

Monitoring Action for Civic Space



Methodology

**Overview of the dimensions
and standards**

February 2025



Co-funded by
the European Union

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The project is implemented by the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law, European Civic Forum, Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Foreningen Nyt Europa, Le Mouvement associatif, Okotárs Alapítvány, Stichting Nederlands Helsinki Committee, Ogólnopolska Federacja Organizacji Pozarządowych, Fundația pentru Dezvoltarea Societății Civile.

The methodology will be piloted by partners in 2025. Afterwards, an assessment of strengths and challenges will be done, and further feedback will be incorporated into the final version, aimed to be published in 2026.



European Center for
Not-for-Profit Law



BCNL

nyt
europa
bæredygtigt og inkluderende

Le
MOUVEMENT
ASSOCIATIF



ökotárs
alapítvány



NETHERLANDS
HELSINKI
COMMITTEE



Ogólnopolska
Federacja
Organizacji
Pozarządowych

FDSSCC
Civil Society
Development
Foundation

Introduction

The Monitoring Action for Civic Space (MACS) methodology is designed to monitor the civic space situation in seven selected EU countries. This initiative is led by a consortium of regional (European Center for Non-for-Profit Law and European Civic Forum) and national civil society organisations (Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Civil Society Development Foundation, Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation, National Federation of Polish NGOs, The Netherlands Helsinki Committee, Le Mouvement Associatif and Nyt Europa).

The primary goal of MACS is to provide systematic and comprehensive information about the state of civil society, which will support nuanced advocacy efforts. The methodology focuses on measuring both progress and decline in the selected countries. MACS consists of two complementary tools: the country reports and the Early Warning and Alert System.

"The Early Warning and Alert System (EWS) aims to proactively identify, monitor, and respond to emerging threats to civic space across EU Member States. Developed through the project Monitoring Action for Civic Space (MACS) and hosted by Civic Space Watch (CSW), this civil society-led initiative alerts the EU, civil society organisations (CSOs), donors, media, and human rights institutions to early signs of civic space deterioration, such as restrictions on freedoms of association, expression, and protest. MACS will increase capacity among civil society actors to monitor and report on early signs of civic space deterioration, while calling on the EU institutions to move towards a preventive and coherent approach against civic space restrictions, underpinned by a policy framework."

The principal dimensions and general standards of the MACS methodology are based on the agreed definition of civic space as follows:

"Civic space is the environment, physical or digital, that enables (individuals) and groups – or 'civic space actors' – to associate, assemble peacefully, freely express views and opinions and to participate meaningfully in the political, economic, social and cultural life in their societies. Vibrant civic space requires an open, secure and safe environment for all that is free from all acts of intimidation, harassment and reprisals, whether online or offline. Any restrictions on such a space must comply with international and European human rights law".

In terms of the scope of application, MACS methodology will apply to the following definition of civil society organisations:

¹ Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, The Netherlands, France and Denmark

² The definition builds upon the civic space definition of the Fundamental Rights Agency:

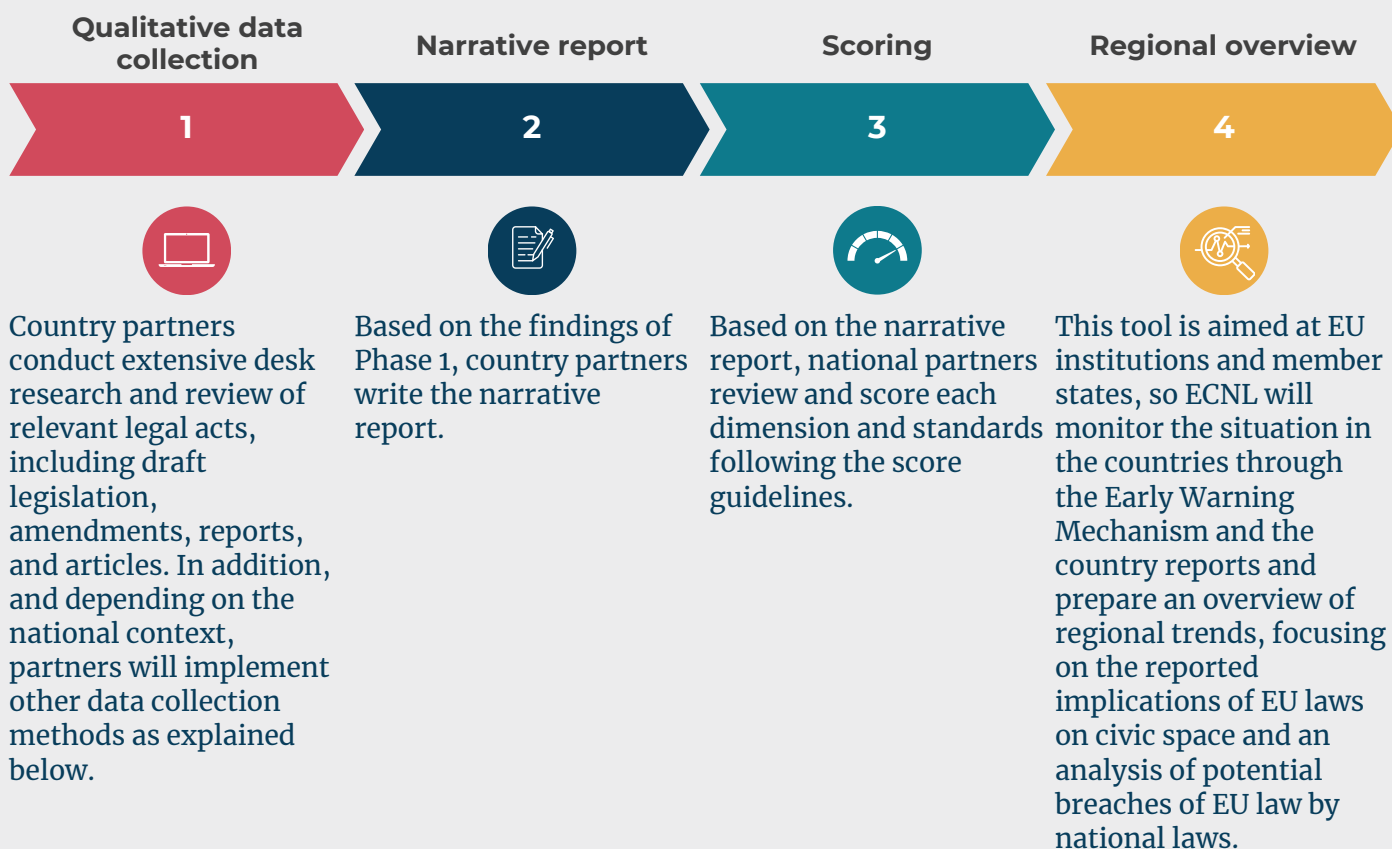
<https://fra.europa.eu/en/cooperation/civil-society/civil-society-space#:~:text=%E2%80%9CCivic%20space%20is%20the%20environment,cultural%20life%20in%20their%20societies.>

“The term “CSO” defines voluntary self-governing bodies or organisations established to pursue non-profit-making objectives. CSOs encompass bodies or organisations established both by individual persons (natural or legal) and by groups of such persons. They can be either membership or no membership based. CSOs can be either informal bodies or organisations, which have legal personality. They may include, for example, associations, foundations, specific movements, nonprofit companies and other forms that meet the above criteria. The initiative does not consider the environment for political parties, religious organisations or trade unions”.³

As a monitoring tool that assesses the state of civic space on a national level based on international and European standards, MACS aims to bring added value to the European Union and the European Union Member States in the following ways:

- It will support the European Commission's Rule of Law mechanisms in their effort to understand the implications for core aspects relevant to the civic space and inform future actions.
- It will add to the EU assessment of how civic space is impacted within the European Union's sphere of competence, particularly the implications of EU laws on civic space and potential breaches of EU law, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, by national laws.

The process for MACS methodology implementation is as follows:



³ The definition builds upon the definition of the CSO Meter: <https://csometer.info/>

Protocol of the Monitoring Process

Each national partner, with the support of ECNL and ECF, is tasked to implement each of the five stages of the monitoring process: Data collection, data analysis, drafting of the country reports, scoring process and verification. In addition, as an ongoing process, national partners will regularly submit alerts to ECF as part of the Early Warning System.

1. National Partners prepare a monitoring plan, including:
 - Timeline for data collection, including an assessment of what type of information is available
 - Type of sources to be used,
 - List of organisations, and topics that are commonly a target of civic space restrictions to assess the equality dimension
2. National partners collect primary and secondary data for each of the standards within the six dimensions of the MACS methodology covering the period of January to October 2025. Any major developments beyond October 2025 could be included in the executive summary of the country report for 2025 but won't influence the scoring process.
3. National partners summarise and contextualise the collected data under each Standard. The analysis will include the legislative framework, including draft and pending legislation and implementation of what occurs in practice. The legal review and monitoring aim to map out national law that affects the environment for CSOs; critically examine the relevant provisions; and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the law. Information about the “practice” element should reflect CSOs’ experiences with conducting their activities within a country or the implementation of relevant legislation. ECNL will provide support upon request in the data analysis process and track the implementation of the scheduled timeframe.

Data Collection

Below is a list of several methods for data collection, national partners will assess based on their resources, capacity and context how to best implement them.

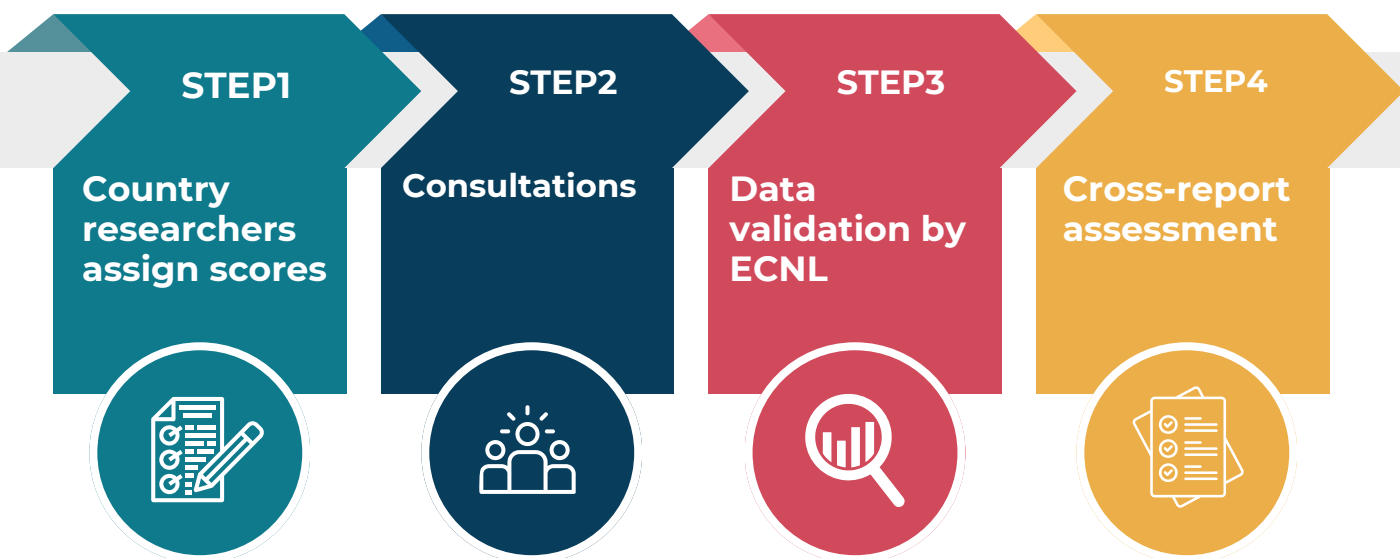
- Desk Research involves systematically using already available data, including a review of legal/normative documents and other existing indexes or analyses from national, regional or international organisations, including UN and EU institutions. It could also include recent research studies, reliable media articles and other relevant documents. It is recommended that unbiased data sources relevant to the country, particularly media outlets, be listed.
- Official statistics and data provided by institutions when available
- Interviews with selected stakeholders (including CSOs, government officials, etc.). Interviews are conducted to collect specialised information on specific subject areas. Pay particular attention to the list of groups specially targeted of restrictions or marginalised groups. It is recommended to use semi-structured interviews, where an interviewer has a set of questions to ask but can also ask clarifying questions when needed, to better understand the topic. National partners will assess the number of interviews based on their context.
- Consultative exchanges with CSO experts in certain areas or topics that require further examination: These are used for issues that might not merit a semi-structured interview to get relevant information or in cases that only need to double-check already acquired information using multiple sources.

Scoring and Verification

A 4-point scale is used for the scoring process: The scale understands the extreme values as extremely favourable environment (4) to extremely restricted environment (1)

The national researchers score countries based on the conditions and events during the coverage period, which is evidenced by the national narrative report. Although the Standard does not explicitly distinguish between Law and Practice, the narrative report and therefore the score should follow the guidance document to make clear in the analysis where the challenges or developments are.

The scoring process entails the following steps to ensure a robust assessment:



1. Country researchers assign scores: In each country, country researchers provided the scores for each Standard based on the narrative country report, considering the country context and the regional perspective.
2. National partners discuss the proposed scores with relevant stakeholders: CSOs in the countries, human rights defenders, and other experts. Any major disagreements in the scoring will be documented, however, the proposed scores should represent the general agreement among the stakeholders involved. This should be done via a meeting, online or physical. It is recommended that an external person (not the national partners) moderates the discussion. It is very important that the moderator appears unbiased and does not reveal their own opinion at any point.
3. ECNL validates the data and cross-checks against qualitative and quantitative third-party sources to provide an additional layer of analysis and to identify possible inconsistencies within the data.
4. To add another level of methodological consistency among the different reports, ECNL reviews the assessment done by partners, providing feedback when inconsistencies are found.

The selection of relevant stakeholders for the score assignment and validation meetings should follow the following criteria to ensure a comprehensive and reliable assessment of civic space. The criteria should be adjusted depending on the national context and priorities.

- **Expertise in human rights:** The group should include participants with an understanding of human rights, particularly the freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly. They should be familiar with international frameworks such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Ideally, participants should cover all the dimensions of the MACS methodology to obtain relevant views from all the topics.
- **Participants should be a mix of individuals from large and small organisations, and different geographical regions and can include experts, people with extensive practical knowledge, umbrella organisations, etc.**
- **Knowledge of domestic legislative and policy developments:** The group should include participants familiar with the country's evolving legal and policy landscape concerning civic space. This includes understanding recent laws or government initiatives that affect the freedom of CSOs to operate, such as any proposed restrictions on foreign donations, tax restrictions on CSOs, or discrimination of CSOs representing excluded or under-represented groups. If a regional organisation is selected, it should have work experience in the relevant country or a specific area of the methodology.
- **The selection should include organizations working on specific issues or with specific groups relevant to the country, such as LGBTIQ+, reproductive rights and gender, anti-discrimination, anti-corruption, etc.**
- **Independence and impartiality:** Given the politically sensitive nature of civic space discussions, CSOs should maintain independence and objectivity in their analysis. Therefore, CSOs that are free from government interference or organisational conflicts of interest are better positioned to provide credible and unbiased commentary.

To ensure the safety of CSOs and activists involved, national partners should ensure:

1. Ensure that CSOs and activists are fully aware of potential risks;
2. Offering the possibility to maintain their anonymity if they wish;
3. All correspondence, as well as research and meeting notes will be kept in a secure platform

Overview of Dimensions & Standards

MACS works on the premise that a conducive civic space, or in other words, an enabling legal and policy environment for individuals and civil society groups to exercise fundamental freedoms, relies on the following criteria:

1. Organised: individuals and organisations can gather and establish formal and informal non-profit organisations;
2. Resourced: individuals and organisations have access to and can utilise diverse resources;
3. Mobilised: individuals and groups can exercise freedom of assembly, can campaign and express their views;
4. Engaged: individuals and groups can access and participate in policy-making affecting their lives.

The standards are meant to be general and capture the state's commitment under international and European human rights law. Each standard is assessed along qualitative indicators. The following are the selected dimensions that will be subject to the monitoring:

- Freedom of Association
- Access to Funding
- Freedom to Peaceful Assembly
- Freedom of Expression
- Participation in Decision-Making
- Safe Space

To ensure that the civic space restrictions that target marginalised, excluded, and historically discriminated groups are highlighted, each dimension will contain a separate analysis that will also inform the scoring process.

DIMENSION 1: FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION		
Standard 1: <i>Everyone has the right to establish, join, or participate in a CSO.</i>	Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> <i>“Extent to which any person, legal or natural, local or foreign and group of such persons has the right to establish, join, and participate in civil society organisations without facing barriers, selective repression or (direct or indirect) repercussions.”</i></p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u></p> <p>4. Everyone is able to establish, join, and participate in CSOs without any unwarranted legal, social, or practical barriers or indirect deterrents.</p> <p>3. Some barriers exist or isolated restrictions, such as administrative hurdles or social stigma, but it does not deter civic engagement.</p> <p>2. Major obstacles prevent many persons from establishing, joining or participating in CSOs, including unwarranted legal restrictions, or fear of repression. Consistent patterns of restrictions against specific organisations create a chilling effect.</p> <p>1. Significant barriers (legal or in practice) practically hamper the ability of persons to establish, join, or participate in CSOs. Restrictions are severe, persistent, and may compound with other forms of discrimination.</p>	
Standard 2: <i>The procedure to register and form a CSO as a legal entity, where required and necessary, is clear, simple, quick, and accessible.</i>	Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> <i>“Extent to which the procedure to register a CSO as a legal entity is clear, simple, quick, accessible and cost effective.”</i></p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u></p> <p>4. The registration process is clearly established by law, simple, quick, and non-onerous, with ample support from the government available for prospective CSOs.</p> <p>3. Some aspects of the process are clear and simple, and the registration is relatively cheap, but minor complications or delays exist, along with limited support from authorities.</p> <p>2. The registration process is unclear, complicated, time-consuming, expensive and onerous, posing significant barriers to potential CSOs.</p> <p>1. The process is extremely complex, opaque, and slow, with onerous requirements, with no support or even interference from the authorities.</p>	



Standard 3: <i>The state does not impose requirements that unlawfully or unnecessarily interfere in internal affairs and the operation of CSOs</i>		Score/value	Comment
<p>Qualitative indicator: <i>“Extent to which the state leaves CSOs free to conduct internal governance, decision-making, and operations.”</i></p>	<p>Evaluation Scale:</p> <p>4. CSOs are free from state interference in their internal matters, and any reporting or monitoring procedures are very clearly defined by laws and proportional to the size of the CSO</p> <p>3. CSOs are mostly free from interference in their internal matters, with some burdensome reporting requirements in certain areas.</p> <p>2. The state significantly interferes in the internal affairs and operations of CSOs, particularly those working on areas the government considers sensitive.</p> <p>1. The state pervasively interferes in the internal affairs and operations of CSOs, hampering their autonomy.</p>		
Standard 4: <i>CSOs are free to determine their objectives and activities and can operate both within and outside the country in which they were established</i>		Score/value	Comment
<p>Qualitative indicator: <i>“Extent to which CSOs are free to determine their objectives, carry out activities without interference, and operate across borders (domestically and internationally).”</i></p>	<p>Evaluation Scale:</p> <p>4. CSOs enjoy complete freedom to determine their objectives, carry out activities, and operate domestically and internationally, including as members of larger associations or federations.</p> <p>3. CSOs face minor restrictions but generally enjoy freedom in determining objectives and operations. These restrictions are aligned with international human rights standards</p> <p>2. CSOs experience significant restrictions on their activities, particularly across borders or in sensitive areas or topics</p> <p>1. CSOs face heavy restrictions or prohibitions on their objectives, operations, and international activities.</p>		



DIMENSION 1	Average Score	Comment
<i>Freedom of association</i>		

Equality and non-discrimination

Questions	Groups per standard	Comments: description
<p>Which groups were specifically targets of restrictions concerning freedom of association? Were any of these traditionally under-represented or marginalised groups?</p> <p>To which specific standard(s) does this relate to? Describe how these groups have actively engaged in activities/events/processes or may have been negatively targeted.</p>		

Good practices

Good practices: please share a good practice applied by CSOs, state, or other actors to enhance 'Freedom of association'



DIMENSION 2: ACCESS TO FUNDING			
Standard 1: CSOs have the right, and in practice, are able to seek, receive, and use financial and material resources to function effectively.		Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which CSOs effectively enjoy the right to seek, receive, and utilise financial and material resources to function effectively.”</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u></p> <p>4. CSOs fully enjoy the right to seek, receive, and use financial and materials resources to carry out their activities. No restrictions or state interference exist, and there is active state or institutional support for these activities.</p> <p>3. CSOs can seek and receive financial and material resources for most activities, with some limitations or moderate barriers, but are still able to pursue diverse missions, with some support from the state or institutions</p> <p>2. CSOs face some restrictions or challenges in seeking or receiving financial resources, which particularly limit their ability to conduct advocacy and politically sensitive activities. Some state or institutional support exists but is inconsistent or insufficient.</p> <p>1. CSOs face significant restrictions or barriers in seeking, receiving, or utilizing financial and material resources, especially for politically sensitive activities. Frequent interference from the state or institutions, limits the ability to carry out their work.</p>		
Standard 2: CSOs are effectively able to access and use foreign and international resources, without discrimination		Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which CSOs are effectively able to access and use foreign and international resources without</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u></p> <p>4. CSOs have full, unimpeded access to seek and use foreign and international funding and there are no additional obligations for CSOs to access this type of funding as compared to domestic resources. There is no discrimination or vilification, and foreign funding is not</p>		



<p>discrimination or repercussions."</p>	<p>subject to restrictive or punitive measures. 3. CSOs can seek and use foreign resources but may face some challenges, such as occasional scrutiny, limited access to certain sources, or moderate legal barriers. 2. CSOs face significant barriers when seeking and using foreign funding, including discrimination or stigmatisation, and certain sources of foreign funding may be blocked or heavily scrutinised. 1. CSOs are effectively prohibited or severely restricted from seeking and using foreign funding, and those who attempt to do so are subjected to stigmatisation or legal penalties.</p>		
<p>Standard 3: State support for CSOs is governed by clear and objective criteria and allocated through a transparent and competitive procedure</p>		<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> "Extent to which State support for CSOs is governed by clear and objective criteria and allocated through a transparent and competitive procedure."</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. State support is governed by clear, objective criteria with a fully transparent, competitive, and accountable allocation process. 3. State support generally follows fair procedures, though some minor improvements in transparency or oversight may be needed. 2. State support is unclear, objective, transparent and competitive, with some evidence of politically influenced decisions or funding restrictions. 1. State support seriously lacks clarity, objectivity, transparency, and competitiveness, and is frequently subject to politically motivated restrictions, attacks, or punitive actions.</p>		
<p>Standard 4: The State supports the creation of a supportive environment for CSOs that facilitates, their ability to access funding in a predictable, sustainable, transparent and fair manner.</p>		<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u></p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u></p>		



<p><i>“Extent to which the state supports CSOs, including by providing predictable, sustainable access to funding and a tax environment that favourable for both CSOs and their donors.”</i></p>	<p>4. CSOs have full and effective access to diverse funding sources, including state funding, to carry out their activities. The tax environment is highly supportive of CSO sustainability, and policies encourage and facilitate philanthropy.</p> <p>3. CSOs generally have good access to resources, including state funding, with only minor limitations. The tax environment supports CSO sustainability, though some areas may require improvement. Policies supporting philanthropy are present but may not be fully effective in all cases.</p> <p>2. CSOs have limited access to resources, with barriers to accessing state funding and resources to carry out their activities. The tax environment is not fully supportive of CSO sustainability, and policies to encourage philanthropy are weak or poorly implemented.</p> <p>1. CSOs are heavily restricted in their access to funding. Legal frameworks are either non-existent or hostile to CSOs’ access to resources. The tax policies are highly unfavourable, with severe burdens placed on both CSOs and their donors. CSOs may be severely restricted from accessing resources, and donors are discouraged due to high tax liabilities or lack of incentives.</p>		
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DIMENSION 2	Average Score	Comment
Access to Funding		



Equality and non-discrimination

Questions	Groups per standard	Comments: description
<p>Which groups were specifically targets of restrictions concerning access to funding? Were any of these traditionally under-represented or marginalised groups?</p> <p>To which specific standard(s) does this relate to? Describe how these groups have actively engaged in activities/events/processes or may have been negatively targeted.</p>		

Good practices

Good practices: please share a good practice applied by CSOs, state, or other actors to enhance 'Access to funding'



DIMENSION 3: FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Standard 1: <i>Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and is able to organise and participate in assemblies without unwarranted interference"</i>		Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> <i>"Extent to which people can effectively exercise their right to peaceful assembly, both physically and online"</i>.</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u></p> <p>4. Individuals can freely organise and participate in peaceful assemblies, including disruptive forms and acts of civil disobedience, as long as they are non-violent, with no unwarranted interference from public or private actors. Any restrictions are justified under clear regulation, for a legitimate ground and strictly necessary.</p> <p>3. Individuals generally enjoy the freedom to assemble despite some minor restrictions or occasional interference. Certain protests may face administrative hurdles, but they are not systematically repressed.</p> <p>2. Major restrictions exist on the right to peaceful assembly, particularly affecting certain groups or sensitive topics. Legal requirements are used to control or discourage protests. Some forms of protest are criminalised. There might be limited access to internet connectivity and electronic means of communication, including digital restrictions on digital platforms.</p> <p>1. Individuals face severe restrictions or threats when attempting to organise or participate in peaceful assemblies, both physically and online. Authorities criminalize or violently disperse assemblies, especially those deemed disruptive or politically sensitive. Online protests face censorship, surveillance, or legal retaliation. Protesters are subject to intimidation, arrests, or</p>		



	violence, creating a chilling effect across civic space.		
Standard 2: <i>The state facilitates peaceful assemblies, including online assemblies and promote an enabling environment for the exercise of this right</i>		Score/value	Comment
<u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which the state facilitates peaceful assemblies, including those taking place online and ensures an enabling environment for the exercise of the right without discrimination.”	<u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. The state fully facilitates and protects peaceful assemblies, providing logistical support, security, and ensuring assemblies can take place without unnecessary restrictions. Regulations are clear, minimal, and non-discriminatory. Online assemblies are equally protected. 3. The state generally facilitates peaceful assemblies but imposes some bureaucratic or procedural hurdles. Digital protests may face minor regulations but are not actively suppressed. 2. The state imposes frequent administrative or legal burdens, particularly on certain groups or sensitive topics. Certain protests may be banned, delayed, or unduly restricted in ways that discourage participation. Online assemblies face regulatory or surveillance barriers. 1. The state actively obstructs peaceful assemblies, using excessive permitting rules, blanket bans, arbitrary denials, or violent dispersal tactics. Online assemblies are heavily censored, monitored, or blocked.		
Standard 3: <i>The state does not impose unnecessary and disproportionate burdens on organisers or participants in peaceful assemblies, including in an online environment</i>		Score/value	Comment
<u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which the state leaves organisers and participants of peaceful assemblies free from unnecessary burdens.”	<u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. The state does not impose any burdens on organisers and participants, ensuring that peaceful assemblies can take place freely and efficiently. 3. The state imposes some minor burdens, but these do not heavily impede the organisation of		



<p>assemblies and participation therein. 2.- The state imposes major burdens, making it difficult to organise and participate in assemblies, but with effort these remain manageable. 1. The state imposes significant or unnecessary burdens that prevent people from organising or participating in peaceful assemblies.</p>		
<p>Standard 4: <i>Law enforcement respects and ensures the exercise of peaceful assemblies – including online assemblies – and is accountable for the actions of its representatives</i></p>	<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which law enforcement agencies actively support peaceful assemblies, before, during and after them, and are accountable for the actions of their representatives.”</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. Law enforcement actively supports peaceful assemblies, adheres to human rights standards and has strong police conduct frameworks and accountability mechanisms in place. Any abuses are investigated and punished. Protesters can seek and receive timely redress for rights violations. 3. Law enforcement generally supports assemblies and adheres to standards, but may occasionally use excessive force or intimidation tactics. Accountability exists but is weak or delayed. Some officers face consequences for misconduct, but many cases remain unresolved. 2. Law enforcement frequently engages in harassment, excessive force, or intimidation, especially against certain types of demonstrations and excluded groups. Accountability is limited or non-existent. Police may target protesters for surveillance or arbitrary arrests. 1. Law enforcement fails to support or systematically suppress peaceful assemblies and has no effective frameworks for police conduct or accountability mechanisms. Online assemblies face surveillance, censorship, and state-backed digital attacks.</p>	



DIMENSION 3	Average Score	Comment
<i>Freedom of peaceful assembly</i>		

Equality and non-discrimination

Questions	Groups per standard	Comments: description
<p>Which groups were specifically targets of restrictions concerning freedom of peaceful assembly? Were any of these traditionally under-represented or marginalised groups?</p> <p>To which specific standard(s) does this relate to? Describe how these groups have actively engaged in activities/events/processes or may have been negatively targeted.</p>		

Good practices

Good practices: please share a good practice applied by CSOs, state, or other actors to facilitate and enhance 'Freedom of peaceful assembly'



DIMENSION 4: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Standard 1: <i>Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression</i>	Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> <i>“Extent to which freedom of opinion and expression is protected, respected, and exercised, both online and offline.”</i></p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u></p> <p>4. Freedom of opinion and expression is well-protected, fully respected, and exercised without undue restrictions. All individuals, including critical voices and marginalized groups, can express opinions freely online and offline.</p> <p>3. Freedom of opinion and expression is generally protected, respected and exercised, with certain restrictions imposed that do not comply with international human rights law standards. Certain topics or particular groups face occasional pressure but do not significantly restrict open debate</p> <p>2. Freedom of opinion and expression is not fully protected, respected and exercised with restrictions that do not align with international human rights law. Legal measures and other forms of violations take place often and are used to discourage dissent.</p> <p>1. Freedom of opinion and expression is severely hampered, with many people facing undue restrictions and disproportionate sanctions. Censorship, criminalization, arbitrary arrests, or violence are used to silence dissent.</p>	

DIMENSION 4: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



Standard 2: <i>The state facilitates and protects freedom of opinion and expression</i>		Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> <i>“Extent to which the state actively supports and protects freedom of opinion and expression, both online and offline”</i></p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. The state provides robust support and protection for freedom of opinion and expression, including comprehensive legal protections and proportionate sanctions. 3. The state overall supports and protects freedom of opinion and expression, with some restrictions that are not aligned with international human rights law, including selective enforcement of law. 2. The state provides limited support and protection for freedom of opinion and expression, with notable restrictions. 1. The state provides minimal support to freedom of opinion and expression or actively suppresses it with few protections and disproportionate restrictions. Legal frameworks criminalize dissent.</p>		
Standard 3: <i>When exercising online, digital technologies are compliant with human rights standards protecting and promoting freedom of opinion and expression</i>		Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> <i>“Extent to which digital technologies are aligned with human rights standards protecting and promoting freedom of opinion and expression”</i></p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. Digital technologies are fully aligned with human rights standards. Online speech is protected, and there are no undue restrictions. There are robust data protection mechanisms to prevent surveillance abuse. 3. Digital technologies are overall aligned, though improvements are needed in transparency or enforcement, or some regulatory or technical restrictions exist. 2. Digital technologies are to a limited extent aligned with human rights standards with surveillance, internet shutdowns, content</p>		



	<p>removals, or cyber-attacks being used to suppress dissent. Certain voices are disproportionately affected</p> <p>1. Digital technologies are not aligned with human rights standards. Authorities or third parties such as social media companies use internet shutdowns, mass surveillance, censorship, or cyber-attacks to silence dissent. Activists face hacking, digital harassment, or arbitrary arrests for online speech.</p>		
<p>Standard 4: <i>The state has adopted appropriate, proportionate and effective measures against incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence</i></p>		<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> <i>“Extent to which the state has adopted appropriate, proportionate and effective measures against incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence”</i></p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u></p> <p>4. The state has implemented and enforced appropriate, proportionate and effective measures against incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence.</p> <p>3. The state has implemented and enforced overall appropriate, proportionate and effective measures against incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, though minor adjustments could improve fairness or proportionality.</p> <p>2. The state has implemented and enforced few appropriate, proportionate and effective measures against incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence. Legislation regulating the topic is vague and selectively enforce against critical voices.</p> <p>1. Measures adopted by the state against incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence are either lacking, inappropriate,</p>		



overly harsh, or ineffectively enforced.

DIMENSION 4	<i>Average Score</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>Freedom of expression</i>		

Equality and non-discrimination

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Groups per standard</i>	<i>Comments: description</i>
<p>Which groups were specifically targets of restrictions concerning freedom of expression? Please pay specific attention to the role of journalists and media. Were any of these traditionally under-represented or marginalised groups?</p> <p>To which specific standard(s) does this relate to? Describe how these groups have actively engaged in activities/events/processes or may have been negatively targeted.</p>		

Good practices

Good practices: please share a good practice applied by CSOs, state, or other actors to enhance 'Freedom of opinion and expression'



DIMENSION 5: RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

Standard 1: <i>Everyone has the right to participation in decision-making</i>		Score/value	Comment
<p>Qualitative indicator: <i>“Extent to which individuals and CSOs have the right and in practice are able to participate in decision-making processes, based on formal mechanisms, actual participation and non-discrimination”</i></p>	<p>Evaluation Scale: 4. – Right to participation is guaranteed without discrimination to everyone in legislation and in practice through robust participation mechanisms with clear rules and redress mechanisms in case of non-compliance. 3. Mechanisms for participation exist, and individuals and CSOs can engage in decision-making, though there may be occasional challenges or barriers for certain groups, including marginalised CSOs or communities. Participation is generally effective, but the process may not always be fully inclusive or transparent. 2. Mechanisms for participation are present but either inadequately structured or selectively accessible, limiting the opportunity for marginalised groups or critical CSOs to participate. Some formal opportunities exist but are ineffective or hindered by systemic challenges or discrimination. 1.– Participation is largely inaccessible or highly restricted for individuals and CSOs. Mechanisms are either non-existent or discriminatory, particularly impacting critical or marginalized groups. The right to participate is undermined by systemic obstacles or active suppression.</p>		
Standard 2: <i>There is regular, open and effective civil dialogue in developing, implementing and monitoring public policies</i>		Score/value	Comment
<p>Qualitative indicator: <i>“Extent to which civil dialogue is codified,</i></p>	<p>Evaluation Scale: 4. Civil dialogue is institutionalized through a policy framework and regularly conducted, with clear channels</p>		



<p><i>effective and supported by public funding enabling CSOs to participate in the development, implementation, and monitoring of public policies, based on the regularity, openness, and effectiveness of their engagement”</i></p>	<p>for all CSOs’ participation in all phases of policy development, implementation, and monitoring. The process is open, inclusive, and transparent, with public funding actively supporting CSO participation. Their participation is effective and influential.</p> <p>3. Civil dialogue takes place regularly, but there may be gaps in its openness or inclusivity. CSOs can participate in policy processes, though their influence may be limited or fragmented. Some funding is available to support CSO participation, but the process may not be fully effective or systematic.</p> <p>2. Civil dialogue exists but is irregular and selective. Critical CSOs or those representing excluded groups are systematically excluded from policymaking processes, while politically aligned groups are actively engaged. There is minimal public funding, and the mechanisms in place are often ineffective, limiting the ability of CSOs to influence policy decisions or monitor implementation.</p> <p>1. Civil dialogue is non-existent, heavily restricted, or severely limited. Critical organizations and those representing excluded or marginalized groups are completely excluded from decision-making processes. Public funding is either nonexistent or directed only to politically aligned or state-controlled organizations. There is a lack of transparency, and the policymaking process is closed off to dissenting voices</p>		
<p>Standard 3: CSOs have access to timely and relevant information necessary for their effective participation.</p>		<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which CSOs have access to timely information necessary for their effective</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4.– CSOs have full and timely access to all relevant information required for effective participation. Information is proactively shared in an open and accessible manner, ensuring that CSOs can participate</p>		



<p>participation in decision-making”</p>	<p>effectively in decision-making processes. 3.– CSOs have access to most of the relevant information, but some information may be delayed or withheld. The legal framework to access information is good, but gaps exist in the timeliness or completeness of information provided 2.– CSOs have access to some information, but accessibility or timely issues limit CSOs’ ability to engage effectively in decision-making. 1.– CSOs have minimal or no access to timely and relevant information. Information is either completely withheld or difficult to obtain, severely hindering their ability to participate effectively in decision-making processes</p>		
<p>Standard 4: State policies facilitate cooperation with CSOs and promote their development</p>	<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>	
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which state policies facilitate cooperation with CSOs and promote their development (e.g. through supportive frameworks, resources, and capacity-building initiatives)”</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. State policies fully facilitate and promote cooperation with CSOs, with strong legal support, extensive capacity-building programs, and effective communication and engagement. 3.– State policies generally support cooperation with CSOs, but there may be some gaps in frameworks, resources and capacity-building programmes that limit CSO development. 2. State policies provide only some support for cooperation with CSOs, but significant barriers or inefficiencies limit effective cooperation and CSO development. 1.State policies are either non-existent or significantly restrictive, discouraging cooperation with CSOs and their development.</p>		



DIMENSION 5	Average Score	Comment
<i>Right to participation in decision-making</i>		

Equality and non-discrimination

Questions	Groups per standard	Comments: description
<p>Which excluded or under-represented groups were target in relation to right to participation in decision-making?</p> <p>To which specific standard(s) does this relate to? Describe how these groups have actively engaged in activities/events/processes or may have been negatively targeted.</p>		

Good practices

Good practices: please share a good practice applied by CSOs, state, or other actors to enhance ‘Right to participation in decision making’



DIMENSION 6: SAFE SPACE ⁶		
Standard 1: <i>The state promotes and protects the work of civil society organisations, human rights defenders and journalists, ensuring that they are protected against violence, threats, harassment, or any arbitrary actions because of their work and provides access to remedies when violations occur</i>	Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which the state promotes and protects the work of human rights defenders, civil society organisations, whistle-blowers and journalists, protecting them from violence, threats, harassment, legal intimidation, SLAPPs and arbitrary actions due to their work, and ensures access to remedies”</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. Strong legal protections, positive visibility, effective law enforcement, easy access to remedies ensures that the work of human rights defenders, CSOs and journalists is well protected and promoted. 3. There are overall legal protections, law enforcement effectiveness and access to remedies, but gaps are observed leading to isolated cases of threats, harassment, or intimidation. 2. Legal protections and remedies exist but are not fully effective, and violations against human rights defenders, CSOs and journalists due to their work are relatively common. 1. CSOs and journalists, with frequent violations, poor enforcement, and no access to remedies.</p>	
Standard 2: <i>The State conducts prompt and impartial investigations of alleged violations of human rights</i>	Score/value	Comment
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which the state conducts prompt and impartial investigations into</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. The state conducts prompt and impartial investigations into alleged violations of human rights. Investigative bodies are independent, transparent, and effective. 3. State investigations into alleged violations of human</p>	

⁶ This dimension incorporates some aspects of the right to privacy



<p>alleged violations of human rights”</p>	<p>rights are generally timely and impartial, but some weaknesses are observed or there might be selective application of justice. 2. Investigations into alleged violations of human rights are regularly delayed or biased. 1. Investigations are either not conducted or are severely obstructed and biased.</p>		
<p>Standard 3: <i>The State protects human rights defenders at risk and facilitates temporary or longer-term relocation mechanisms</i></p>		<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which the state protects human rights defenders, including those at risk of persecution in other countries and facilitates temporary relocation mechanisms”</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. The state offers strong legal protection to human rights defenders and offers temporary or long-term relocation mechanisms to human rights defenders coming from restrictive environments. All mechanisms are fully functional in practice and provide effective remedies. 3. While the state provides protections and relocation mechanisms, there may be some gaps in efficiency, availability of support services, or the comprehensiveness of legal frameworks. 2. The state offers limited protection, with relocation mechanisms or support services that are inconsistent or insufficient. 1. There is little to no protection for relocated human rights defenders, with no clear mechanisms or support in place.</p>		
<p>Standard 4: <i>Measures used to fight foreign interference, extremism, terrorism, money laundering or corruption are targeted and proportionate, in line with the risk-based approach, and respect human rights standards</i></p>		<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> ” Extent to which state measures to combat foreign interference, extremism, terrorism,</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4. State measures are necessary, proportionate, and aligned with a risk-based approach, while fully respecting human rights standards related to freedom of opinion and expression, association, peaceful assembly,</p>		



<p>money laundering, and corruption are targeted, proportionate, and consistent with a risk-based approach and human rights standards on fundamental freedoms”</p>	<p>right to participation in decision-making, as well as privacy and data protection. 3.The state generally applies a targeted, proportionate approach. Some gaps are observed in human rights standards or the full application of a risk-based approach, but they are not systematically used against civil society. 2. Measures are disproportionate and frequently misused to target civil society, media, and activists. Vague definitions in the legal framework allow arbitrary restrictions 1. State measures are overly broad and disproportionate, violate human rights standards and disregard a risk-based approach. The state systematically misuses legislation to criminalize dissent. CSOs and journalists are accused of terrorism, extremism, or foreign interference to justify repression.</p>		
<p>Standard 5: <i>The state protects the right to privacy and data protection of CSOs, associated individuals, and all other external supporters, both offline and online</i></p>		<p>Score/value</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><u>Qualitative indicator:</u> “Extent to which the state protects the right to privacy and data protection both offline and online for CSOs, their associated individuals, and external supporters, based on legal frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, and actual protection of privacy”</p>	<p><u>Evaluation Scale:</u> 4.Strong legal protections, effective enforcement, and a robust privacy environment ensure that the privacy of CSOs, associated individuals and external supporters is fully protected. 3. Adequate protections exist, but there are gaps in enforcement, or specific areas of data protection that need further strengthening. 2. Some legal protections and enforcement mechanisms are in place, but there are significant weaknesses in protecting the privacy of CSOs and their associated individuals and external supporters. Targeted surveillance, data breaches, or privacy violations affect certain groups. 1. Privacy protection for CSOs and their associated individuals and external supporters is minimal or</p>		



lacking, with severe violations in legal, enforcement, and data protection measures. Critical CSOs, activists, and journalists systematically face hacking, online harassment, or doxxing.

DIMENSION 6	Average Score	Comment
Safe space		

Equality and non-discrimination

Questions	Groups per standard	Comments: description
<p>Which excluded or under-represented groups were target in relation to safe space?</p> <p>To which specific standard(s) does this relate to? Describe how these groups have actively engaged in activities/events/processes or may have been negatively targeted.</p>		

Good practices

Good practices: please share a good practice applied by CSOs to enhance 'Safe space'

Country Score	Average Score	Comment





Monitoring Action
for Civic Space