

# Country Focus Report

Chile

August 2025

# Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

Six key enabling principles:

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms
2. Supportive legal and regulatory framework
3. Accessible and sustainable resources
4. Open and responsive State
5. Supportive public culture and discourses on civil society
6. Access to a secure digital environment

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the six principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

## Brief Overview of the Country Context

Chile is undergoing significant changes in civic participation, with some advances like greater inclusion in participatory processes, alongside rising challenges such as political polarisation and violence. Global trends, such as new technologies, misinformation, and the political use of digital platforms, are also reshaping how civil society engages. This makes it essential to examine the environment in which civil society works.

Civil society plays a vital role in promoting democratic values in Chile, grounded in the Constitutional [principles](#) of dignity, freedom, equality, human rights, and popular sovereignty. Its significance has been evident throughout Chile's recent history—from the struggle to defend democracy during the dictatorship, to its active involvement in the 2019 demonstrations and the two constitutional processes. Over the past 30 years, civil society has gained increasing recognition both nationally and internationally. The growth and organisation of civil

society are reflected in the [existence](#) of more than 400,000 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the country, marking a significant growth since 1990. Notably, 60% of these organisations are concentrated in key areas such as community development, economic advancement, and cultural initiatives. This not only underscores their growing presence but also their sustained contribution to strengthening democracy from the grassroots level.

However, Chile is still grappling with the fallout of two failed constitutional referendums. The [second draft](#), rejected by 55 % of the voters in December 2023, deepened public mistrust in political elites and sapped enthusiasm for reform. Political fragmentation widened in the October 2024 municipal elections, where independents captured 103 of 345 mayoralties, prompting mainstream parties to float alliances and electoral changes to curb their rise. In 2024, street protests persisted over pensions, indigenous land claims and economic inequality. Critics argue that the 2023 [Náin-Retamal Law](#)— which imposes harsher penalties for crimes against police and expands self-defence rights for officers— risks undermining accountability by creating potential safeguards for security forces accused of misconduct. The Mapuche conflict in the south also endures. Recurrent states of emergency in Araucanía have deployed the military, limiting movement and public assembly and hampering civil-society monitoring of indigenous-rights abuses.

Another important aspect to have in mind regarding civil society in Chile, is the [“Caso Convenios”](#), also known as “Caso Fundaciones”. This is a corruption case involving the misappropriation of public funds by CSOs, significantly undermining public and institutional trust, and making it increasingly difficult for CSOs to secure funding from both public and private sectors. [14 billion pesos \(≈ USD 16.4 million\) lost](#) through direct transfers to foundations linked to the ruling party, sparked widespread public criticism and prompted investigations by the Attorney General's Office and the Comptroller's Office due to evaded fiscal controls and irregular political financing.

As a result, many CSOs have been affected by the broader institutional trust crisis: a [2023 study](#) shows that 55% of organisations impacted by this context had to reduce their operating expenses and adjust salaries of personnel to stay afloat. On that note, while public support for CSOs remains, the State has adopted stricter administrative measures, creating a more cautious and bureaucratic funding landscape. This ongoing situation continues to generate uncertainty about the long-term financial sustainability of civil society, highlighting the need for close monitoring and effective trust-rebuilding strategies.

## B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

### Principle 1: Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

**Score: 4.2 <sup>1</sup>**

Chile's 1980 Constitution formally guarantees the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. Moreover, the legal framework supports the right of CSOs to associate, and in the past 30 years new laws have been introduced to promote transparency and encourage

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<sup>1</sup> This is a rebased score derived from the CIVICUS Monitor rating published in December 2024. The country is rated as Narrowed in the Monitor, with a score of 80/100, which has been converted to fit our 1–5 scale.

participatory civic engagement. Nevertheless, the actual respect for and protection of these fundamental rights remains uneven, particularly for historically marginalised groups such as women, LGBTQ+ people, Indigenous peoples, and migrants. Although legal protections exist on paper, their enforcement often falls short, and episodes of repression, surveillance, and discrimination continue to be reported. The country has made institutional progress in areas such as electoral participation and transparency. However, the persistence of police violence, limited access to justice, and an increasingly hostile environment for dissenting voices can be compared to the period prior to the 2019 social uprising, when civic protests were less frequently met with violent repression and public institutions maintained a more open dialogue with civil society. As noted by academic analysis from [The Reasons for the Mass Protests in Chile 2019/2020](#) IPE Berlin Institute, Chile was widely perceived as one of the most stable democracies in Latin America until 2019, with functioning institutions and a relatively open civic space despite underlying inequality. These changes have raised concerns about the overall quality of Chile's civic space and the commitment of the State to promote and protect it.

### **Freedom of Peaceful Assembly**

In Chile, the right to assembly is granted as a constitutional right; however, there is an ongoing legal debate regarding the draft bill regulating the use of force by law enforcement, which civil society organisations warn could weaken protections for peaceful protesters and expand impunity for police violence. Peaceful social protests regularly occur across the country, ranging from [teachers' unions](#) demanding better working conditions, to protests with more than 20,000 people in [support of Palestine](#) and asking for a ceasefire in Gaza. These and many other events have occurred without major incidents or acts of violence. Nevertheless, there is a perception within civil society that the response of law enforcement is sometimes disproportionate, particularly when demonstrations address politically sensitive issues or demand structural reforms, rather than simply depending on the size of the protest. It is not new that over the past several years, civil society in Chile has faced a pattern of disproportionate and at times violent responses by security forces to social protest, even when demonstrations have remained peaceful. This concern is especially relevant in the context of increasing attacks and harassment against environmental and Indigenous defenders, which underscore persistent gaps in the protection framework.

The [2019 social uprisings](#) were particularly emblematic, where widespread protests against inequality resulted in more than 10,000 complaints of excessive use of force by the police and armed forces—yet, as of October 2024, only about 1% of these cases had been resolved, reflecting deep-rooted issues of impunity. Several reports — including [The Never Again that Never Was](#), a national media and academic analysis published by CIPER — as well as international assessments by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, documented serious and widespread human rights violations committed by State agents during this period. These incidents are not isolated, but part of a long-standing pattern of police repression, impunity, and institutional resistance to reform. The use of force during protests has followed a trajectory of recurring violations that remain insufficiently addressed — particularly in contexts involving youth, women, Indigenous peoples, and human rights defenders. More recently, on 8 March 2025, during [International Women's Day](#), public reports indicated that isolated incidents of unrest occurred near the end of the march. Small groups erected burning barricades and clashed with police forces in the vicinity of San Ignacio Street. In response, police deployed water cannons and other crowd-control measures. In that same month, protests against a controversial fishing bill, led by [artisanal fishers](#), turned violent,

resulting in several arrests. These repeated events illustrate a concerning pattern of disproportionate force by the State in response to large-scale protests, particularly when such demonstrations challenge economic or political interests.

## Freedom of Association

The right to associate in Chile presents a vast legal framework. It is not only granted by the Constitution, but also in the [Labour Code](#) and several [international treaties](#) to which Chile is subscribed. For instance, the Labour Code protects the right of workers to form trade unions and engage in collective bargaining, offering legal safeguards against anti-union practices. This is crucial for the protection of labour rights and democratic participation within the workplace. For this reason, different types of unions exist in a wide range of sectors, like professors, fishermen, public sector workers, and health professionals, among others.

Together, these instruments create a comprehensive legal framework for the right to associate, binding the Chilean state to uphold, promote, and protect this right both in law and in practice. However, while the formal legal framework is robust, challenges persist in its implementation and accessibility, particularly for vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, Indigenous communities and informal sector labourers, who often face barriers in exercising their associational rights fully and equally to others. A particularly concerning example is the criminalisation of Mapuche leaders and organisations in the Araucanía region, as documented in the report: [Chile: Violations of the Rights of the Mapuche Raised Again at the UN](#) |. In this region, the use of anti-terror legislation and prolonged states of emergency have restricted their ability to organise, mobilise, and defend ancestral land rights. Civil society organisations have documented surveillance, arbitrary arrests, and judicial persecution, which undermine Indigenous communities' ability to associate freely and safely.

In that sense, the situation in the Araucanía region exemplifies how structural violence and militarised responses can severely undermine associational rights. The long-standing Mapuche conflict—rooted in demands for ancestral land restitution—has been met with recurring states of emergency and military deployments. These security responses have restricted the right to free movement, limited public gatherings, and intensified tensions between Indigenous communities and the State. CSOs defending Indigenous rights have reported increased surveillance, police intimidation, and legal harassment, contributing to a climate of fear and distrust. According to [Human Rights Watch](#), such measures have constrained the ability of organisations to monitor human rights violations and advocate for affected communities, especially in remote or militarised zones. A prominent example is [Julia Chuñil's case](#), an Indigenous woman and environmental rights defender who [disappeared](#) more than eight months ago, allegedly after receiving repeated threats related to her political activism. The absence of protection mechanisms and persistent impunity in such cases underscores the State's failure to guarantee the right to associate freely and safely.

## Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression, while formally upheld, is increasingly under threat, especially for those who challenge dominant narratives or political elites. Although Chile continues to be rated as "free" in terms of press freedom, in recent years the country has seen a rise in [online harassment](#) and smear campaigns targeting journalists, human rights defenders, and activists—particularly during politically sensitive moments like the 2024 municipal elections. For instance, during the lead-up to the October 2024 elections, [Chilean journalists](#) such as Josefa Barraza—editor of *El Ciudadano*—faced legal harassment and coordinated digital

attacks after publishing investigations into corruption and environmental conflicts involving political candidates, particularly in the Araucanía region. Disinformation and coordinated [attacks on social media](#) have been used to discredit journalists, fuelling polarisation and hostility toward dissenting voices. According to [the Annual Report by the Observatorio del Derecho a la Comunicación \(ODC\)](#), 132 press freedom violations were documented in 2024—representing a 27% increase compared to 2023—including cases of physical aggression, digital harassment, legal intimidation, and restrictions on journalistic work. More than half of these incidents were reportedly perpetrated by state agents. This environment, compounded by the lack of swift legal protections against digital attacks, has chilled public discourse and deterred some actors from speaking out.

Perhaps most concerning is the sharp deterioration of rights for the LGBTIQ+ community, who have experienced a significant rise in both violence and institutional backsliding. According to the [23rd Report on the Human Rights of Sexual and Gender Diversity](#), released in March 2025, discrimination cases rose by 78.7%, rising to 2,847 incidents over the previous year. For the first time since the return to democracy, all three branches of government showed signs of backsliding on LGBTIQ+ rights, marking a systemic shift away from previously expanding protections. These setbacks pose a serious threat to the political and civic participation of sexual and gender minorities, and represent a broader erosion of Chile's commitment to inclusive democratic governance.

## Conclusion

In sum, while Chile maintains formal protections for fundamental freedoms, their implementation remains selective, context-dependent, and increasingly fragile, particularly when it comes to protecting the rights of protesters, Indigenous peoples, journalists, and LGBTIQ+ communities. Addressing these challenges requires not only legal reforms but also a deep cultural and institutional commitment to upholding the rights of all individuals, regardless of political position, identity, or affiliation.

## Principle 2: Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

### Score: 3.3

This principle is one of the bases for the development of any work or activity for civil society and is divided into 3 dimensions. First, legal and regulatory framework that favours the partnership; second, operational environment, and lastly, protection against interference. These three all gather fundamental aspects of how the institutions support civil society and its incorporation into public life. Chile has a legal framework that supports civil society operations, with transparent registration processes established by the Civil Code and [Law No. 20.500 on Associations and Citizen Participation](#), and the [Decree 84](#) (approving the regulations of the national registry of non-profit legal entities, 2013).

### Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

In general, Chile presents a favourable legal framework, specifically the [Law 20,500](#) on associations and citizen participation in public management, and the Decree [84](#) that allows the participation of non-profit organisations. This allows the existence of different CSOs in a generally accessible way, broadly recognising the importance of the freedom of association and its institutional recognition as something relevant for civil society. The process of



association of a CSO is considered to be a clear and accessible procedure in the various laws mentioned, with reasonable standards, free processes, appeal mechanisms and defined and public deadlines.

Although the framework is robust, marginalised groups and smaller associations face challenges when it comes to applying it. One of the main challenges faced by CSOs in Chile relates to administrative barriers during the incorporation and formalisation process. The approval of a non-profit organisation's registration depends on the criteria and procedures of each municipality, which can result in delays and inconsistencies across the territory. Additionally, there is a lack of accessible legal and administrative guidance, particularly for smaller or grassroots organisations that many times lack information or formal training in the topic, which hinders their ability to meet the formal requirements.

These barriers are even more acute for marginalised groups, who often face technological, educational, connectivity and time-related constraints when attempting to complete bureaucratic procedures. Obtaining legal personality, preparing official meeting minutes, hiring accountants, or accessing legal counsel often becomes a significant obstacle. Lastly, while the law allows rejected applications to be corrected and resubmitted, and even appealed in court, these pathways are not always viable for organisations without legal support, limiting their effective access to institutional recognition.

### **Case Study - Housing Committees in Camps:**

A specific case that shows the characteristics of the current regulatory framework regarding association, is the Housing Committees, which are community organisations formed by people living in encampments or informal settlements, who come together to organise and collectively demand access to decent housing. These committees play a key role in channelling demands to the State, especially to the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism ([MINVU](#)), managing access to housing subsidies, coordinating community self-management initiatives—such as basic infrastructure or service provision—and representing their communities before municipalities and other public or private entities.

Despite their crucial social role, these organisations face multiple bureaucratic and legal challenges in the process of formalising their association. For example, requirements like permanent residency exclude many migrants who hold other valid residence permits and seek to participate precisely to advocate for their own situations. In addition, the bureaucratic registration process is slow and requires multiple follow-ups with municipal authorities. The use of technical and legal language in documentation often hinders understanding, especially when accessible guidance is lacking. Many municipalities do not have the institutional capacity to provide adequate support, leaving communities without access to necessary information or assistance. While re-registration with corrections is allowed, the process remains burdensome and time-consuming, further delaying community efforts to formalise and advance their housing demands.

### **Operational Environment**

Chile has a legal and institutional framework regulating the structure, autonomy, and public participation of CSOs—notably through [Law 20,500](#) on Associations and Citizen Participation in Public Management. This law enshrines the right to associate freely for lawful purposes (Art. 1) and provides the legal basis for CSOs to incorporate, establish governance structures

with statutes and boards, and manage both domestic and international funding through instruments like the Funds for Strengthening Public Interest Organisations and membership in consultative bodies such as Councils of Civil Society (COSOC). However, significant obstacles arise from bureaucratic and administrative requirements. While these are generally designed to promote transparency and accountability—for example, the mandatory annual submission of financial reports to the Civil Registry, or the registration of all donations received through the Chilean Internal Revenue Service (SII)—they often create disproportionate burdens for small and emerging organisations. These groups may lack the technical or financial capacity to comply with such requirements, especially when they involve digital platforms, strict timelines, or accounting standards beyond their reach.

Thus, while these regulations are not arbitrary and aim to ensure transparency, they unintentionally become barriers to entry and sustainability for newer CSOs. To balance the goals of accountability and the inclusion of diverse civic actors, it is essential to implement training programmes and simplify procedures to ensure both accessibility and compliance across the sector.

Although Chile's legal framework does not explicitly restrict access to funding for CSOs, independent civil society stakeholders consulted for this report observed that it imposes complex administrative requirements that disproportionately affect small and emerging organisations. Bureaucratic procedures—such as submitting documents already held by state agencies—limit effective access to public resources. Additionally, financial infrastructure remains inadequate: [Banco Estado](#) is the only bank offering basic accounts to CSOs, but these accounts lack essential digital services and require in-person transactions, restricting efficient management. These regulatory and operational barriers, while not formal restrictions, function as structural obstacles that weaken the enabling environment for civil society.

While the legal environment for CSOs in Chile provides a structure for their operation, it also includes ambiguous provisions that may have negative consequences. For instance, in its 1st Article, Law 20,500 establishes the following when it comes to the general principles about organisations:

“The organizations that are constituted under the protection of this law must have lawful purposes and may not contravene public order, morality or good customs.”

This requirement, although it seeks to avoid abuses, opens the door to ambiguous interpretations, since the interpretation of “morals” or “good customs” may vary according to the socio-cultural or political context. This can become a subjective barrier to the formal registration of organisations, especially those that promote controversial or non-traditional agendas (e.g. LGBTIQ+ collectives, sex workers' organisations, etc.).

### **Case Study - “Tremendas” and Youth-led Organisations:**

A specific case that illustrates issues regarding the operational framework for CSOs is the case of youth-led organisations, specifically [Fundación Tremendas](#), an CSO that promotes the activism and leadership of girls, adolescents and young women in Chile and Latin America. Its core aim is to empower young people to be active leaders, which becomes especially difficult when it comes to how institutions recognize and adapt for the participation of people under 18 years old. During the discussion with civil society experts, the question was raised



as to whether active participation in a [Civil Society Council for Youth](#) (COSOCS) can be effectively balanced with school responsibilities.

Another topic discussed was the age limiting format of the operative environment. Under the Chilean Civil Code, the legal framework generally recognises the “natural person” as someone over 14 years of age with limited capacity to act. Nevertheless, this becomes a challenge for organisations of people that are even younger than 14—such as Tremendas, where girls are leading projects as early as age 10. Furthermore, even after reaching the minimum age, it remains difficult for young students to engage in the operative environment, especially in aspects of applications and funding, as they remain legally dependent on adult representatives or guardians.

### Protection Against Interference

In Chile, CSOs benefit from a moderate level of protection against undue interference based on panel comments, though important challenges remain. Legally, CSOs are protected from arbitrary dissolution, which can only be ordered by a court ruling following a request from the Ministry of Justice and legal action from the State Defence Council (as per [Article 549](#) of the Civil Code, amended by Law 20.500). This must follow due process and be based on specific causes such as a “serious violation of the statutes” although such criteria may be open to interpretation. The law also establishes organisational autonomy: [Article 2](#) of Law 20.500 explicitly prohibits State interference in the internal affairs of associations, and the Ministry of Justice’s supervisory role is limited to requesting information without direct intervention. Apart from this, CSOs also have access to judicial mechanisms to challenge arbitrary decisions, which offers an important safeguard, although legal processes can be lengthy and costly for small CSOs.

A significant gap in Chilean legislation is the limited protection against third-party interference. Existing legal tools—such as defamation lawsuits or protective measures—are primarily available to natural persons, not legal entities. Although Chile has ratified the [Escazú Agreement](#)—whose Article 9 specifically mandates protection for environmental defenders—there are still no concrete national guidelines to operationalise these protections for civil society actors more broadly. This gap is particularly concerning for organisations working on sensitive issues such as environmental protection and gender rights, which often face heightened risks. For instance, in April 2025, environmental defender and journalist [Matias Rojas](#) in the Maule Region was targeted in a coordinated campaign that involved threats, vandalism (his car was torched), and earlier physical attacks—clearly demonstrating the real dangers civil society actors face, even with legal registration. Civil society actors have stressed that their legal status does not shield them from exposure to threats such as cyberattacks, defamation campaigns, or the impunity of aggressors. The only available legal recourse—protective measures—is frequently insufficient to ensure their safety and ability to operate freely.

### Conclusion

Chile’s legal framework provides a generally strong foundation for civil society, with clear procedures for association, and institutional protections against state interference. Laws such as [Law 20.500](#) and [Decree 84](#) enable the formal creation and operation of CSOs, ensuring legal recognition and autonomy.

However, significant barriers remain. Smaller, rural, youth-led, and marginalised organisations face challenges in navigating bureaucratic procedures, accessing funding, and participating equally. Outdated banking systems and limited digital infrastructure also constrain operations. Furthermore, while protections against state interference exist, safeguards against third-party threats—especially online—are insufficient. Ambiguous terms like “morality” in the legal language may allow discriminatory interpretations that undermine inclusivity. Strengthening this principle requires reducing administrative burdens, modernising digital and financial systems, and ensuring stronger, clearer protections for all CSOs—particularly the most vulnerable.

## Principle 3: Accessible and Sustainable Resources

### Score: 2.5

This principle is foundational for the functioning and sustainability of civil society, and it is assessed across three dimensions: accessibility, effectiveness, and sustainability. Together, these aspects determine the real capacity of organisations to access and manage resources necessary for fulfilling their missions—whether financial, institutional, or infrastructural.

Access to financial and other resources for CSOs in Chile is uneven and has deteriorated significantly over the past two years. While public and private funding mechanisms exist—through ministries, local and regional governments, or [donation laws](#)—structural, regulatory, and political barriers restrict their accessibility, effectiveness, and sustainability. A pivotal turning point was the so-called “[Caso Convenios](#)” (Agreements Case) that erupted in mid-2023, triggering a crisis of trust and administrative tightening in the relationship between the state and CSOs. The effects of this case remain visible as of May 2025.

The “Caso Convenios” revealed significant irregularities in the allocation and transfer of public funds to foundations, prompting intense political scrutiny and public backlash. In response, authorities imposed stricter fiscal controls, tougher eligibility criteria, and more burdensome auditing processes for CSOs. While intended to improve transparency, these measures disproportionately affected smaller, community-based organisations. According to data collected by [Sociedad en Acción](#) and corroborated by the [Center for Public Policy of the Pontificia Universidad Católica](#), over 60% of organisations reported a drop in income, and 31% a decrease in donations after the scandal. Smaller and newer organisations were the most affected. Additionally, Chile’s status as an OECD country also limits its eligibility for many international cooperation grants, further narrowing opportunities for sustainable, diversified financing.

### Accessibility

Chile offers a broad array of public funds at national, regional, and local levels. In theory, the application processes for these are open to civil society. In practice, however, they are more accessible to well-resourced organisations with the administrative capacity to navigate technical application requirements, maintain financial records, and meet detailed reporting standards.

Small and emerging organisations often lack these capabilities, particularly outside urban areas. While funding opportunities are usually published on official platforms, their access often depends on [informal sharing](#) through peer networks or word of mouth. This makes it

harder for groups less connected to established civil society circles to stay informed. Additionally, workshops or application support are rare and usually limited to university-based spaces, which are not accessible to most grassroots organisations.

Furthermore, and despite existing opportunities, access to public financing has bureaucratic hurdles (such as delivery of background information already held by the State, or tax requirements) that are difficult to meet for small and new organisations. Besides this, when it comes to which banks CSOs can use, there are few to no options, where only [BancoEstado](#) – the only state-owned bank in Chile mandated to offer inclusive financial services – has an account available to CSOs with no minimum maintenance costs.

This instrument has serious operational limitations: it does not allow electronic transfers and requires withdrawals to be made in person by the director and treasurer, which hinders the agile and modern management of resources by CSOs. This account, despite being the only cost-free option, does not adequately respond to the sector's current digital and operational needs.

Additionally, since the “[Caso Convenios](#)”, the financial sector has adopted a more cautious stance. Some banks now refuse to open accounts for CSOs unless they have been registered with the Internal Revenue Service (SII) for at least three years—effectively excluding new organisations from formal financial systems. While donation laws exist (Laws 19.885 and 21.440), the process is complex and difficult to navigate, particularly for grassroots organisations.

## Effectiveness

The effectiveness of resource use varies considerably by funding source. Some donors, particularly international foundations, or private sector allies, are perceived by CSOs as responsive and aligned with their values. These relationships allow for shared decision-making and adaptable implementation, often including capacity-building components and greater flexibility in reporting.

However, public funding mechanisms are increasingly characterised by bureaucratic rigidity and administrative overload. According to the [survey "Encuesta de Sociedad en Acción" \(2024\)](#),

- **83%** of CSOs reported an increase in bureaucratic control,
- **59%** perceived greater distrust from the state, and
- **58%** felt their relationship with public authorities had worsened.

In addition, civil society actors noted that public calls for funding (*concursos públicos*) often prioritise short-term, highly structured projects, leaving little room for innovation or context-based adaptation. These conditions negatively impact the operational effectiveness of CSOs, creating uncertainty in programme execution and disincentivising risk-taking or long-term planning. Several organisations also pointed out that disproportionate audit demands and delayed disbursements have led to liquidity problems, forced staff reductions, and project suspensions. Repeated requests to re-submit documentation, delayed disbursements, and complex audit requirements hinder timely implementation. The experts consulted suggested

that even large organisations that have stable funding are facing these obstacles, suggesting that the problem is systemic.

## Sustainability

Sustainability is perhaps the most concerning dimension analysed in this Report. The Chilean CSO sector remains heavily reliant on short-term, project-based public funding. Core costs—such as infrastructure, administration, or financial management—are rarely covered by grants, forcing organisations to piece together resources or rely on unpaid labour.

This funding model undermines long-term planning. According to the [survey "Encuesta de Sociedad en Acción" \(2024\)](#):

- **46%** of CSOs reduced programme coverage,
- **40%** cut programme components,
- **31%** closed programmes entirely, and
- **30%** reported that they had stopped serving beneficiaries.

Moreover, banking barriers persist. Without access to basic services—like checking accounts or donor transfers—many organisations operate informally, which in turn prevents them from growing or applying for larger grants. The impact of the decrease in income has forced many CSOs to adopt financial strategies to cope with the situation. For example, [55% of affected organisations](#) have implemented measures such as reducing operating expenses and adjustments in remuneration, seeking to maintain their operations despite the adversities.

## Conclusion

The assessment of accessible and sustainable resources highlights important structural vulnerabilities within Chile's civil society ecosystem. While a range of public and private funding mechanisms exists, accessibility remains limited and uneven in practice, disproportionately affecting grassroots and emerging organisations. The aftermath of the "Caso Convenios" has further exacerbated these challenges, introducing restrictive measures that—while aimed at ensuring transparency—have intensified bureaucratic burdens and eroded trust between the state and civil society.

Effectiveness and sustainability are increasingly compromised by short-term project-based funding, rigid compliance demands, and barriers to financial formalisation, particularly for newer entities. These conditions hamper the ability of CSOs to plan strategically, sustain programmes, and serve their communities effectively. Without comprehensive reforms to promote equitable access to resources, streamline bureaucratic processes, and support long-term institutional development, civil society's capacity to contribute meaningfully to social transformation will remain constrained. Addressing these structural barriers is not merely a matter of technical improvement—it is fundamental to preserving the vibrancy, independence, and legitimacy of civil society in Chile.

## Principle 4: Open and Responsive State

## Score: 2.8

This principle evaluates the degree to which the State enables an environment of transparency, participation, and accountability for civil society and citizens. A central participatory structure in Chile is the Consejo de la Sociedad Civil (COSOC)—consultative civil society councils mandated by [Law No. 20.500 \(2011\)](#). This law requires the establishment of COSOCs both in municipalities ([Law No. 18.695](#), Art. 94) and in state administrative bodies ([Law 18.575](#), Art.74), with the goal of ensuring diverse, representative, and pluralistic citizen participation in public management.

Despite a strong legal framework, the functioning of COSOCs remains inconsistent. They are often active only during politically sensitive moments—such as constitutional reforms—rather than serving as ongoing civic engagement bodies. Their consultative and non-binding role limits their real influence, leading to frustration among its members. Many COSOC members, especially in smaller municipalities, lack access to training, legal advice, or technical support. Studies by Fundación Multitudes (2022) and the [2023 COSOC Characterization Study](#) confirm that most councils operate without sufficient institutional backing, and both civil society and government actors see the lack of training and induction as a major weakness.

[Law No. 20.730](#) on Lobbying and Interest Representation, which promotes transparency by requiring public officials to disclose meetings with interest groups, also affects civic participation. While it facilitates access to authorities, it has caused confusion. Some COSOC members are unclear on whether their actions fall under lobbying rules, and public officials may misinterpret interactions with civil society as reportable, which can hinder dialogue. To ensure the law strengthens, rather than restricts, civic engagement, targeted training and clearer guidelines are urgently needed.

These challenges reflect a broader disconnect: the mere existence of participatory structures does not guarantee real civic empowerment, particularly when those structures are under-resourced, lack adequate training, and remain excluded from meaningful decision-making processes.

## Transparency

Chile has a strong legal framework for transparency, anchored in [Law 20.285 \(2008\)](#) which guarantees the right of all individuals to access public information held by state bodies. The law also established the Council for Transparency (*Consejo para la Transparencia*, CPLT), an autonomous public entity with its own legal personality and assets. The CPLT's primary role is to ensure compliance with regulations on transparency in public functions and access to information across the public administration.

The CPLT holds sanctioning authority and carries out its mandate through both oversight mechanisms and public education initiatives. Under Law No. 20.285, all individuals have the right to request public information from any state body, with the [Transparency Portal](#) providing a digital platform to facilitate access. The system has demonstrated significant growth: in 2024 alone, over two million access-to-information requests were submitted — a 10,000% increase since 2013 ([CPLT, 2024](#)).

Additionally, the 2023 reforms to the [Transparency Law](#) improved accountability and encouraged greater civic involvement, also promoting checks and balances within the

framework. This reform increased public institutions' obligations for information disclosure and encouraged greater involvement of CSOs in governance processes.

Despite these advancements, implementation challenges remain. According to [the RTI Rating](#), which evaluates the strength of national right to information laws based on international standards, Chile scores 94 out of 150. This reflects a moderate overall performance, with notable shortcomings. In particular, the limited institutional coverage—excluding the judiciary and legislature—and the inconsistent application of the public interest test, which is essential for granting access even in cases involving exceptions, highlight key areas for improvement.

Moreover, civil society organisations have highlighted that technical and bureaucratic hurdles—such as overly complex formats, institutional jargon, or limited digital accessibility—often prevent underserved or marginalised communities from effectively accessing or interpreting public information. Both the Judicial Observatory and the CPLT have noted that transparency shortcomings stem not from deliberate efforts to withhold information, but rather from inadequate record-keeping practices and weak information management systems within public institutions.

According to the [Global Information Society Watch](#), while Chile has made improvements in transparency, some challenges remain in ensuring that information is accessible and understandable to all citizens. Additionally, the [Council for Transparency \(CPLT\)](#) has observed that transparency failures are frequently the result of inadequate record-keeping practices and weak information management systems, rather than intentional efforts to withhold information.

Lastly, in a symbolic setback, Chile's Lobby Platform, which discloses meetings between public officials and interest groups, was [offline](#) for 58 consecutive days in early 2024, generating widespread criticism and raising concerns about the resilience of digital transparency tools.

## Participation

Chile has a vibrant civil society, and the 2023 reforms to the Transparency Law marked an important step forward by enhancing accountability and encouraging greater civic participation. These reforms expanded public institutions' obligations regarding information disclosure and promoted stronger engagement of CSOs in governance processes, reinforcing mechanisms of checks and balances. However, while COSOCs are present throughout the country, their effectiveness remains limited. As of 2023, [117 COSOCs](#) were either active or in the process of being renewed. Although this figure may appear substantial, it represents only a small fraction of the institutions legally required to establish such councils—considering that Chile has 345 municipalities, in addition to numerous regional and national government bodies.

However, as much as these councils involve diverse organisational actors such as community groups, guilds, and foundations, they still face some structural challenges:

- Meetings have decreased since the pandemic.
- Councils often lack influence over the agendas or decision-making processes of the public institutions they are meant to advise—such as municipal governments, ministries, or other state agencies—which limits their role to a merely symbolic or



consultative one.

- There is a disconnect between COSOC input and policy outcomes.

According to [“¿Hay COSOC?” study](#), legal compliance exists, but practical implementation is inconsistent. Many municipalities fail to follow through with basic mandates, and participation is often symbolic—used to give the appearance of openness or consultation. As experts reported, it is a way to demonstrate that the public sector has openness for civil society for the records, but, in practice, it is not a real instance of participation. Regional and socioeconomic disparities persist, and citizens in peripheral zones face digital and logistical barriers to effective engagement.

Beyond COSOCs, other participation mechanisms—such as public hearings or environmental consultations—are mostly non-binding and depend heavily on the political will of authorities. As the [2024 UNDP Human Development Report](#) notes, a form of “*implosive citizenship*” has emerged, where citizens participate but feel their voices carry little weight in shaping public policy.

## Accountability

Chile has formal mechanisms for accountability, including participatory public reporting obligations and complaint procedures via the CPLT. The law mandates that institutions respond to citizen observations on plans, budgets, and performance. Nevertheless, in practice, these mechanisms fall short.

A recurring critique from civil society is the difficulty in tracing a clear line between public participation and decision-making. Consultations are often seen as exercises in collecting feedback without follow-up or real implementation. A clear example was the 2015 constitutional consultation under President Bachelet, where over [127,000 people](#) participated in dialogues and cabildos with the government. However, despite wide participation, the process lacked political continuity and did not lead to any reform.

This ongoing pattern—where reports and feedback from consultations are usually not returned to the communities consulted—exacerbates public frustration and undermines trust. Multiple evaluations, including a 2023 final report on the Indigenous Consultation Guidelines, have highlighted that consultation processes often fail to share outcomes or next steps with participants. This was particularly evident in recent land policy consultations with Indigenous groups, as well as during both constitutional processes of the last decade, where participants noted persistent gaps between their input and the actual decisions taken. A recent case in 2025, where Atacameño communities challenged the consultation process over the [Codelco-SQM lithium agreement](#), further illustrates these shortcomings.

In addition, [Chile's Lobby Law](#) (Law No. 20.730), enacted in 2014, requires public authorities to record meetings, gifts, and trips involving lobbyists and interest groups. While it aims to enhance transparency in policymaking, civil society organisations that participated in the panel have pointed out that the law's implementation can be inconsistent and often lacks mechanisms for public oversight of follow-up actions. Furthermore, the law focuses more on formal registration than on ensuring that citizen input influences decisions.

Moreover, accountability efforts tend to focus on administrative “outputs” (i.e. activities or expenditures), rather than actual outcomes or impacts. Chile lacks an independent agency to

evaluate public policies systematically. As a result, civil society must often rely on its own efforts to monitor progress, which is rarely supported institutionally.

## Conclusion

Chile presents a paradoxical governance environment: it has a solid legal foundation for transparency and participation, yet these mechanisms are often undercut by ineffective implementation, digital barriers, institutional rigidity, and a lack of responsiveness.

The COSOC system, while central to participatory policy design, suffers from structural shortcomings and low influence. Transparency is improving in quantitative terms, but recent failures like the Lobby Platform outage highlight the fragility of institutional commitments.

To achieve a more open and responsive State, Chile must close the gap between formal participation and real influence—ensuring that citizen input leads to tangible outcomes and that accountability becomes a proactive, inclusive, and systemic practice.

## Principle 5: Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score: 2.7

This principle evaluates whether societal narratives, cultural frameworks, and public discourses create an enabling environment for civil society. It is assessed through three dimensions: Public Discourse and Constructive Dialogue, Public Perception of Civil Society and Civic Engagement, and Civic Equality and Inclusion. Chile currently shows important weaknesses in each dimension, reflecting a fragile public culture of participation.

### Public Discourse and Constructive Dialogue

Public narratives about civil society in Chile are deeply polarised. Following the 2023–2024 “[Caso Convenios](#)”, political discourse around civil society has become increasingly hostile. Members of parliament and government officials from across the ideological spectrum have publicly questioned the legitimacy and transparency of CSOs, particularly those engaged in advocacy or rights-based work. For instance, in June 2023, [parliamentarians](#) from the Los Ríos region called for transparency in government agreements with CSOs, emphasising the need for public disclosure of fund allocations. Additionally, in July 2023, [opposition deputies](#) met with the Comptroller General to request expedited investigations into foundations like *Democracia Viva*, *Urbanismo Social*, and *ProCultura*, expressing concerns over their sudden involvement in housing projects and questioning their transparency. This bipartisan scrutiny reflects a broader scepticism towards CSOs, especially those involved in advocacy and rights-based initiatives.

Organisations focused on Indigenous rights or feminist agendas are [frequently accused](#) by right-wing actors of deepening societal divides. Progressive groups, meanwhile, often discredit CSOs aligned with corporate or economic interests as being out of touch. According to the [2025 CEP survey](#), 44% of respondents perceive intense conflict between left and right ideologies, and 55% perceive high levels of conflict between Chileans and immigrants, revealing a highly fractured national conversation.

While the administration of President Boric has promoted a pro-youth and participatory narrative, such efforts have not reversed the broader climate of mistrust. Experts consulted during the panel emphasised that Chile lacks a robust and sustained national dialogue about the importance of civil society, its diversity, and the critical role it plays in addressing gaps left by the state. Most citizens remain unaware of the functions or contributions of CSOs, and public figures rarely defend the sector as part of democratic institutions.

Despite the polarisation and mistrust described above, there are also signs of recognition for participatory mechanisms and their role in public discourse. According to the [2023 COSOC Characterization Study](#), 81% of public officials in charge of citizen participation believe that COSOCs are listened to by authorities, while 68% of COSOC members share that perception. These figures, while reflecting a gap in perspectives, also highlights a broader acknowledgment of the relevance of formal participatory spaces. Strengthening these channels and bridging perception differences could contribute to rebuilding public trust in civil society and fostering a more constructive national dialogue.

### **Public Perception of Civil Society and Civic Engagement**

Public trust in civil society and civic participation mechanisms remains low. According to the [CEP 93 survey \(2025\)](#), trust in key institutions is poor: just 3% of citizens trust political parties, 21% trust labour unions, and 24% trust municipalities—despite the latter being the level of government most engaged with community organisations. This general distrust diminishes the legitimacy of participation mechanisms and limits their effectiveness.

In this context, participation is often driven by obligation (e.g., mandatory voting) rather than genuine conviction. Experts noted that many people perceive civil society and politics as disconnected from their lives, contributing to widespread apathy and disenchantment. Chile's political culture has yet to internalise a vision of democracy grounded in solidarity, civic duty, or mutual accountability.

Education is another critical area of concern. [Law No. 20.911 \(2016\)](#) mandates that all state-recognised schools implement civic education programmes across all educational levels. However, implementation has remained shallow. Studies such as [Zúñiga et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Salazar et al. \(2021\)](#) reveal that most schools limit civic education to a technical subject in the last two years of secondary school. This approach fails to promote meaningful democratic engagement or critical citizenship. Moreover, the curriculum remains predominantly adult-centric, and the lack of systematic teacher training further limits its effectiveness and reach.

Moreover, many citizens are unfamiliar with the very concept of civil society. Experts noted that terms like "NGO" or "foundation" are not widely understood, and the media rarely explains what these organisations do. The idea of joining a CSO as a meaningful civic choice is still far from the mainstream imagination, especially in contexts where formal politics are discredited and community engagement is undervalued.

### **Civic Equality and Inclusion**

Structural inequality strongly influences who participates in civil society—and how. While CSOs are legally open to all, real participation is often conditional on class, geography, gender, and race. For example, young women from affluent areas of Santiago can volunteer and engage with CSOs thanks to family support and logistical resources. In contrast, participants from peripheral communes or rural areas must travel long distances, spend

personal funds, and juggle responsibilities such as caregiving or work. This asymmetry severely limits equal access to civic life.

The [COSOC Study \(2023\)](#) found that 45% of those who responded to the survey were affiliated with organisations based in the Santiago Metropolitan Region, and 9% with organisations in Valparaíso. Additionally, 16% of respondents were based in the commune of Santiago itself, and 10% in Providencia. While these figures reflect the distribution of survey respondents—not necessarily the overall composition of COSOCs members—they suggest a strong centralisation of participation and highlight the challenges of achieving territorial representativeness in citizen participation mechanisms. While Chile’s legal framework mandates the creation of COSOCs at different levels of public administration and in all the communes of the country—including regional governments—their implementation has been uneven. Some regions, such as [O’Higgins](#), [Biobío](#), [Maule](#), [Tarapacá](#), [Atacama](#), and [Los Ríos](#), have successfully formed regional COSOCs, while others like [Arica and Parinacota](#) still lack them. Moreover, even where councils do exist, regional engagement often depends on local elites, and many mechanisms struggle with continuity and representativeness over time. Activities remain largely centralised, and regional participation is frequently limited or symbolic.

Marginalised populations—including migrants, Indigenous persons, and rural communities—face additional barriers. Security policies in regions like La Araucanía, including states of emergency and military deployment, have [restricted](#) the work of human rights organisations and limited Indigenous community advocacy. Furthermore, digital and bureaucratic barriers prevent many from accessing participatory tools or official consultations.

Gender roles also shape inclusion. Women remain overrepresented in volunteerism and social work, often due to traditional caregiving responsibilities—but this rarely translates into leadership positions or influence in decision-making. Similarly, children and youth, especially from low-income backgrounds, remain structurally excluded. Civil society continues to reflect a narrow sector of the population, undermining its democratic potential.

Despite these persistent challenges, it is worth noting that Chile has made important normative and institutional strides to foster civic inclusion. The existence of laws such as [Law No. 20.500](#) (on associations and participation), [Law No. 20.730](#) (on lobbying), and recent [national strategies](#) for inclusion and equity reflect a state-level commitment to formal equality. International assessments such as the [BTI 2024](#), which gave Chile a score of 8/10 in Equal Opportunities, and the [World Justice Project Rule of Law Index](#), with a 0.72/1 score in Fundamental Rights, highlight this progress. These frameworks provide a foundation upon which more inclusive civic engagement can be built—particularly if implementation efforts are strengthened and adapted to reach structurally excluded groups.

## Conclusion

Chile’s public culture around civil society is full of contradictions: it formally recognises civil society but often fails to trust it; legal frameworks exist, yet exclusionary practices persist; and while public discourse promotes participation, actual implementation is often superficial or merely symbolic. In the aftermath of the “Caso Convenios”, public institutions and political leaders have not done enough to defend or legitimise civil society, leaving the sector exposed to stigma and growing invisibility.

Civic engagement in Chile remains fragmented, unequal, and often exhausting. To move forward, the country must invest in cultural, educational, and communicative strategies that make civic participation a common and valued part of everyday life, strengthen the role of civil society organisations, and ensure that inclusion goes beyond symbolism to become truly structural.

## Principle 6: Access to a Secure Digital Environment

**Score: 4.0**

This principle examines the extent to which civil society organisations and citizens can exercise their rights in digital spaces, including freedom of expression online, data privacy, and equal access to the internet and digital tools. Chile presents a relatively strong legal and practical framework for digital rights, but gaps persist in digital literacy, cybersecurity readiness, and equitable access across territories and populations.

### Digital Rights

Chile stands out globally for its digital openness and freedom. According to [Freedom on the Net 2024](#), Chile is ranked among the top three countries worldwide for internet freedom, due to the absence of government-imposed internet shutdowns, website bans, or restrictions on political content. CSOs and activists are free to operate, publish online statements, and organise campaigns without risk of government censorship or surveillance.

Moreover, Chilean CSOs report no cases of government-led cyberattacks, spyware use, or unjustified surveillance. Digital rights are protected by existing legislation, notably the [Law No. 19.628](#) on Personal Data Protection, though experts agree it is outdated and no longer fit for the digital age. In December 2023, Chile passed a new data protection law, [Law No. 21.719](#), which creates the Personal Data Protection Agency and modernises the legal framework; however, it will only enter into force in December 2026.

In parallel, Chile has launched the [National Cybersecurity Policy 2023–2028](#), which outlines a strategic roadmap for strengthening digital infrastructure and creating institutional safeguards. While this policy includes provisions for public-private cooperation, its implementation is still in early phases and lacks targeted engagement with civil society actors—particularly small and local organisations, who remain unprepared for digital risks.

### Security and Privacy

While state respect for digital freedoms is strong, the security and privacy environment remains vulnerable, particularly for marginalised groups. According to the 2023 [National Internet Use Survey](#), 44.3% of internet users feel unprotected against digital threats such as phishing or malware, and over 21% of users implement no protective measures at all—a figure that rises in rural areas (25.5%), among women (24.6%), and lower-income populations (27.2%).

Although the National Cybersecurity Agency has been established, many of its functions remain in early stages, and there are no institutional mechanisms tailored specifically for civil society support or risk response. Experts highlighted that most CSOs—especially small or volunteer-based ones—lack clear protocols for managing cyber threats, securing

organisational data, or recovering from digital breaches. Their reliance on mobile data and personal devices further increases vulnerabilities.

Women leaders and defenders of environmental or Indigenous rights have [reported](#) rising levels of digital gender-based violence, including targeted harassment, disinformation, and intimidation campaigns. Additionally, there has been a recent increase in online harassment and smear campaigns targeting journalists, human rights defenders, and activists—particularly during politically sensitive moments like the 2024 municipal elections. These attacks are not systematically addressed by Chilean law or platform governance, leaving many at risk. The need for stronger frameworks to prevent and penalise digital violence is critical, particularly as disinformation and smear campaigns against CSOs increase.

### Digital Accessibility

Chile's internet access rates are relatively high at the national level as 94.3% of households report [internet access](#). However, gaps persist along geographic, economic, and generational lines. For example, only 89.5% of rural households have access to internet compared to 95% in urban areas, and just 70.5% of households composed solely of older adults report access.

These gaps directly impact the ability of grassroots organisations to operate online or engage new members. Many CSOs in peripheral regions depend entirely on the personal mobile data of staff or volunteers and lack institutional websites, cloud infrastructure, or secure communication platforms. Experts emphasised how there are no national subsidies or existing public programmes to support CSOs' digital access or build institutional capacity.

Digital literacy also shows deep [inequalities](#). While only 2.8% of youth (16–29) report never having used a computer, this figure jumps to 53.3% among those over 60. The *main reasons cited for lack of internet use* include not knowing how to use it (17%) or understanding its benefits (15%)—not economic cost. This indicates a policy gap in digital education, especially for older adults and vulnerable populations.

Panel participants also noted that the absence of accessibility standards on websites—including those of public institutions—further marginalises people with disabilities. This is especially concerning for CSOs that work with these populations or require digital infrastructure to implement their programmes effectively.

### Conclusion

Chile offers an open and rights-respecting digital environment, supported by strong legal protections and limited government interference. Civil society is free to operate and express itself online without fear of state repression. However, gaps in digital security, institutional capacity, and equitable access undermine the full realisation of these rights.

Digital participation in Chile remains shaped by social inequalities and technical barriers. Without [public investment](#) in literacy, infrastructure, and protective measures—especially for the most vulnerable—Chile's civil society cannot fully capitalise on the opportunities that the digital sphere offers.

## C) Recommendations



Based on the findings of this Country Focus Report, the following recommendations are addressed to key stakeholders to strengthen the enabling environment for civil society in Chile:

### **1.To the Government of Chile**

**(Ministry General Secretariat of Government, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, Ministry of Science and Technology, Subsecretariat for Human Rights):**

- ❖ Strengthen and simplify public funding mechanisms for civil society, particularly for grassroots and emerging organisations. This includes reducing bureaucratic barriers, offering training and technical assistance, and creating differentiated calls for smaller organisations.
- ❖ Ensure the effective implementation of digital rights and cybersecurity protections, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women leaders, youth, and rural activists.
- ❖ Reinforce participatory mechanisms by making COSOC and public consultations more binding, diverse, and representative—especially outside of Santiago.
- ❖ Advance the national digital inclusion strategy, guaranteeing equitable access to the internet, digital tools, and skills training, particularly for rural areas, older adults, and low-income groups.
- ❖ Publicly acknowledge and promote the legitimacy and role of civil society, countering harmful narratives and fostering constructive dialogue across political lines.

### **2. To Donors and the International Community**

- ❖ Diversify funding channels and reduce reliance on short-term project-based grants. Support core funding for CSOs, especially those working on human rights, climate justice, gender, and Indigenous rights.
- ❖ Invest in capacity building for CSOs in digital security, strategic communications, monitoring and evaluation, and community organising.
- ❖ Support regional exchange and learning, particularly within Latin America, on issues such as participatory governance, disinformation, and civic technology.

### **3. To Civil Society Organisations**

- ❖ Strengthen coordination and alliances, especially between national and local groups, to advocate collectively and exchange resources and knowledge.

- ❖ Invest in internal capacities for financial sustainability, digital security, and impact measurement.
- ❖ Amplify youth, Indigenous, and rural voices within national advocacy agendas to ensure more representative and intersectional civic action.

## Research process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members. The consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the [CIVICUS Monitor](#). However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year. This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as [V-Dem](#), the [Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index](#), the [RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

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