

FAQ's on the Selection Process of European Capital of Democracy 2027

Türkiye is not a member of the European Union. Why are cities from Türkiye on the shortlist for the European Capital of Democracy 2027?

Turkish cities can participate in the European Capital of Democracy process because the Call for Applications is open to cities in all member states of the [Council of Europe](#) and Kosovo. Türkiye is a member of the Council of Europe and therefore eligible to take part in the initiative.

The European Capital of Democracy initiative focuses on democracy at the local level. Cities are evaluated based on their commitment to citizen participation, democratic innovation and inclusive governance within their municipal context.

The shortlisted cities – [Ankara](#), [Brussels](#) and [Denizli](#) – were selected by the independent [Experts' Jury](#) following a detailed evaluation of their applications and city visits. The [Experts' Jury](#) assessed the ambition and quality of the cities' democracy projects, project ideas, and their potential to lead meaningful improvements and strengthen democratic participation at the city level.

The shortlisted cities come from different national contexts, histories and political environments. What connects them is their commitment to strengthening democracy through participation, inclusive governance and democratic innovation at the local level.

Does being shortlisted for the European Capital of Democracy title endorse or reward a national government?

No. The European Capital of Democracy initiative does not evaluate or endorse national governments or national political systems. The initiative focuses exclusively on democracy at the municipal level.

Cities are assessed based on their democratic practices, participation initiatives and governance structures within the city administration. The evaluation focuses on how cities involve citizens in decision-making processes and how they develop innovative democratic practices locally.

The selection process is designed to recognise cities that create meaningful opportunities for participation and democratic engagement within their communities.

Can cities from countries experiencing democratic challenges still be considered?

Yes. The European Capital of Democracy initiative recognises that democracy is practiced and developed at multiple levels, including the local level. Cities often play an important role as spaces where democratic participation, civic engagement and innovation can take place in everyday life.

This can also happen in an environment where democratic standards deteriorate elsewhere. Cities can, in some cases, act as a bulwark against illiberal tendencies at the national level.

The initiative is based on the idea that cities are key arenas of democratic life. As stated in the Call document, cities are “incubators for democracy” and are often best placed to safeguard self-government, participation and democratic resilience at the local level.

At the same time, the evaluation is not only based on existing practices, but also on a city’s **future commitment**. Cities are expected to present **ambitious Project Ideas for their Democracy Year**, outlining how they intend to further strengthen citizen participation, improve access to democratic processes and advance inclusive governance. This forward-looking dimension is a key element of the selection process.

This is why the European Capital of Democracy focuses on democratic practice in cities and on how local institutions and communities create meaningful opportunities for participation.

Who receives the European Capital of Democracy title – the city, the national government, or institutions ?

The European Capital of Democracy title is awarded to a city, not to a national government, or an international institution.

This means, for example, that the title was awarded to [Vienna](#), not Austria; to [Barcelona](#), not Spain or Catalonia; and to [Cascais](#), not Portugal. In the same way, for 2027, the title will be awarded to a city – Ankara, Brussels or Denizli – not to the European Union, Belgium or Türkiye.

The initiative recognises democratic innovation and citizen participation at the municipal level. The title therefore honours the work of the city administration, local institutions, civil society organisations and citizens who contribute to strengthening democracy locally.

It does not evaluate or award national governments, national political systems, or European institutions.

FAQ about the European Capital of Democracy Initiative

What evaluation criteria are used to assess applications for the European Capital of Democracy title?

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 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.

Who finances the democracy projects and project ideas included in a city's application for European Capital of Democracy?

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.

Which cities are eligible to apply for the European Capital of Democracy title?

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 for a city of applying for the European Capital of Democracy title and joining the European City Network?

When applying for the ECoD title, Cities become part of 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 happens when a city is 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 a title-holding city benefit from the existing formats and events of the European Capital of Democracy initiative?

ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH will complement the City's Projects with established events like [The Innovation in Politics Awards](#), the [ACT NOW Mayors' Conference](#), and more, 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 Programme Year of each title-holding city.

What requirements must a city fulfil in order to apply for the European Capital of Democracy title?

If your City is eligible to participate in the Call (see 'Which cities are eligible to apply for the European Capital of Democracy title?'), 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 a city need to meet a minimum population requirement to apply for the European Capital of Democracy title?

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 does a city need to submit in order to apply for the European Capital of Democracy 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 Autumn 2026. 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.

(The Timeline for European Capital of Democracy 2028 selection process will be published in May 2026.)

Can cities apply for the European Capital of Democracy title with projects addressing emerging crises, such as supporting refugees or people in need?

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.

When can cities apply for the next European Capital of Democracy Call for Applications?

The Timeline for European Capital of Democracy 2028 selection process will be published in May 2026. Stay tuned!

Does winning the European Capital of Democracy title include a financial prize or grant?

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.

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.

Can the title of European Capital of Democracy be bought by a city?

No. The title of European Capital of Democracy cannot be purchased.

Cities are selected through a multi-stage and independent process involving both the [Experts' Jury](#) and the [Citizens' Jury](#). The [Experts' Jury](#) evaluates the applications and identifies up to three shortlisted cities. The final decision is made independently by the Citizens' Jury.

Financial contributions associated with participation in the initiative are clearly outlined in the Call document and are independent of the selection outcome.

How independent is the selection process for selecting the European Capital of Democracy?

The selection process is structured in several stages and separates formal screening, expert evaluation and the final citizen decision.

First, the ECoD Team reviews all applications to verify whether they are complete and in line with the eligibility criteria. This is a formal step and does not determine the winner. After that, the [Experts' Jury](#) evaluates the applications, visits the most promising cities and draws up a shortlist of up to three Nominee Cities. The final decision is then taken by the [Citizens' Jury](#). This multi-staged process is designed to ensure a fair and open selection process.

The [Experts' Jury](#) is composed of five distinguished professionals in democracy, urban planning, and development. It evaluates all call submissions, conducts on-site visits and assesses cities on the basis of clearly defined criteria. The [Citizens' Jury](#), which consists of more than 4,500 citizens from across Europe, then makes the final selection via a secure online platform.

The [Call document](#) also includes further safeguards. Applicant cities must provide formal documentation, including political support for participation, self-evaluations, a city council resolution or equivalent, and clearly structured project information. For reasons of professional conduct and impartiality, participants are explicitly asked not to contact Jury members or members of the [ECoD Consortium](#) directly. In addition, the initiative is monitored continuously, including with academic assistance from a partner institution.

Taken together, these elements are intended to ensure that the process is independent, methodologically credible and based on transparent rules and procedures.

What is the official language used for the European Capital of Democracy Call, applications and related documents?

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

Where can cities send individual enquiries about the European Capital of Democracy initiative?

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

Which organisation operates the European Capital of Democracy 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 newsletter or another regular source of updates about the European Capital of Democracy 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](#).

How is the European Capital of Democracy 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 members of the Experts' Jury for the European Capital of Democracy selection process?

The [Experts' Jury](#) Members are:

- Sanja Bojanic – [University of Rijeka](#)
- Paulina Fröhlich – [Bertelsmann Foundation](#)
- Bruno Kaufmann – [Democracy International](#)
- Haris Piplas – [Drees & Sommer, Switzerland](#)
- Antonella Valmorbida – [ALDA Europe](#)

What financial and organisational resources are required from cities participating in the European Capital of Democracy initiative?

European Capital of 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. [European City Network](#) 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 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 – [The Innovation in Politics Awards](#) (<https://awards.innovationinpolitics.eu/>), [ACT NOW Mayors Conference](#) (<https://actnow.capitalofdemocracy.eu/>), [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.

Are there any fees associated with applying for or participating in the European Capital of Democracy initiative?

Yes. Cities participating in the European Capital of Democracy initiative contribute financially to the broader programme.

Cities that submit a successful application and join the [European City Network](#) contribute a membership fee of €5,000 per year. This contribution supports network activities such as meetings, workshops and exchange formats between member cities. In addition, the city that is selected as European Capital of Democracy is invited and expected to join the [ECoD Consortium](#) and contribute €50,000 per year to support the preparation, implementation and communication of the Democracy Year.

These contributions are publicly documented in the Call for Applications and are independent of the selection process.