

# Apply to become European Capital of Democracy 2028

The fifth European Capital of Democracy will be designated in March 2027, selected by a jury of experts and over 5,500 European citizens. Title-holding city host a wide range of activities, designed to improve and strengthen democracy. Barcelona held the title in 2023/24, Vienna, the second European Capital of Democracy, held the title in 2024/25, Cascais holds the title in 2026 and the City of Brussels takes over in early 2027.

## 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 27 members from 15 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 throughout Europe, both large and small, 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 Democracy 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 European City Network engage in a fruitful exchange with fellow practitioners, international experts, civil society and citizens.
- » 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 ACT NOW Mayors' Conference.

# Selection Process for ECoD 2028

How does a city become a European Capital of Democracy? The ECoD Call for submissions will open in June 2026 for cities over 100,000 inhabitants from all Council of Europe member states enjoying full rights of representation, and Kosovo.

## PHASE 1 APPLICATION / JUNE - NOVEMBER 2026:

Cities apply for the title, presenting a portfolio of their best democratic practices and new project ideas. Apply by 15 July 2026 to receive a reduction on your ECN membership fee.

## PHASE 2 ADMISSION / NOVEMBER 2026:

The ECoD team screens the application documents for admissibility & completeness and informs applicant cities.

## PHASE 3 EVALUATION / NOVEMBER 2026 - FEBRUARY 2027:

An Experts' Jury evaluates the projects and decides on a shortlist of up to three cities.

## PHASE 4 EVALUATION / MARCH 2027:

Finally, a jury of over 5,500 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, training and capacity building project cooperation as ECoD partners.

Apply as a City to register your interest for ECoD 2028



**Register now!**



Register as a Citizens' Juror to select the next Capital of Democracy!

## Who we are

ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH (ECoD NPO) was founded in 2021 by The Innovation in Politics Institute GmbH, an independent and non-partisan organisation that identifies, develops and implements innovations in the private and public sector in order to strengthen democracy in Europe.

As a non-profit organisation, ECoD NPO's mission is to promote democratic governance and to strengthen social cohesion by fostering and expanding participation and awareness across the Council of Europe member states. For this purpose, a European Capital of Democracy is designated every year. Following Barcelona in 2023/24 and Vienna in 2024/25, Cascais currently holds the title of European Capital of Democracy 2026, with Brussels taking over in 2027. In cooperation with civil society and citizens, the designated city will curate, organise, and implement a Programme Year, featuring a wide range of activities and events. Visitors from all over Europe are invited to join and to participate.

We also present the annual ACT NOW Mayors' Conference and the Innovation in Politics Awards as highlights of the Democracy Year, as well as new innovative formats like Art of Democracy and the Truth, Lies & Democracy game jam.

## Contact

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

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