

Barcelona, 18th of January 2023

European Capital of Democracy

Antonella VALMORBIDA, Chair of the Jury

This is a very big day today. We are awarding the first title of the European Capital of Democracy. On behalf of the whole jury members and on behalf of ALDA, the European Association for Local Democracy, I would like to congratulate Barcelona, its political representatives, its team and all its citizens. Indeed, this is what is all about: a great experience of governing and loving its own town, with commitment of the political level with vision and responsibility, the functioning of the team and the recognition and participation of citizens.

We, the members of the jury, had both a fantastic time evaluating the applications and also a very difficult task to preselect the three last ones: Braga, Brussels and Barcelona. It was fantastic in the three of them to see the innovation put in place, the way that democracy was more structured and applied in day to day live and of citizens and how indeed this cooperation brought visible effects on the quality of life of citizens. We saw vibrant communities and fantastic proposals. We were driven by our personal experience coming from different background and countries. I have been accompanied by Bruno Kaufman, Amina Krvavac, Jaimie Just and Robert Krimmer. We decided together with ECoD team the principles and features of the selection and then also visited the potential towns. The final word stayed in the hands of the citizens' jury.

The city of Barcelona is the winner. We hope that this experience will help us all together to give visibility and recognition to the efforts made in this town to translate words into facts and to have an impactful local democracy, together and for citizens. We would like also that this prize could be a mean of motivation as example and source of inspiration for others. We wanted not only to recognize those who have done a lot (as in fact Barcelona did) but also we measured the level of ambition, vision and coherent and holistic approach in implementing democracy at the local level. We found Barcelona team and projects going into this direction with a full commitment of the political level, the specialization and focus of the team, and the full engagement of civil society.

We loved the projects and were excited to discuss about them all: They aim to include the general population, minority groups, and disadvantaged citizens. It sometimes seems that participation is even part of their DNA. Co-creation, co-production, and inclusion of other sectors are embedded and welcomed by all stakeholders we spoke to.

We know that words are easy to write while implementation is MUCH more difficult. And we saw that here we try hard to DO democracy at the local level.

The vision was articulated in projects ideas and activities: a democratic innovation for a democratic city. The climate participatory budgeting project is a robust and clear extension of existing approaches from which strong results can be expected. We are aware of the challenge of technology and digitalization and the way it is addressed in democratic terms and instrument is really interesting. We came across approaches to collaborative spaces in the theater/performing arts industry with brilliant democracy ideas. The focus on youth and

environment was also striking in initiatives and programmes. The scale of commitment was also relevant in terms of people engaged and sum allocated, showing a real commitment and a wish of constant improvement (like in superbloc or participatory budget). Innovation in forms of participation have been tested. I can only confirm that there we had an excellent impression of the organizational and communication capacity of the City to deliver and effectively promote a ECoD programme year. We are looking forward to be part for instance in the federative deliberation on metropolitan climate changes and in the climate participatory budget. And of course much more.

Finally, it is just so nice to be here. It is such a nice place in troubled world.

We are convinced that local Democracy will save Democracy.

Good luck!