

40 YEARS OF ECCO

A stylized map of Europe is depicted using a network of blue and teal lines. A string of colorful lights, featuring yellow, blue, and purple circles, is draped across the map, passing through the letters of the '40 YEARS OF ECCO' text.

Chemnitz
European Capital
of Culture



GO! 2025
NOVA GORICA
GORIZIA

European
Capital
of Culture



YE4RS OF
EUROPEAN
CAPITALS
OF CULTURE



WHITE PAPER: 40 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 40 YEARS OF ECOC

FINAL RELEASE MAY 2025



POLITICAL MATTER 1.
EUROPE IN
EVERYTHING YOU DO



POLITICAL MATTER 1.
EUROPE IN
EVERYTHING YOU DO



POLITICAL MATTER 2.
CELEBRATE WHAT
YOU CHANGE

POLITICAL MATTER 1.
EUROPE IN
EVERYTHING YOU DO



POLITICAL MATTER 2.
CELEBRATE WHAT
YOU CHANGE

POLITICAL MATTER 3.
MAKE IT SIMPLE AND
TRANSPARENT

**POLITICAL MATTER 1.
EUROPE IN
EVERYTHING YOU DO**



**POLITICAL MATTER 2.
CELEBRATE WHAT
YOU CHANGE**

**POLITICAL MATTER 4.
KEEP YOUR
PROMISES**

**POLITICAL MATTER 3.
MAKE IT SIMPLE AND
TRANSPARENT**

**POLITICAL MATTER 1.
EUROPE IN
EVERYTHING YOU DO**

**POLITICAL MATTER 5.
STOP MAKING THE
SAME MISTAKES**

**POLITICAL MATTER 2.
CELEBRATE WHAT
YOU CHANGE**

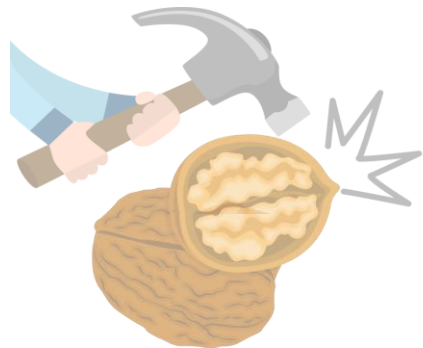
**POLITICAL MATTER 4.
KEEP YOUR
PROMISES**

**POLITICAL MATTER 3.
MAKE IT SIMPLE AND
TRANSPARENT**

HOW DID WE GET THERE?



40 YEARS OF ECOC IN A NUTSHELL



+240

Candidate Cities

82

Capitals until 2029

33

Hosting countries

92

by 2033

52mIn

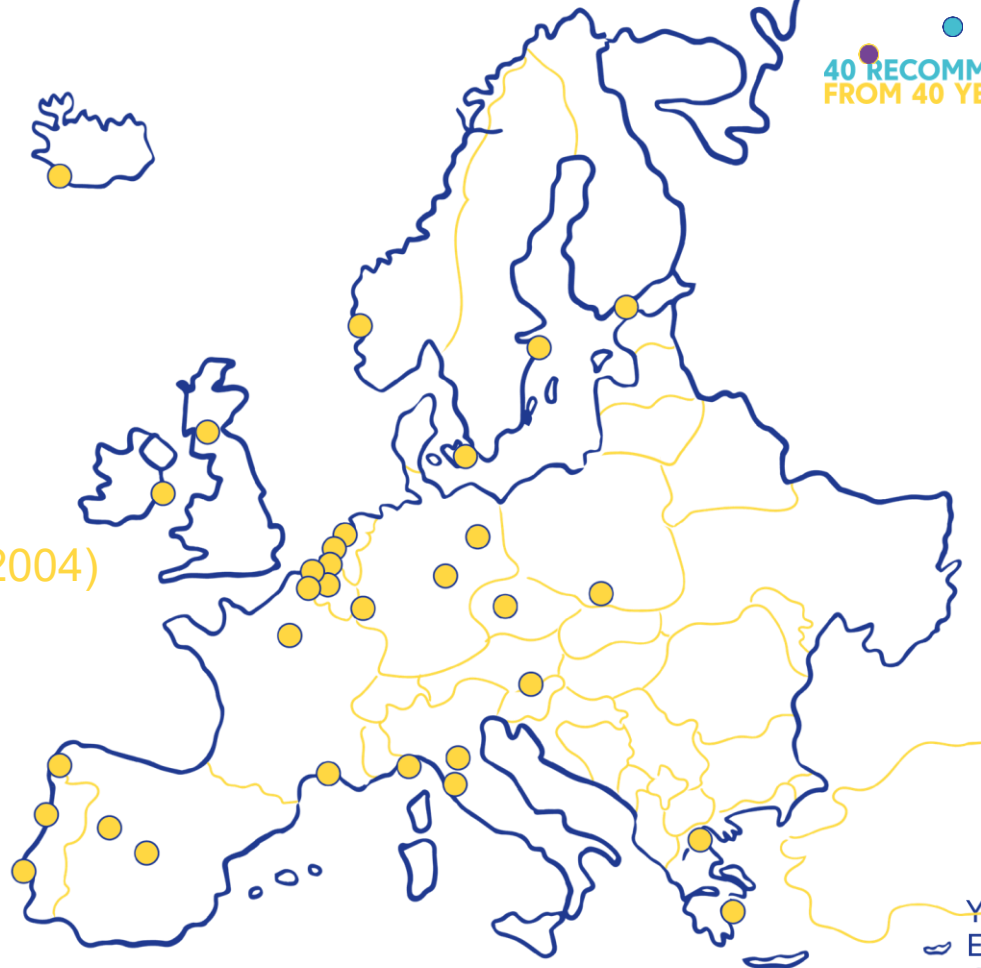
Europeans possibly
experienced the ECoC

40 RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM 40 YEARS OF ECOC

SEASON 1

Symbolic Celebration (1985-2004)

- Celebration of **Europe's rich and diverse cultures.**
- **No competition** organised.



Chemnitz
European Capital
of Culture



GO! 2025
NOVA GORICA
GORIZIA

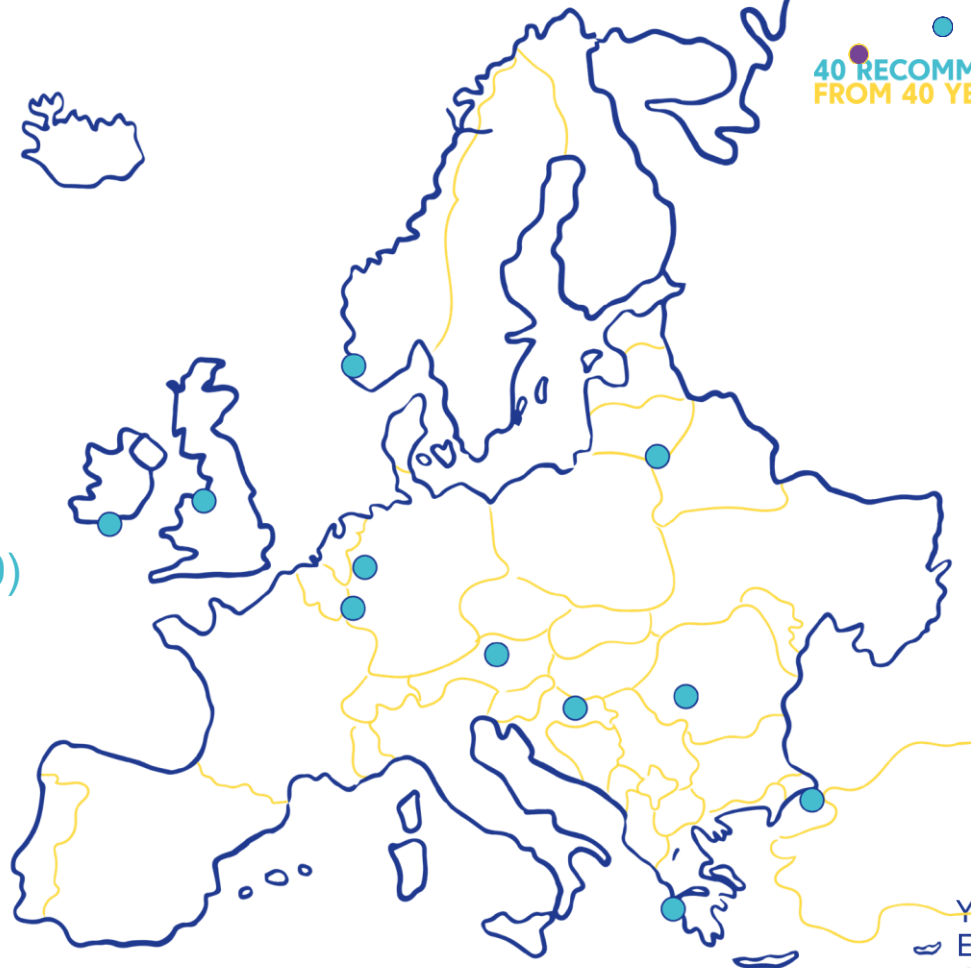
European
Capital
of Culture

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SEASON 2

Institutionalisation (2005-2010)

- **First legal basis** adopted.
- Title requires a **specific cultural programme** having a **European dimension**.



40 RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM 40 YEARS OF ECOC

SEASON 3

Professionalisation (2011-2019)

- Legal basis revised.
- **Two-stage competitive selection** introduced.



SEASON 4

Legacy (2020-2033)

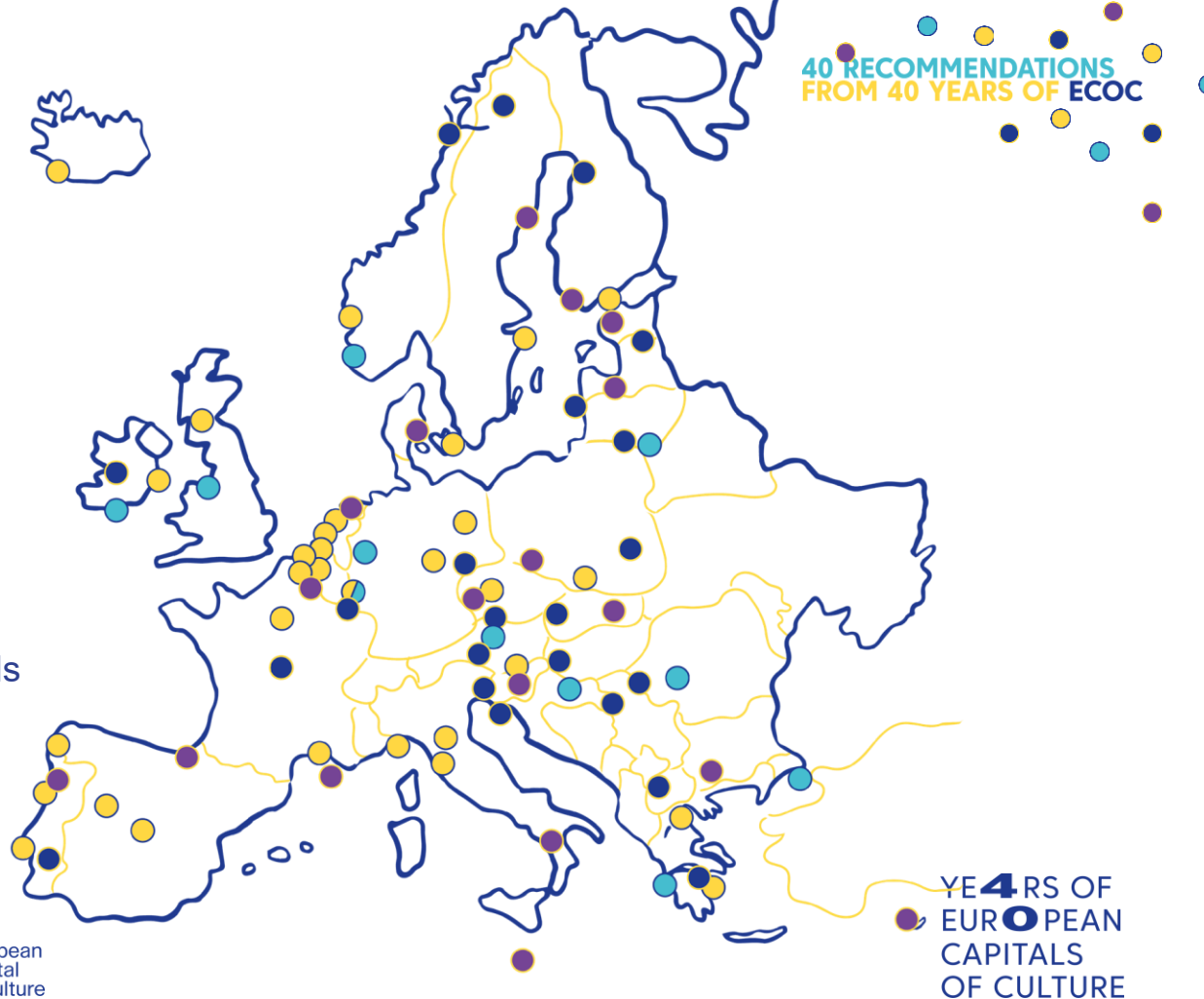
- **Second general objective** introduced.
- 1) celebration + **2) legacy**.



40 RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM 40 YEARS OF ECOC

2034: WHAT'S NEXT?

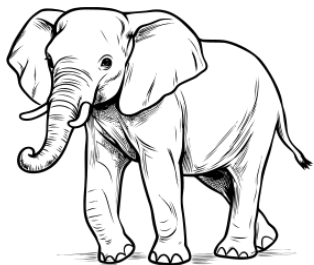
- New EU legal basis for Capitals from 2034.



FOUR POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR 2034 ON

CELEBRATION

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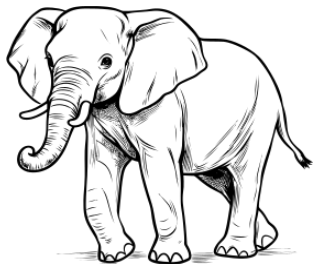
PARADING ELEPHANT

A majestic European celebration.

FOUR POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR 2034 ON

CELEBRATION

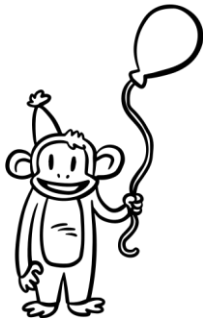
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PARADING ELEPHANT

A majestic European celebration.

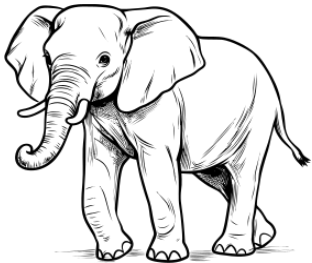
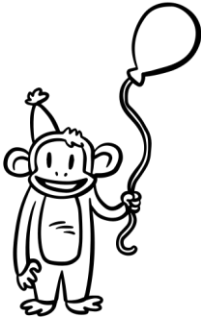

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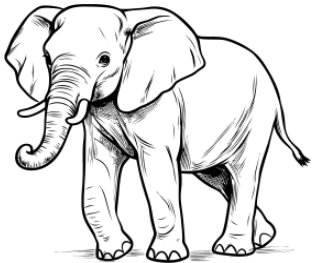

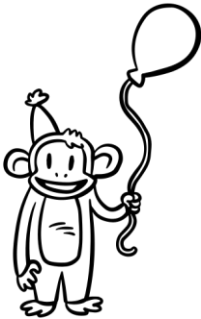

FESTIVE MONKEY

A playful local celebration.

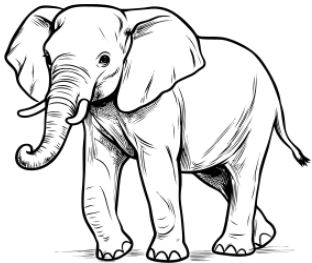

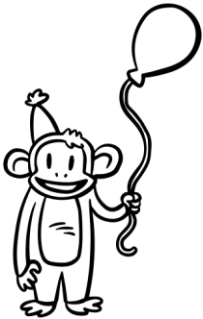

FOUR POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR 2034 ON

		CELEBRATION	CHANGE
EUROPEAN	LOCAL	 <p>PARADING ELEPHANT</p> <p><i>A majestic <i>European</i> celebration.</i></p>	
		 <p>FESTIVE MONKEY</p> <p><i>A playful <i>local</i> celebration.</i></p>	 <p>RISING BEAVER</p> <p><i>A programme bringing gradual but steady <i>local</i> change.</i></p>

FOUR POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR 2034 ON

CELEBRATION		CHANGE	
EUROPEAN		PARADING ELEPHANT	A majestic <i>European</i> celebration.
		EUROPEAN PHOENIX	A programme of <i>European</i> rebirth and change.
LOCAL		FESTIVE MONKEY	A playful <i>local</i> celebration.
		RISING BEAVER	A programme bringing gradual but steady <i>local</i> change.

FOUR POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR 2034 ON

		CELEBRATION	CHANGE
EUROPEAN		 <p>PARADING ELEPHANT</p> <p><i>A majestic European celebration.</i></p>	 <p>EUROPEAN PHOENIX</p> <p><i>A programme of European rebirth and change.</i></p>
	LOCAL	 <p>FESTIVE MONKEY</p> <p><i>A playful local celebration.</i></p>	 <p>RISING BEAVER</p> <p><i>A programme bringing gradual but steady local change.</i></p>

THE WHITE PAPER

40 RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM 40 YEARS OF ECoC



WHAT

40 actionable recommendations to enhance ECoC's impact and relevance and align it with **contemporary challenges**.



WHY

Guide EU decision-makers in the Commission, European Parliament, Council, and Committee of the Regions, who will prepare the **new legal basis** (draft: 2025; adoption: 2027).



HOW

Complement the **mid-term evaluation** carried out by the EU Commission + research by others (Culture Next, Eurocities) through **practical insights** from **ECoC managers**.

TWO CRITICAL REALITIES

40 RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM 40 YEARS OF ECOC



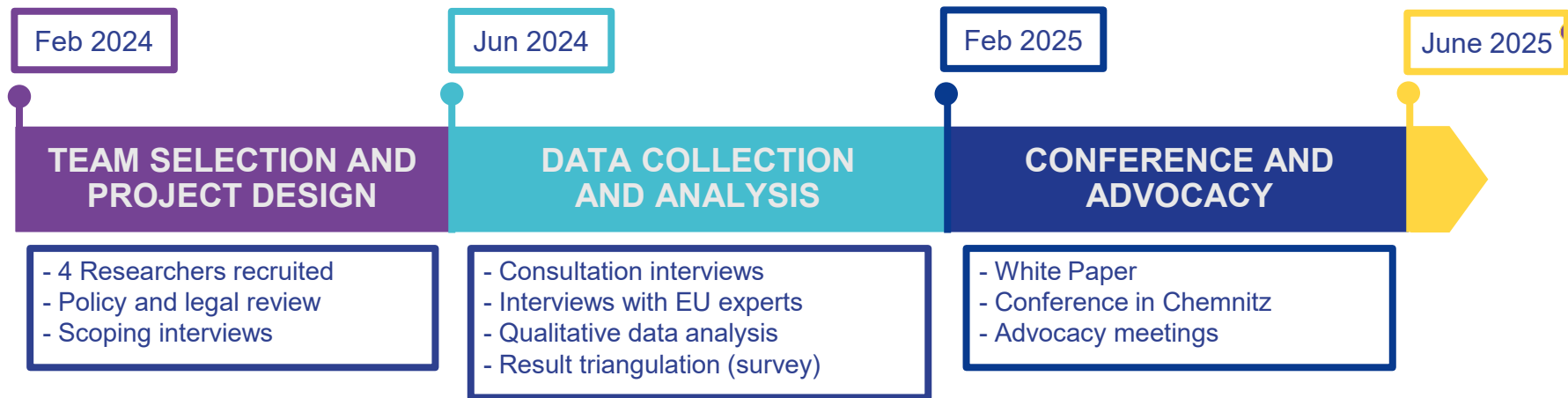
EU LIMITED
RESOURCES



LEGAL
BASIS

METHODOLOGY AND TIMELINE

40 RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM 40 YEARS OF ECOC



Representative from

64 ECoC cities

interviewed



“The whole focus needs to be more, not on the celebration of a Capital of Culture, but on the whole notion really **focusing on long-term development and change.**”

“There is a very **specific skill set** and knowledge that only people who have designed, developed and delivered an ECoC will have, that's just fact, and they are best placed, in my humble opinion, to support others and to understand.”



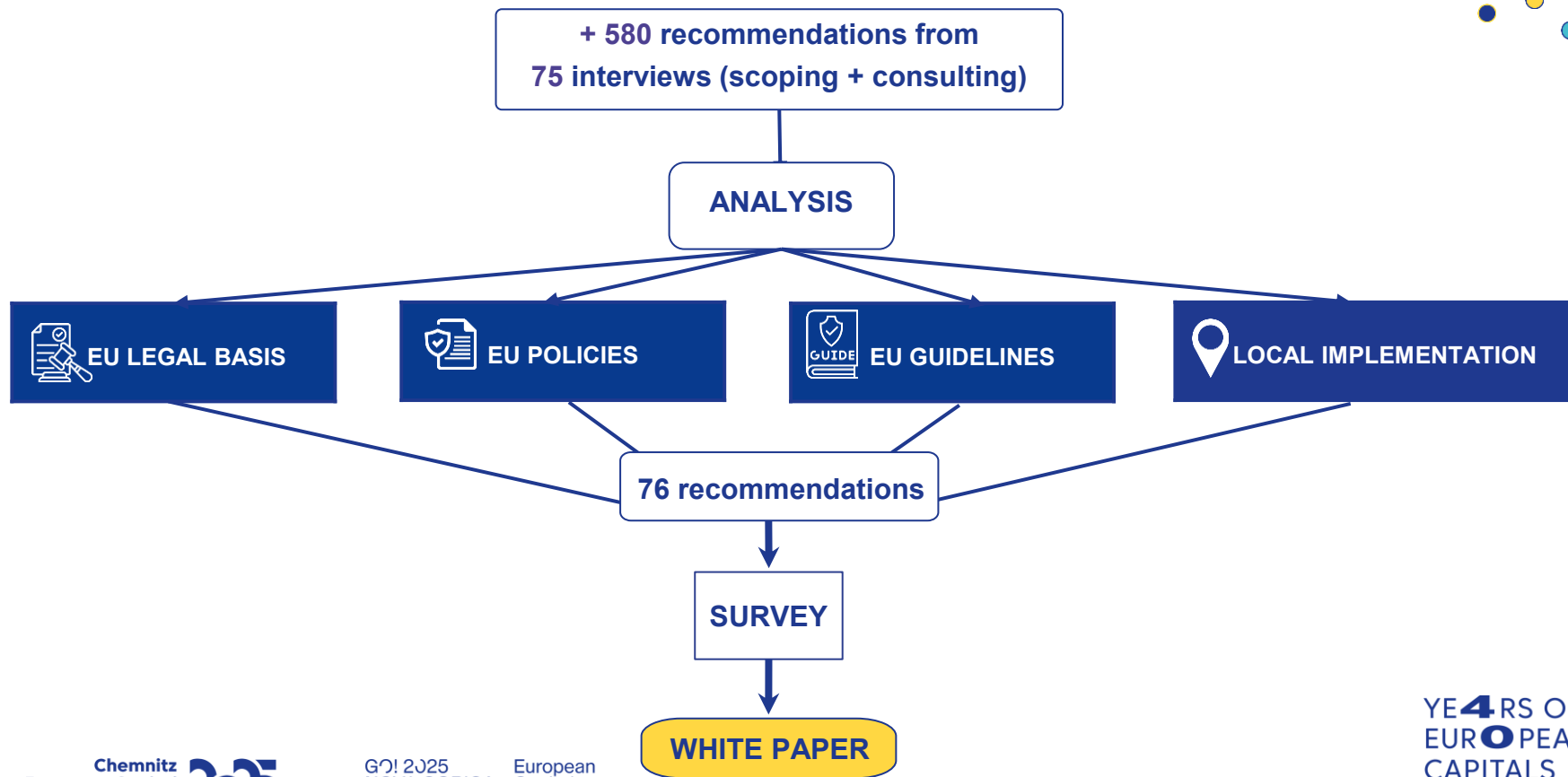
“Tradition can live long only if it is combined with **innovation.**”

“I would strongly stress that there should be a way to really assess the commitment of a city to be an ECoC and to their **capacity to understand that this is a long-term effort.** So it shouldn't be a marketing exercise. It should be for real.”



IMPLEMENTATION: FOUR OPTIONS, A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

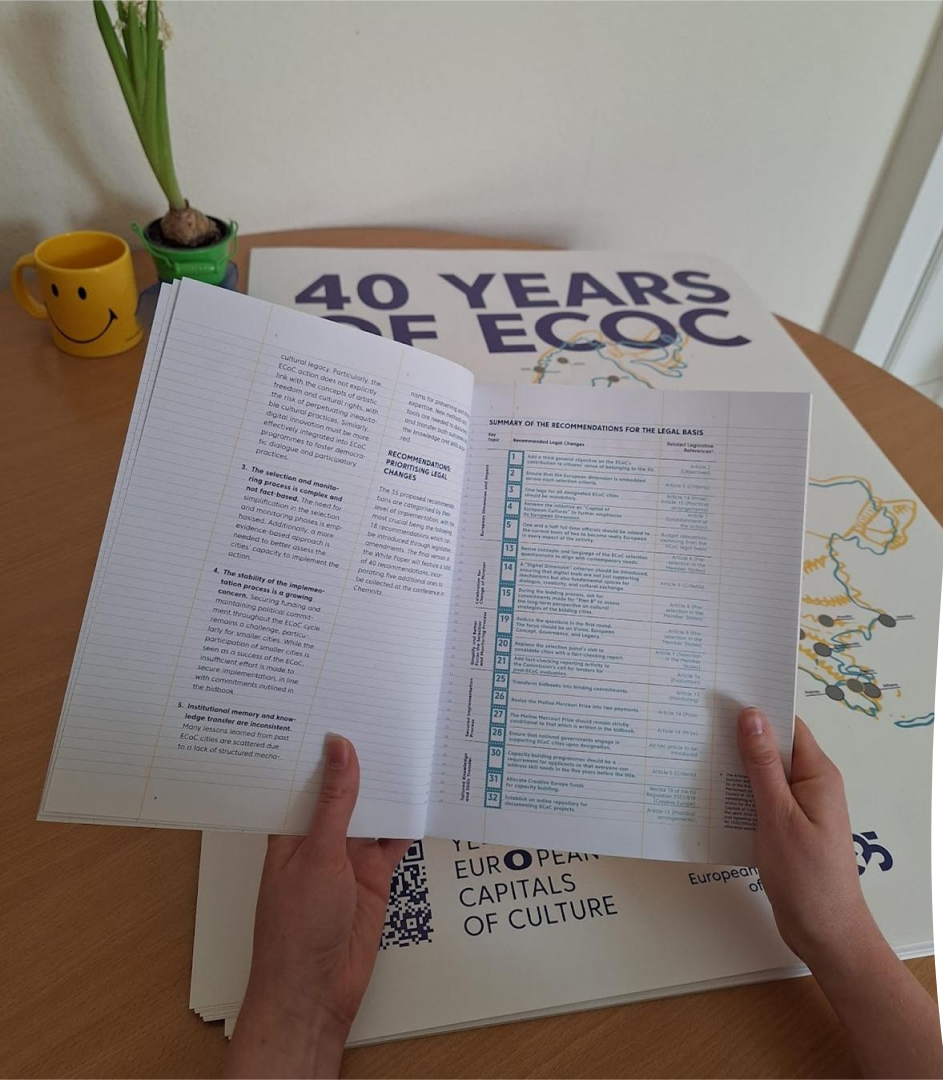
40 RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM 40 YEARS OF ECOC



40 RECOMMENDATIONS

19

of which are
«legal» recommendations



40 RECOMMENDATIONS

19

of which are
«legal» recommendations

5

co-designed
in Chemnitz

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OF CULTURE

40 YEARS OF ECOC

cultural legacy. Particularly, the link with the concept of artistic freedom and cultural rights, with the risk of perpetuating inequitable practices. Similarly, digital innovation must be more effectively integrated into ECOC programmes to foster democratic dialogue and participatory practices.

3. The selection and monitoring process is complex and not fact-based. The need for simplification in the selection and monitoring phases is evidenced. Additionally, a more evidence-based approach is needed to better assess the cities' capacity to implement the action.

4. The stability of the implementation process is a growing concern. Security of funding and consistent political commitment throughout the ECOC cycle remains a challenge, particularly for smaller cities. While the participation of smaller cities is seen as a success of the ECOC, insufficient effort is made to secure implementation, in line with commitments outlined in the bidbook.

5. Institutional memory and knowledge transfer are inconsistent. Many issues derived from past ECOC cities are scattered as a result of a lack of structured mechanisms for transferring knowledge and experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITISING LEGAL CHANGES

The 14 proposed recommendations are categorised by the level of implementation which must occur during the bidding process. Recommendations which will be implemented through legislative amendments, the final set of 40 recommendations, prioritising five additional ones to be collected at the conference in Chemnitz.

SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEGAL BASIS

Key Recommendation	Recommended Legal Changes	Responsible Government
1	State a clear general objective for the ECOC, including the criteria: 'aim of becoming a European Capital of Culture'.	Article 2 (Contract)
2	Ensure that the European Commission is involved in the selection process.	Article 3 (Contract)
3	Ensure that the selection process is transparent and fact-based.	Article 4 (Contract)
4	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 5 (Contract)
5	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 6 (Contract)
6	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 7 (Contract)
7	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 8 (Contract)
8	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 9 (Contract)
9	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 10 (Contract)
10	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 11 (Contract)
11	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 12 (Contract)
12	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 13 (Contract)
13	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 14 (Contract)
14	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 15 (Contract)
15	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 16 (Contract)
16	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 17 (Contract)
17	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 18 (Contract)
18	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 19 (Contract)
19	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 20 (Contract)
20	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 21 (Contract)
21	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 22 (Contract)
22	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 23 (Contract)
23	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 24 (Contract)
24	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 25 (Contract)
25	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 26 (Contract)
26	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 27 (Contract)
27	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 28 (Contract)
28	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 29 (Contract)
29	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 30 (Contract)
30	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 31 (Contract)
31	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 32 (Contract)
32	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 33 (Contract)
33	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 34 (Contract)
34	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 35 (Contract)
35	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 36 (Contract)
36	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 37 (Contract)
37	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 38 (Contract)
38	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 39 (Contract)
39	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 40 (Contract)
40	Ensure that the selection process is evidence-based.	Article 41 (Contract)

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CAPITALS
OF CULTURE

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of

RECOMMENDED LEGAL CHANGES

Key Political Matter	Legal instruments to bring change	Related articles ³	Key Political Matter	Recommendations	Related Legislative References ³
POLITICAL MATTER 1. EUROPE IN EVERYTHING YOU DO	General objectives	2	POLITICAL MATTER 1. EUROPE IN EVERYTHING YOU DO	1 Add a third general objective on the EcoC's contribution to citizens' sense of belonging to the EU	Article 2 (Objectives)
	Selection criteria	5		2 Ensure that the European dimension is embedded across each selection criteria	Article 5 (Criteria)
	ECoC Logo	15		3 One logo for all designated EcoC cities should be mandatory.	Article 14 (Prize); Article 15 (Practical arrangements)
	Budget allocation for staff and communication	—		4 Dedicate specific EU funding and expertise to professionalise the communication of the EcoC action.	Budget allocations stemming from the EcoC legal basis
POLITICAL MATTER 2. CELEBRATE WHAT YOU CHANGE	Pre-selection process	8	POLITICAL MATTER 2. CELEBRATE WHAT YOU CHANGE	5 The equivalent of 1.5 full-time staff should be added to the current team of two to become European in every aspect of the activity.	Budget allocations stemming from the EcoC legal basis
	In Member States	5		14 Revise concepts and language of the EcoC selection questionnaire to align with contemporary needs.	Article 8 (Pre-selection in the Member States)
	Selection criteria	5		15 A "Digital dimension" criterion should be introduced, ensuring that digital tools are not just supporting mechanisms but also fundamental spaces for dialogue, creativity, and cultural exchange.	Article 5 (Criteria)
				16 Introduce "Sustainability" as a selection criterion, integrating culture as a driver and fundamental condition for economic, environmental, and social sustainability.	Article 5 (Criteria)
POLITICAL MATTER 3. MAKE IT SIMPLE AND TRANSPARENT	Pre-selection process	8	POLITICAL MATTER 3. MAKE IT SIMPLE AND TRANSPARENT	17 During the bidding process, ask for commitments made for "Plan B" to assess the long-term perspective on cultural strategies of the bidding cities.	Article 8 (Pre-selection in the Member States)
	In Member States	8		22 Reduce the questions in the first round. The focus should be on Vision, European Concept, Governance, and Legacy.	Article 8 (Pre-selection in the Member States)
	Selection process in Member States	9		23 Replace the selection panel's visit to candidate cities with a fact-checking report.	Article 9 (Selection in the Member States)
	Evaluation process	16		24 Add fact-checking reporting activity to the Commission's call for tenders for post-EcoC evaluation.	Article 16 (Evaluation)
POLITICAL MATTER 4. KEEP YOUR PROMISES	Monitoring process	13	POLITICAL MATTER 4. KEEP YOUR PROMISES	30 Transform bidbooks into binding commitments.	Article 13 (Monitoring)
	Melina Mercouri Prize	14		31 Revise the Melina Mercouri Prize into two payments.	Article 14 (Prize)
				32 The Melina Mercouri Prize should remain strictly conditional to what is written in the bidbook.	Article 14 (Prize)
				33 Ensure that national governments engage in supporting EcoC cities upon designation.	Ad hoc article to be introduced
POLITICAL MATTER 5. STOP MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES	Selection criteria	5	POLITICAL MATTER 5. STOP MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES	15 Capacity building programmes should be a requirement for applicants so that everyone can address skill needs in the five years before the title.	Article 5 (Criteria)
	Creative Europe programme	18 ⁴		16 Allocate Creative Europe funds for mentoring, training and fostering partnerships.	Recital 18 of the EU Regulation 2021/818 (Creative Europe)
	ECoC official online repository	15		17 Establish an EcoC official online repository for documenting EcoC projects.	Article 15 (Practical arrangements)

Key Political Matter

Legal instruments to bring change

Related articles³

POLITICAL MATTER 1.
EUROPE IN EVERYTHING YOU DO

General objectives	2
Selection criteria	5
ECoC Logo	15
Budget allocation for staff and communication	—

AS A MATTER OF PRIORITY



Dedicate specific **EU funding** to introduce a one **customisable** **logo** and **professionalise communication** of the ECoC action



Article 14 (Practical arrangements)



Align **selection criteria** to contemporary challenges:
Digital criterion **15** + Sustainability criterion **16**



Article 5 (Criteria)



Request a 'Plan B' to ensure the investment made is fully leveraged, regardless of the competition's outcome **17**



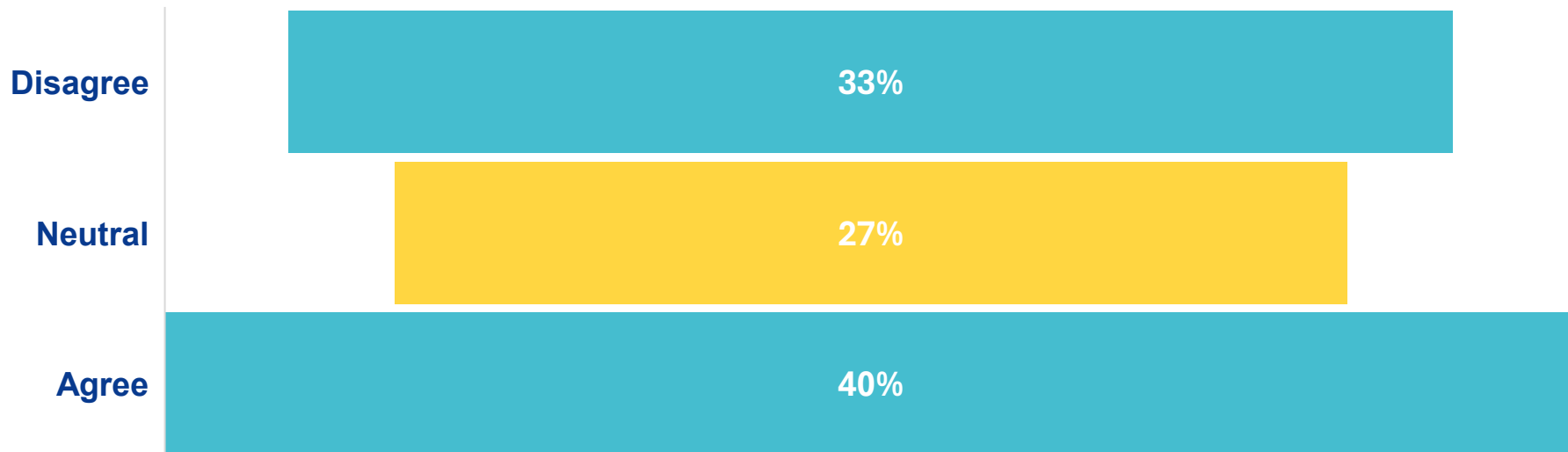
Article 8 (Pre-selection)

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS PROPOSED BUT ...



Excluded controversial recommendations

Eliminate the fixed calendar of countries and organise open competitions: as soon as a city has been chosen, the belonging Member State would be eligible to apply again only after 12 years.



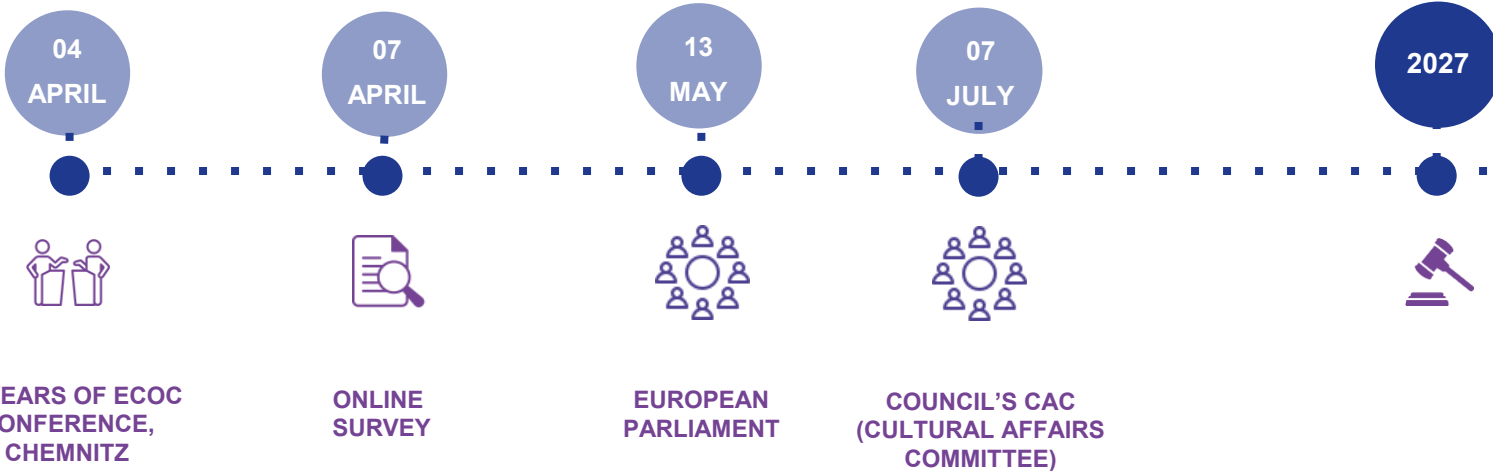
HOW CAN YOU MAKE IT BIGGER?

40 RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM 40 YEARS OF ECOC



SHARE & DEBATE!

A NEW ECoC REGULATION



THANK YOU!



RESEARCH TEAM

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