



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot

Argentina

March 2025

Context

Argentine civil society has an outstanding history of participation in democracy building following the last civil-military dictatorship of 1976-1983 and has been particularly active in the defence of human rights and fundamental civic freedoms. This trajectory of active participation presents the backdrop to the enabling environment that has recently been put under strain since the inauguration of the government of La Libertad Avanza in December 2023.

Since then, the enabling environment for civil society in Argentina has deteriorated significantly. During his electoral campaign, President Milei promoted a [narrative of discrediting multilateral organisations](#) such as the [United Nations and its Agenda 2030](#), as well as political parties, [unions](#), [social movements](#) and civil society organisations (CSOs). Once in power, this trend translated into the [elimination of key institutions such as the Ministry of Women and Diversities](#), thereby denying the legitimacy of the human rights and gender equality agendas.

The new government has deliberately avoided establishing [mechanisms for dialogue with civil society](#), dismantling institutional channels that, in various forms, have been functioning since the return to democracy. This rupture directly impacts on civil society's meaningful participation in public affairs, one of the pillars of the enabling environment.

At the same time, the enabling environment was seriously affected by the promotion of repressive policies, such as the Security Protocol ([Res. 943/2023](#)), which enables the development of monitoring and control systems for demonstrators and the registration of organisations, violating the [National Intelligence Law](#) and seriously affecting the right to peaceful assembly, a fundamental freedom of civil society.

To this must be added the approval of regressive reforms through [DNU 70/2023](#) and the subsequent ["Basic Law"](#) (an initiative consisting of 238 articles, including issues such as the declaration of a state of emergency, extraordinary temporary powers for the executive branch, state reform, labour reform, energy and the Large Investment Incentive Regime -RIGI-) which, among other effects, deepen economic inequality. The resulting context of social crisis has led to an increase in protests and a growing militarisation of public space, reinforcing an environment of hostility and risk for CSOs.

In short, the context is characterised by a combination of factors that seriously compromise the enabling environment for civil society in Argentina: lack of dialogue, restrictions on freedom of expression and protest, repression, concentration of power and [weakening of rights-based public policies](#).

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Since December 2023, the government has deployed an approach that erodes the enabling environment for civil society¹ [by delegitimising the human rights agenda](#) (and thus, thousands

¹ Articles 14 and 14 bis of the Argentine Constitution clearly express the fundamental rights by classifying individual rights (Article 14):

- **Freedom of expression:** One may freely express one's ideas and opinions, without prior censorship.

of human rights-based organisations)² and implementing [restrictive public policies](#). Furthermore, the adoption of the "Protocol for the Maintenance of Public Order" ([Resolution 943/2023](#)) and its extension through [Resolution 893/2024](#) enable the repression of protests without a court order and promote surveillance of social actors, both during protests and subsequently. This directly affects freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association³ and is evidence of a systematic policy of criminalisation of protests⁴ (which is expressed in [criminal charges against whistle-blowers](#)), for those who wish to exercise these fundamental civic freedoms.

The government's insincerity in its respect for civic freedoms (both from governmental discourse and from the normative provisions implemented) has affected some sectors in particular. Anti-union narratives have been used to [stigmatise](#) and limit the freedoms of trade union centres,⁵ organisations working on women's and LGBTIQ+ rights suffered [the closure of the specific ministry and the elimination of public policies](#), key for the exercise of their activities; indigenous communities were exposed to greater violations after the [repeal of Law 26.160](#) by means of a [Decree of Necessity and Urgency](#), leaving their territories without legal protection from extractivists and private capital interests (favoured, on the other hand, by the [Large Investment Incentive Regime -RIGI-](#))⁶; and the peaceful mobilisation of elderly people [in defence of their pension rights](#)⁷ has been met with [violent repression](#).

As [FLACSO](#) has compiled, repression has focused on protests carried out by civil society, unions and self-organised groups (see Graph 1).

Percentage of protests according to the actor who called for them and whether or not they were repressed.

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- **Freedom of religion:** One may freely profess any religion or none at all.
 - **Freedom of association:** You may form and join associations.
 - **Freedom of movement:** You may enter, stay, transit and leave Argentine territory.
 - **Right to property:** You may use and dispose of your property.
 - **Right to defence in court:** You have the right to be tried by an impartial judge, to have a defence counsel and not to be tried twice for the same offence.
 - **Equality before the law:** The law must be applied equally to all.
 - **Right to education:** The right to primary education is guaranteed.
 - The right to work is guaranteed in the Argentinean National Constitution, mainly in articles 14 and 14 bis. Article 14 establishes the right of all inhabitants of the nation to work and to exercise any lawful industry. Likewise, collective rights linked to labour rights are defined in Article 14 bis.
 - Article 14 bis, on the other hand, expands this right, ensuring decent and equitable working conditions, limited working hours, paid rest and holidays, fair remuneration, minimum living wage, equal pay for equal work, among others.

Various laws regulate these principles

² For a broader analysis of this point, see the report "[A year of struggle against the planned destruction of human rights and democracy](#)".

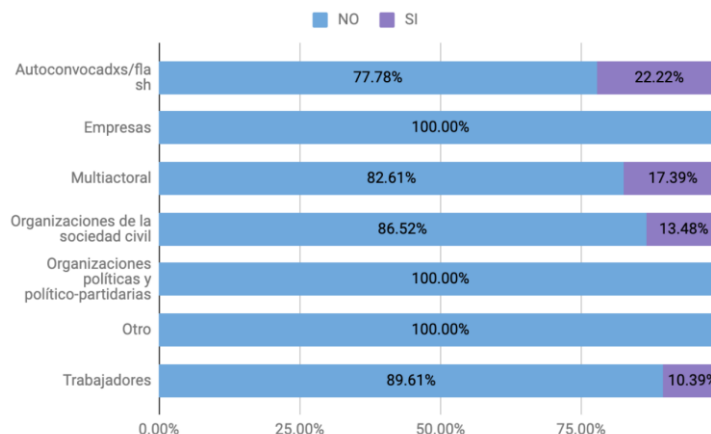
³ See <https://elciudadanoweb.com/centrales-sindicales-piden-intervencion-urgente-de-la-oit-por-el-protocolo-de-bullrich/>.

⁴ [The case of the photographer Pablo Grillo](#) serves as an example.

⁵ By [promoting hate speech](#) and criminalising his [right to demonstrate](#), in violation of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, [1948 \(No. 87\)](#) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, [1949 \(No. 98\)](#).

⁶ See <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/734317-denuncian-a-milei-en-el-foro-permanente-para-cuestiones-indi>.

⁷ See DNU 274/2024: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/decreto-274-2024-397577>.



Milei's government intends to revise legal frameworks that regulate the use of the armed forces in internal affairs, raising concerns about a possible regression with regard to the limits placed on the use of military action within the country, with potential detrimental effects on fundamental freedoms.⁸

This set of government measures and discourses implies an accelerated contraction of the enabling environment for civil society, characterised by repression, institutional weakening, and the violation of its fundamental rights.

2. Supportive Legal Framework for the Work of Civil Society Actors

Argentina has regulations that allow [social and trade union organisations to operate](#), in particular Law 23.552 on Trade Union Associations. Non-profit organisations (NPOs) require a simple registration that is processed at the General Inspectorate of Justice and allows them to act as civil associations in both cases. In addition, unions must have trade union status (granted through the Ministry of Labour) in order to be able to act on behalf of the collective of workers in the branch of production they represent.

However, in the case of social movements, there are gaps and weaknesses in the regulations on representation. During the pandemic, the former Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security issued [Resolution 118/21](#), which allows organisations to represent the Popular Economy and subsistence collectives (which in Argentina function as a binding force for various community demands - food, health, education, work, access to justice, etc. - and above all as a link with the different levels of a state that does not achieve direct contact).

However, there are still difficulties in sustaining legal status, difficulties in access to banking, legislation similar to that of companies, and a lack of distinction of typologies between different

⁸ See the case of the City of Rosario: <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/311076/20240723#:~:text=Que%20mediante%20Resoluci%C3%B3n%20Ministerial%20N, en%20la%20ciudad%20de%20Rosario.>

organisations. These factors make it extremely difficult (if not impossible) to formalise the activities of organisations and to recognise the work of the people who support them.

In terms of bureaucracy, civil society organisations have to deal with a [proliferation of regulations](#), often antagonistic for each local jurisdiction, thereby hindering joint advocacy actions at the national level. Additionally, the absence of a single window in the public sector for procedures (any office of any Ministry requires the presentation of all documentation) and the absence of a labour regime specific for workers of NGOs and Foundations further complicate the regulatory environment. Currently, there is an effort by government departments to encourage social organisations to adopt a model similar to the business sector. An example of this is the new [regulation](#) of the General Inspectorate of Justice (Inspección General de Justicia IGJ) which opens the possibility for organisations to integrate for-profit companies. ([Resolución General 15/2024, art. 32](#)).

3. Accessible and Sustainable rResources

Civil society has played a key role in giving attention to vulnerable sectors, coordinating with different levels of the State to implement public policies. This joint effort was a main avenue for civil society to access resources to sustain their activities. However, since December 2023, the National Government interrupted this relationship by [eliminating programmes](#) and [downgrading ministries](#), such as the Ministry of Education, whose functions [were absorbed by the Ministry of Human Capital](#). The [lack of funds](#) led the [National Universities](#) to [declare a budgetary emergency](#) in March 2024 .

Access to international cooperation has also been restricted. Argentina, [classified as an upper-middle income country](#), receives marginal official development assistance. CSOs make enormous efforts to obtain funding from various sources, including agencies from different countries - such as Sweden, the US, Ireland, Spain -, private foundations and various UN agencies.

Regarding international cooperation through the UN, funding is fragmented among [agencies](#) such as UNEP, ILO or UNHCR, which have been working on a sustained basis with specific profiles of civil society organisations. Although this has generated some strong links thanks to the [high impact guaranteed by CSOs at the territorial level](#), the effectiveness of development cooperation, particularly in the area of social policies, has been limited.

Since late 2023, the government adopted a [hostile discourse towards UN agencies](#), affecting the UN Strategic Cooperation Framework (UNSCF) 2025-2029 process. This situation was aggravated by the Milei government's alignment with Donald Trump's foreign policy, which has refracted the Agenda 2030 and eliminated all forms of cooperation with developing countries. US Department of Labor programmes [supporting CSOs in labour rights](#), [youth](#) and popular economy were also suspended.

Other sources such as the European Union ([Global Gateway](#)⁹), [Sweden](#) or AECID¹⁰ offer cooperation, but with low CSO participation. The [National Directorate for International Cooperation](#), which is officially responsible for this area, has not integrated CSOs in the planning or distribution of funds, limiting their capacity for advocacy and access to fundamental resources to sustain an enabling environment for participation.

4. Open and Responsive State

Although there is an official, collegiate and citizen participation body for debate and the search for consensus on strategic priorities for the country's development - the Economic and Social Council -, the current administration transferred it to the National Strategy Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers ([Decree 45/2023](#)) and it is, in practice, discontinued. This is representative of the relationship between the current administration and organised civil society. In other words, although there are a large number of institutional spaces¹¹, they have ceased to be implemented during this period. While the regulations for these participation bodies remain, there is no political will to implement them.

As a consequence, [labour, pension and education reforms](#) have been implemented without public participation or consultation, violating democratic principles and access to rights.

Social dialogue between employers, workers and the state is institutionalised in the framework of [Decree 1095/2004](#). The National Council for Employment, Productivity and Minimum Wages - Vital and Mobile - is a permanent forum for dialogue between representatives of workers, employers, the National State and the Federal Labour Council (provincial governments) to assess issues related to labour relations. These include income redistribution, assistance to the unemployed, generation of genuine and decent employment and combating unregistered work, among others. Institutional weakness is also observed in this space, since it is not a law sanctioned by the National Congress, but rather convened by the current government. That means that the government has the power to establish minimum wage increases by decree when an agreement cannot be reached. Additionally, the commissions are not facilitated to function in a way that would enable tackling more structural labour issues.

Other spaces for dialogue with civil society established by law include the National Plan for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change, which is regulated by [Law 27.520](#) and requires the convening of an expanded roundtable with social organisations, unions and companies. However, since the Milei government took office, these regulations have not been fully implemented. Instead, the dialogue roundtable has been either not convened at all or has

⁹ Although our perspective on this programme is not positive, as we consider that it functions as a tool for silencing voices that might rise up against the installation of extractivist models. For a more in-depth analysis, see the article ["Global Gateway, the new European colonialism"](#).

¹⁰ With special emphasis on the contribution to the development of global and regional public goods through the following instruments: public-private partnerships for development (PPPD), interventions linked to knowledge transfer and R&D and triangular cooperation.

¹¹ Federal Council for Transparency, National Council for Social Policies, National Council for Women, Gender and Diversity, Advisory Council of the National Plan against Discrimination, Advisory Council of the Civil Society of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Council for Food and Nutritional Security, Honorary Advisory Council for Mental Health and Addictions, National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies - SDG Space, Federal Council for Youth, Interministerial Bureau for Care, Federal Council for the Prevention and Tackling of Femicide, Transvesticides and Transfemicides, Federal Council for Human rights, National Commission for Justice and Peace (with intersectoral participation), National Council for Early Childhood, Networking Commission of the National Agency for Disability, Advisory Council of the Agency for Access to Public Information, Bureau for Articulation with Civil Society of the Ministry of Social Development, Crisis Committee with Social Organisations (during the pandemic), Space for dialogue with CSOs of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainability.

been used to merely share information without giving civil society the opportunity to influence or make contributions.

Several regional integration organisations that Argentina participates in offer spaces for social dialogue and dialogue with CSOs, such as MERCOSUR, UNASUR, CELAC and the EU-CELAC dialogue. While these spaces have only deliberative or declarative powers, The Mercosur Socio-Labour Commission is the only binding space in which employers, workers and States participate.

5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

The current government [has devalued and even polarised political narratives towards social organisations](#), particularly organisations that work on the ground with [vulnerable sectors](#). Moreover, [It has publicly stigmatised state workers, describing them as "militants"](#) and diminished the value of their work. Accompanying this trend, the media stigmatises organisations, in particular unions, social movements, youth, and even social sports clubs (non-profit CSOs set up to strengthen community ties through sports and/or social gatherings, which - like popular libraries - exist throughout the country and are very relevant socio-cultural actors at the local level).

[This exacerbation, together with the multiplication of hate narratives over the last year, culminated in the repression of a protest by pensioners and retirees on 12 March](#), which was attended by political youth organisations, unions, citizens and citizens' movements.

Fake news disseminated through newspapers such as *La Nación* and *Clarín* (the two national mass media companies with the greatest impact in the country) amplifies these negative narratives. At the same time, television media belonging to pro-government media oligopolies replicate the speeches of President Milei that [accuse organisations and individuals who exercise their right to freedom of expression and protest of trying to destabilise the government and of being coup perpetrators](#).

In this context, Milei has additionally made statements against a supposed “gender ideology” and LGBTIQ+ collective, including at the World Economic Forum in Davos, in a broader attempt to eliminate gender perspectives. This¹² is expressed in the wording Milei has chosen to describe the entire multilateral system:

"The Argentine Republic warns that applying a sectoralised approach to understanding human rights generates inequities contrary to the intended objective of non-discrimination.

If the law is interpreted only through the gender perspective, other equally or more pressing corrective perspectives, such as childhood, the elderly, disability or mental health, are left out.

For this reason, Argentina believes that instead of a gender perspective, the more inclusive perspective of vulnerability should be used, in order to safeguard the principle of equal opportunities."

¹² Mercosur Social and Labour Organisations. SGT 10, Employment, Labour and Social Security (Minutes not yet published).

Other groups subject to criticism in pro-government media outlets are farmers' communities and indigenous peoples. Official policies aimed to provoke these groups, such as [eliminating the name “Room of Indigenous Peoples” in the Casa Rosada](#) (the seat of Executive Power), or the [repeal of the territorial emergency DNU 805/21](#), and [police persecution in the territories](#).

In the education sector, the significant [budget cuts emptying](#)¹³ the system and the elimination of social programmes deepen exclusion and reduce civil society's capacity for democratic participation.

These policies and narratives severely threaten the capacity for action and participation of the aforementioned collectives. Their opportunities for participation are often limited as a direct consequence of undermining their work; access to support and resources is more difficult, and they face increasing regulatory limitations and penalties.

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

In Argentina participation in the digital environment is broad, but uneven. According [to INDEC surveys in early 2024](#), 92.5% of Argentina's population lived in urban centres and internet penetration reached 88.4%, with social networks being the most widely used medium for information.

However, due to the size of the territory, the difficult access to certain geographies means that the infrastructure is not adequate for rural sectors, indigenous peoples, and farmers, as has been confirmed by CSOs working in these territories.

Access to, production and consumption of digital content is related to the capacity to access infrastructure and acquired knowledge and skills, which is why the most marginalised sectors of the population are excluded from these communication channels.

At the same time, and very fundamentally, the digital environment is the political sphere most widely used as a means of amplifying the aforementioned hate narratives towards different groups in civil society, both by the pro-government media outlets and by [militant cyber groups known as libertarians](#). This exacerbation is particularly evident in the use of official government social media accounts — most notably the President's — to reproduce these narratives and disseminate [false information](#).¹⁴

Challenges and Opportunities

The main challenge for civil society in the coming months is to overcome the fear imposed by the executive branch, both in terms of physical security during demonstrations and protests, and in terms of the threats received by state workers not to demonstrate or participate politically or civically in the public arena.

¹³ See the joint statement of the National Universities Trade Union Front, the Argentine University Federation (FUA) and the National Interuniversity Council (CIN) "The public university: basis of democracy and social development": <https://www.cin.edu.ar/la-universidad-publica-base-de-la-democracia-y-el-desarrollo-social/>.

¹⁴ This dynamic reaches its corollary with the [\\$LIBRA case](#), the criminal consequences of which have yet to be uncovered.

Likewise, there is a devaluation of social engagement and civil society, especially human rights defenders, labour rights activists and environmental defenders.

The rapid increase in social conflict, together with the loss of rights and quality of life and the consequent repression by the public forces, make for a difficult combination. However, human rights and [the demand for Memory, Truth and Justice continue to be the most unequivocal demand in a large part of Argentine society, bringing millions of people onto the streets.](#)

Civil society needs to address increasing social conflict in a way that does not fragment civil society demands and, instead, needs to work towards uniting demands in a rational, democratic and inclusive narrative. It is important to identify the upcoming electoral processes and the possible impact they could have on party agendas (legislative elections in October 2025 and presidential elections in 2027) as an opportunity to contribute to this narrative.

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