitals of Democracy join the ECoD Consortium and steer the future of the initiative. They take on a leading role in joint projects, guide and host the European City Network throughout their Democracy Year.

How can the City benefit from existing formats?

ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH will complement the City's projects and Democracy Year events with established highlights like the Innovation in Politics Awards and the ACT NOW Mayors' Conference, which will guarantee international attention, additional visitors and a Europe-wide impact. Formats like the Art of Democracy or Truth, Lies & Democracy are adapted with local partners for the Democracy Year of each title-holding city. All events and formats require co-hosting and co-financing by the title-holding City and/or partner organisations, to be agreed upon 3-4 months prior to the opening of the Democracy Year.

What requirements does the City have to fulfil to apply?

If your City is eligible to participate in the Call (see 'Which Cities are covered by the ECoD Call?'), you need to complete a Democracy and Prerequisites self-evaluation (see ECoD Call Document). The ECoD team will assess how well the City's infrastructure can cope with set maximum visitor numbers with respect to transportation and accommodation during the given time frames.

Does my City need to meet a minimum number of residents?

This Call is open to Cities with a population of over 100,000. In individual cases worthy of special consideration, ECoD NPO may also admit cities with a population of just under 100,000 to the Call.

What do I need to apply for the ECoD title?

The Application consists of two steps, starting with online self-evaluations of the technical, organisational and democracy prerequisites. Step 2 of the Application, after the pre-screening by the ECoD NPO, the submission of a mission statement, including an executive summary, current and completed projects and project ideas (in a predefined form and structure) has to be completed by 15 November 2025. Additionally, a City Council resolution (or similar) for participating in the ECoD Call has to be adopted, and a contact person or office as well as a project team established.

Is it possible for Cities to apply with projects related to emerging crises, e.g. taking care of refugees?

Yes, taking care of people in need and citizens fleeing from wars is without doubt understood as a democracy project, covered by the Dimensions of Democracy. Initiating such support in the short-term shows the high level of the city's resilience, engagement for human rights and social cohesion.

What are the most important deadlines for the application?

Deadline	Milestone
1 September 2025	ECoD Call opens
15 November 2025	Application phase for Interested Cities ends
November-December 2025	Experts' Jury evaluates Call submissions and presents the Long List of Cities to be visited
January-February 2026	Experts' Jury visits the most outstanding contenders (Long List)
Early March 2026	Experts' Jury presents the Shortlist of Nominee Cities
Late March 2026	Citizens' Jury reviews Shortlist and selects the European Capital of Democracy 2026
March 2026	European Capital of Democracy 2026 is announced in a joint press conference
March/April-December 2026	The Democracy Year is prepared, coordinated by a Steering Group
Beginning of 2027	Opening Ceremony of the fourth European Capital of Democracy

When can my City apply for ECoD?

The Application phase lasts from 1 September to 15 November 2025. The next call for applications is planned to open in Autumn 2026 (to be confirmed).

What are the Evaluation Criteria for the Application?

The Experts' Jury evaluate Applications on the following criteria, selecting a maximum of three Nominee Cities (from which the winning City is selected by the Citizens' Jury):

- **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

The Mission Statement indicates the City's ambition and motivation to participate in the ECoD Initiative and include an awareness of the City's strengths and challenges.

The Democracy Projects form the core of the Application, described in an informative way which includes an organisational and financial perspective. Each project should link back to the Mission Statement and one or more of the Dimensions of Democracy. The projects' innovation and impact are extremely important factors, as well as the level of acceptance/use by the target audiences (citizens); economic and environmental sustainability; Civil Society involvement; and, the relevance of the topic/project on a European scale / for other regions.

The Project Ideas showcase what's in the pipeline for the next few years. Here, the power of the ideas presented and the ambition behind them are assessed, as well as their political support and chances of realisation.

The Local Context is also assessed, in terms of the organisational capacity of the City; active partnerships with other organisations, institutions, and stakeholders; potential reach of citizens (communication and budget resources); and, the level of cooperation with Civil Society Organisations.

Is there a prize or grant awarded with the title?

ECoD NPO and its partners additionally bring well-established event formats, such as the Innovation in Politics Awards and ACT NOW Mayors' Conference, while the costs associated with application and participation in the ECoD Call are covered by the City.

Neither participating in the ECoD Call nor winning the title generates any prize money, but members of the European City Network profit from EU co-financing of meetings and webinars, as well as access to funding instruments and opportunities which can be jointly explored.

Which is the official language to be used for the ECoD Call, for the submission and the related documents?

English is the official language to be used in all documents and correspondence.

When will the Call submissions be evaluated?

Your full Application has to be submitted by 15 November 2025. After receiving your submission, ECoD NPO will check its formal correctness and completeness. From November 2025 to February 2026, the Experts' Jury will evaluate your submission and decide whether your City is going to be shortlisted as a Nominee City for European Capital of Democracy 2027.

When will I know the result of my City's application?

You will be notified 1 week after submission of part 1 if the information is complete and you can continue with part 2 of the Application. By 15 November 2025 (latest) you will be informed of your City's admission to the Call and European City Network. You can find the current timeline on our [website](#).

Are there contact details for individual enquiries?

For further information or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us via office@capitalofdemocracy.eu.

Who is the operating entity of the ECoD initiative?

European Capital of Democracy is a Europe-wide initiative of ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH (ECoD NPO), 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, supported by The Innovation in Politics Institute GmbH.

Is there a medium that regularly informs me about the ECoD initiative?

We publish a monthly newsletter to keep you informed about news and updates related to the European Capital of Democracy. You can subscribe to it on our [website](#).

Who finances the existing Democracy Projects and Project Ideas?

Current and completed democracy projects as laid out in the City's application have to be financed, organised and implemented by the City. It is possible to apply for co-funding of project ideas together with other members of the European City Network and/or ECoD NPO and other partner organisations.

How is ECoD NPO financed?

The necessary financial resources are raised through income from national and European funds, membership fees by Cities, activities (especially events, research and other services), subsidies from public institutions as well as private individuals, income from sponsoring, donations and other contributions.

Who are the Experts' Jury members?

The Experts' Jury Members are:

- Sanja Bojanic – University of Rijeka
- Bruno Kaufmann – Democracy International
- Haris Piplas – Drees & Sommer, Switzerland
- Antonella Valmorbida – ALDA Europe / European Partnership for Democracy

For more information, please refer to our [website](#).

Which resources are required from Cities?

European Capital in Democracy has been designed to provide a level playing field for all Cities over 100,000 inhabitants, asking for a minimum of resources while offering a maximum of benefits.

ECoD NPO provides a mobile Democracy Year app/website, serving as a central information and contact hub. ECN members support the ECoD Initiative with a membership fee of EUR 5,000 per year, covering the participation in physical meetings (including all related costs), contributions to monthly webinars and other activities. Special conditions for smaller cities with limited financial capacities or special economic circumstances are possible. Furthermore, ECN members are invited to continuously apply for European and other project funding, and to implement resulting activities together.

All member Cities are expected to join activities of and contribute to the European City Network with their expertise, for three in-person meetings a year (2-3 days per meeting, hosted in one of our member cities) and monthly webinars for exchange, collaboration and capacity building.

The designated European Capital of Democracy will be asked to participate in monthly Steering Board meetings between April and December 2026 to prepare the Democracy Year. During the Democracy Year in the title-holding City, representatives of all member Cities can present themselves and their democracy projects in various events and formats. The level of involvement is up to each City.

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 (<https://innovationinpolitics.eu/awards>), ACT NOW Mayors Conference (<https://innovationinpolitics.eu/actnow/conference>), Truth, Lies and Democracy (<https://capitalofdemocracy.eu/truth-lies-democracy>) and Art of Democracy (<https://artofdemocracy.eu>) - needs to be decided 3-4 months before the launch of the Democracy Year.

Municipal elections are planned between the ECoD 2027 announcement (March 2026) and the opening of the Democracy Year in December 2026, can our City still apply?

All eligible Cities that have provided a complete ECoD application as defined in the Call document (including mission statement, democracy projects and project ideas) by 15 November will be accepted as a member of the European City Network.

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 during the Democracy Year 2027 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.

We're concerned about the confidentiality clause. Does it mean that we can't publicly announce our participation in the ECoD initiative?

The confidentiality clause means that ECoD NPO doesn't announce the names of the Cities which do not forward a complete application, are not eligible or are rejected to join for other reasons as laid out in the Call document and its annexes. Cities are free to publicly announce their participation in the ECoD initiative.