

## **Barcelona and Vienna – A Joint Statement: Safeguarding the Future of Democratic Innovation in Europe**

As Barcelona passes the baton to Vienna as the European Capital of Democracy 2024/25, we celebrate our shared commitment to democratic values and the role cities play in fostering civic engagement. This moment marks not only a transfer of responsibilities but a reaffirmation of our dedication to nurturing and safeguarding democracy at the local level.

### **Cities as Beacons of Democracy**

Cities are the heart of democracy, uniquely positioned to understand and respond to the needs of their citizens. They serve as vibrant platforms, where diverse communities can come together and connect across all cultures and backgrounds, acting as bulwarks against the current populist wave. Barcelona's year as inaugural European Capital of Democracy has demonstrated how a city can radiate democratic ideals, enhancing democratic participation and empowering citizens to shape their own future. Barcelona has served as democratic stronghold on an international scale.

### **Fostering Democratic Innovation**

The dynamic environments of cities provide fertile ground for creativity and experimentation in democratic practices. Both Barcelona and Vienna, along with the entire ECoD City Network, have showcased a plethora of best practices that encourage innovation and can inspire other cities. Our cities exemplify how local experimentation can lead to meaningful advancements in democracy. By cultivating spaces where new ideas can flourish, we pave the way for more responsive and inclusive governance.

### **City-to-City Collaboration**

To further advance democracy, it is vital that cities maintain a close exchange of ideas and best practices. We invite all citizens, politicians, members of the municipal administration, business leaders, academics, young changemakers and civil society representatives to join us in Vienna for the upcoming Democracy Year. A wide range of activities will create an engaging space to share expertise, draw inspiration from one another, and strengthen bonds within the international democratic community.

We also encourage other cities to apply for the title of European Capital of Democracy 2026, ensuring a continued focus on democratic values across Europe at <https://capitalofdemocracy.eu>

Together, let us embrace this moment to reinvigorate our commitment to democracy and work hand in hand towards a brighter, more inclusive future.

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