

European Capital of Democracy 2028

Call for Applications

June 2026

Table of contents



1. About the initiative	4
2. Why become a capital of democracy?	5
3. European City Network	6
4. Stages, Timeline and Contributions	6
5. Prerequisites	9
5.1 Eligibility	9
5.2 Prerequisites	10
6. Call Submission	11
6.1 Mission statement	12
6.2 Democracy Projects	13
6.2.1 Current and completed projects	13
6.2.2 Project ideas	14
7. Democracy Year	15
8. Selection by the Juries	16
8.1 Experts' Jury - Shortlist selection	16
8.2 Citizens' Jury - Final selection	16
9. Legal Notice	17
10. Miscellaneous	17
10.1 Consortium	17
10.2 Monitoring	17
10.3 Points of Contact	17
10.4 Sustainability	18
10.5 Other Guidelines	18
11. Annexes	18
› Financial Accountability, Impact Logic and Monitoring Matrix	18
› CI/CD Guidelines	18
› Compliance Guidelines	18
› Confidentiality Agreement	18
› Data Processing Agreement	18
› Data Security Guidelines	18
› Declaration of Intent and Exclusion Criteria (incl. Conflict of Interest Declaration)	18
› Democracy self-evaluation	18
› Dimensions of Democracy	18
› Diversity and Inclusion Guidelines	18
› Factsheet: Consortium	18
› Factsheet: ECoD NPO	18
› Factsheet: European City Network	18
› Factsheet: Innovation in Politics Institute	18
› Legal Framework	18
› Safeguarding Policy and Annexes (Forms of Violence Risk Assessment Code of Conduct)	19
› Sustainability Guidelines	19
12. Glossary	19

1. About the Initiative

Is your city ready to become a European beacon of democracy? Multiple crises, global shifts and technological revolutions are sending shockwaves through our societies, political institutions and international frameworks. Hence, we have to demand-and fight for-our freedom, our peace and our prosperity. Together, we must innovate democracy and prove that it delivers.

The European Capital of Democracy (ECoD) Initiative is a timely response to these challenges, strengthening resilience and making our democracies fit for the present and the future. Steered by an international Consortium and in partnership with European and international organisations, ECoD has built a strong network of Cities fostering participation, exchanging best practice and boosting the adaptation and implementation of successful democracy projects across Europe. **To foster and rebuild trust, strengthen societal cohesion and empower citizens, ECoD builds on its network of currently over 5,500 democracy defenders from the 46 member states of the Council of Europe, and Kosovo.**

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. In turbulent times, Cities are proving once more to be strongholds, increasing democratic resilience and empowerment at the regional level, and providing a plethora of opportunities to be seized and best practices to be shared. **Now is the time to put successful, innovative democratic practice to work, at scale, together with the citizens and supported by new technologies.**

To identify, address and interlink these spearheads of Democratic Innovation, **ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH¹ (hereinafter “ECoD NPO”), launched in 2021 by The Innovation in Politics Institute based in Austria, 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, a different city is selected by over 5,500 members of ECoD’s Citizens’ Jury, to become the next European Capital of Democracy. Following **Barcelona in 2023/24, Vienna in 2024/25, Cascais in 2026, and Brussels in 2027, this call invites Cities to apply as European Capital of Democracy 2028**, hosting high-level international events and bringing together leading politicians, experts, and representatives from the world of arts and culture and media from across Europe and beyond.

Here is what past and designated European Capitals of Democracy think:

Jaume Collboni, Mayor of Barcelona (ECoD 2023/24)

“Our city has hosted numerous events, exchanges, and initiatives that have fostered

¹ECoD 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.



dialogue, promoted inclusion, and empowered citizens to take an active role in shaping their futures. As we look back, we can be proud of the involvement of the diverse range of institutions, entities and initiatives that worked in Barcelona for the lasting impact of democracy in our city and beyond”.

Michael Ludwig, Mayor of Vienna (ECoD 2024/25)

“I am proud that we have been able to convince the jury of European citizens with our concepts on how to further advance democracy. As European Capital of Democracy, Vienna will demonstrate how social cohesion can be further strengthened through the participation of citizens”.

Carlos Carreiras, Mayor of Cascais (ECoD 2026)

“Being chosen as European Capital of Democracy 2026 is both an honour and an opportunity, one that we embrace with commitment, innovation, and an unwavering belief in the power of civic engagement”.

Philippe Close, Mayor of Brussels (ECoD 2027)

“This title is a recognition of the commitment of thousands of Brussels residents. Our city proves every day that democracy lives and grows thanks to its inhabitants”.

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, celebrating democratic innovation and participative approaches. The Democracy Year, featuring the title-holding City’s lighthouse projects and highlight events by ECoD NPO and international organisations, sets the stage for international dialogue and exchange:

- › All **citizens are invited to participate and contribute** to this endeavour.
- › City representatives, scientific and academic institutions, NGOs, businesses, and associations get involved and exchange ideas.
- › Cooperation partners, international organisations, foundations, and institutions **bring their events to the city**

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 **ACT NOW Mayors’ Conference** (<https://actnow.capitalofdemocracy.eu>), where international mayors, local innovators and young changemakers meet to tackle global challenges at a local level

- › **The Innovation in Politics Awards** (<https://awards.innovationinpolitics.eu>) which showcase up to 80 best practice projects in 8 categories (e.g. Climate Protection, Strengthening Europe, Democracy)
- › **Truth, Lies & Democracy** (<https://capitalofdemocracy.eu/truth-lies-democracy/>), a two-day game jam on identifying and tackling fake news, connecting this vital 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 Designate will coordinate with the relevant stakeholders to plan, co-finance, implement and monitor the individual activities, elements and projects.

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. The ECN is a strong network of twenty-seven cities that fosters participation and provides a platform for cities to showcase how we can improve local democracy.

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 responsible for democracy and civic participation to actively participate in network activities. Our twenty-seven ECN members come from fifteen countries across Europe are: Ankara (TR), Antwerp (BE), Barcelona (ES), Bologna (IT), Braga (PT), Bratislava (SK), Brussels (BE), Burgos (ES), Cascais (PT), Denizli (TR), Durrës (AL), Gdańsk (PL), İzmir (TR), Kyiv (UA), Krakow (PL), Leipzig (DE), Linz (AT), Maia (PT), Metz (FR), Opole (PL), Rotterdam (NL), Rzeszów (PL), Sarajevo (BiH), Sofia (BG), Tirana (AL), Valongo (PT), and Vienna (AT).

ECN members benefit from:

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



4. Stages, Timeline and Contributions

The ECoD 2028 Call for submissions is open from 15 June to 1 November 2026.

The following stages ensure a fair and open selection process for the title of European Capital of Democracy 2028:

Stage 1 Early-Bird Application - 15 Jun – 30 Jul 26

Early Applicant Cities submit their full Call application including a mission statement and project descriptions – and receive a 50% reduction on the ECN contribution fee.

Stage 2 Regular Application - 1 Aug – 1 Nov 26

Interested Cities submit their Call application, including a mission statement and project descriptions, together with an organisational, technical and democratic self-evaluation.

Stage 3 Admission - ECoD NPO, Nov 26

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 4 Evaluation - Experts' Jury, Nov 26 – Feb 27

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

Stage 5 Selection - Citizens' Jury, Mar 27

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 1 November 2026. For details, please refer to 5.2 - prerequisites. Cities have the option to submit an Early-Bird Application. This application window is open from 15 June 2026 to 30 July 2026. An Early-Bird submission results in a 50% reduction of the European City Network membership contribution for the year 2027.

ECoD NPO then conducts a formal check of all complete Call submissions. All applications are treated confidentially. Cities that meet the prerequisites and initial screening by the ECoD Team, will be notified of their acceptance into the European City Network by the end of November 2026. Following the initial screening process, the ECoD Experts' Jury will

convene to review all applicant cities and decide which cities will be placed on the longlist to be visited during the City Visits.

After the City visits have been completed, the Experts' Jury will draw up a Shortlist of up to three outstanding contenders (the Nominee Cities) by early February 2027. The Citizens' Jury will then select the European Capital of Democracy, to be publicly announced in March 2027. Over the subsequent nine months, the City Designate will prepare for the Democracy Year 2028.

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 2028



Contributions

The title-holding City will join the ECoD Consortium (EUR 50,000 per year to support the Democracy Year preparation, implementation and communication), which is formalised in the Steering Group meetings. Financial and organisational support for the co-organised events - The Innovation in Politics Awards, ACT NOW Mayors Conference, and Truth, Lies and Democracy needs to be decided by end of July 2027 at the latest.

All applicant cities, including re-applying cities, support the ECoD Initiative through an ECN membership fee of EUR 5,000 per year², covering the participation in physical meetings, contributions to monthly webinars and other activities. Furthermore, ECN members are invited to jointly apply for European and other project funding, and to implement resulting activities together.

5. Prerequisites

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.

Hence, 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, Kosovo, 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, and the United Kingdom.

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, Applicant Cities must confirm fulfilling the following 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.

² Special conditions for smaller cities with limited financial capacities or special economic circumstances are possible

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 2027 and the start of the Democracy Year in early 2028, 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 list of events which are held in the City in 2028 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, iCapital etc.)

- › **Facilities and infrastructure**

- › **Venues:** List of three or more venues of different sizes that could be used during the Democracy Year.



- › **Transport:** Describe accessibility for national and international visitors and transportation within the City.
- › **Accommodation:** State the direct (city area) and indirect (local area) accommodation capacities.
- › **Significant construction projects and road works:** Provide an overview of the most substantial infrastructure projects scheduled for the ECoD Democracy Year, if applicable.

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 existing 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 to the Application 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
- › Online Democracy self-evaluation, 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 Call³
- › Establishment of a representative (single point of contact) by the City
- › Mission statement and selected existing Democracy Projects and project ideas for the Democracy Year and beyond⁴ including images, videos and website URLs (in the predefined form and structure), including an executive summary

³ Depending on the relevant city body's meeting schedule, this document can be provided after the deadline

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.

All complete Call submissions that have been handed in on time will be forwarded to the Experts' Jury for evaluation by November 2026, after the initial screening conducted by ECoD NPO. The most outstanding Applicant Cities will be placed on the longlist and visited in December 2026, January and February 2027.

Preparation and Implementation Phase (applies to designated European Capital of Democracy 2028 only):

- › Confirmation of the representative's power to act and sign on behalf of the City
- › Designation of representatives for the ECoD Steering Group
- › Establishment of a project implementation team (covering project management, event management, communication, financial matters and political liaising with the Mayor and relevant City Council members)
- › Regular meetings with political leadership (Mayor or City Councillor)

You can find previous applications of Nominee Cities on our website at <https://capitalofdemocracy.eu>.

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?

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:** Detailed description, including how the project contributes to the overall mission.
- › **Target group & communication strategy:** Who is this activity aimed at and how is it advertised or communicated to the target audience?
- › **Project partners:** Are Civil Society Organisations or other external partners involved in the project?
- › **Duration and time frame:** Is it a one-off, regular, or permanent project?
- › **Budget:** Provide an estimate of the project budget and an indication of how it has been funded:
 - › One-time costs (planning and preparation)
 - › Operational costs (per year)
 - › Funding provided by the city (in percent)
- › **Democracy Year Integration:** How will you showcase this project during the ECoD Democracy Year? How can it be featured or integrated in an event?
- › **Democracy Dimension:** Community / Empowerment / Participation / Sustainability / Technology

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 by the project owner or political representative, explaining the idea to the jurors. 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?
- › **Implementation:**
 - › 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 Democracy Year.

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 & 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 (www.capitalofdemocracy.eu).

8.2 Citizens' Jury - Final selection

As a living example of participatory practice, a jury of currently over 5,500 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. Each Citizen Juror may rate the three shortlisted cities on a scale of 1-5 stars (1=lowest, 5=highest). Members of the Citizens' Jury may not rate Cities within their country of residence. 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 Consortium

The ECoD Consortium serves as a high-level advisory body providing strategic guidance, expertise, and support to the ECoD initiative. Members contribute to shaping the direction of ECoD, fostering collaborations within the ECN, and promoting democratic values across Europe. The Consortium facilitates knowledge exchange, joint initiatives, and advocacy efforts to strengthen urban democracy. For details, please refer to <https://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 Consortium 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 and Safeguarding Policy. All relevant guidelines are included as Annexes. Current versions can be found at <https://capitalofdemocracy.eu/guidelines/>.

11. Annexes

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 and [Safeguarding Policy](#). All relevant guidelines are included as Annexes. Current versions can be found at <https://capitalofdemocracy.eu/guidelines/>.

- | | |
|---|---|
| › Financial Accountability, Impact Logic and Monitoring Matrix | › Democracy self-evaluation |
| › CI/CD Guidelines | › Dimensions of Democracy |
| › Compliance Guidelines | › Diversity and Inclusion Guidelines |
| › Confidentiality Agreement | › Factsheet: Consortium |
| › Data Processing Agreement | › Factsheet: ECoD NPO |
| › Data Security Guidelines | › Factsheet: European City Network |
| › Declaration of Intent and Exclusion Criteria (incl. Conflict of Interest Declaration) | › Factsheet: Innovation in Politics Institute |
| | › Legal Framework |



12. Glossary

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 join the European City Network and submit their bid to become European Capital of Democracy for a year.
Citizens	All inhabitants of a city, regardless their age, gender, socio-economic and legal status.
ECoD Citizens' Jury	A Jury of currently over 5,500 ⁵ citizens from all Council of Europe member states enjoying full rights of representation, and Kosovo, 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.
Consortium	The ECoD Consortium serves as a high-level advisory body providing strategic guidance, expertise, and support to the ECoD initiative.
Democracy Project	An initiative, project or policy planned or implemented by a City which strengthens democracy.
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, with the term ECoD Initiative covering 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.

⁵ as of April 2025

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	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 European City Network. Please consult our website (www.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.
Programme Year / 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 2028 and ending with a closing ceremony in winter 2028.
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 Designate.
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.



ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH

European Capital of Democracy
Ungargasse 59-61, 1030 Vienna, Austria
office@capitalofdemocracy.eu
+43 660 1027903