

Ecuador

Country Focus Report

September 2025



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A) An 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 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 6 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

Civil society organisations have historically played a [leading](#) role in facilitating access to public services and collaborating in landmark processes such as the drafting of the 1998 and 2008 constitutions (still in force today). With the expansion of citizens' participation rights under [the current Constitution](#) and related laws, it was initially anticipated that there would be greater citizen involvement in decision-making processes, governance and social control of the government. However, this has remained subject to the interests of the respective governments in power.

Currently, civil society organisations in Ecuador have remained on constant alert following President Daniel Noboa's declaration of [internal armed conflict](#) on 9 January 2024 as a result of the exponential increase in the number of [violent deaths and other crimes](#) associated with organised criminal groups. Although the [Constitutional Court and experts](#) agree that the conditions justifying this declaration do not exist, the national government has continuously declared states of emergency that have allowed it to suspend fundamental civil liberties and militarise internal security. In its *Concluding Observations on Ecuador's Seventh Periodic Report (CCPR/C/ECU/CO/7)*, the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed concern about these measures taken by the national government, arguing that they are disproportionate to the context in which the country finds itself. In addition, reports by organisations such as [Amnesty International](#) and [Freedom House](#) point to serious cases of human rights violations committed by state security forces since the declaration of internal armed conflict.

Concerns also remain regarding the national government's attempt to interfere in the affairs of the Constitutional Court (CC). On 4 August 2025, the CC decided [to temporarily suspend a series of articles](#) of the Organic Law on Public Integrity, Organic Law on Intelligence, and Organic Law on National Solidarity due to the admission of a series of constitutional challenges against these laws. It is worth mentioning that [Human Rights Watch](#) has rejected these three laws because they contain articles that seek to restrict citizens' privacy and due process and grant the President more discretion to declare the existence of an armed conflict and make use of his emergency powers. In response to the temporary suspension ordered by the Constitutional Court, the national government called for a march in the city of Quito to protest against its judges. At the march and in other cities across the country, the photos and names of the judges [were displayed](#) on banners and billboards under the slogan "These are the judges who are stealing our peace"; in addition, President Daniel Noboa referred to them as ["enemies of the people."](#) Margaret Satterthwaite, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, [expressed concern](#) about these threats and stigmatisation, describing them as an attempt to undermine the independence of the judiciary.

Amid this escalation of violence in the country, the national government has begun to take action to strengthen the state's control over the CSOs, with particular emphasis on nature conservation and human rights organisations critical of the government. Under the banner of promoting transparency, controlling money laundering and monitoring actors seeking to "destabilise" the government, two significant changes to the regulatory framework for CSOs have emerged from

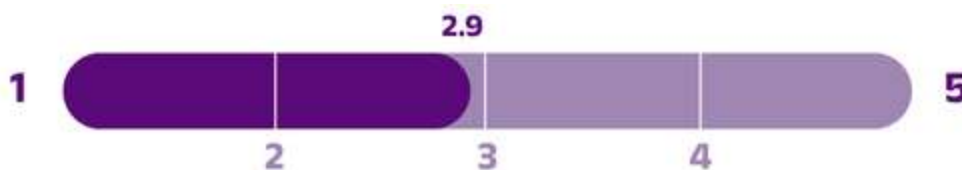
the Office of the President: the Integrity Strategy for Civil Society Organisations (2024) and the draft Social Transparency Law (2025). Both regulatory texts have been criticised by the [United Nations Human Rights Committee](#) and the [United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association](#) for their potential to severely restrict freedom of association in Ecuador.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: 2.9/5¹



Freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression are recognised in Article 66 of the Constitution and the [Organic Law on Citizen Participation](#); forms of association belonging to indigenous peoples and nationalities are also recognised (Article 30 of the Organic Law). However, there is evidence of a deterioration in respect for these rights in Ecuador. Under the pretext of promoting a "heavy-handed" policy against organised crime organisations, the national government has suspended civil liberties in the process.

Freedom of association

Normatively, there are no impediments to the establishment of citizen groups. Citizens who wish to establish foundations, corporations or other types of social organisations must follow the procedure established in [Executive Decree 193 of 2017](#) (D.E. 193). However, despite this apparently enabling regulatory framework, in practice significant obstacles to the full exercise of freedom of association remain. First, freedom of association is one of the rights that have been suspended through the use of presidential emergency powers as part of the state policy to combat organised crime and insecurity. Through [Executive Decree 318 of 2024](#), President Daniel Noboa suspended the right of association in six provinces of the country between 2 July and 31 August 2024.

¹This is a rebased score derived from the [CIVICUS Monitor rating](#) published in December 2024. The country is classified as Obstructed in the Monitor, with a score of 48/100, which has been converted to fit our 1-to-5 scale.

According to a [report by the American Bar Association's Centre for Human Rights](#), harassment and dismissals of unionised workers in the productive and agricultural sectors are common despite the provisions of the [Labour Code](#) (Articles 44 and 187). Employers also resort to practices such as offering financial incentives to workers to leave unions, creating "blacklists" of employees, unduly interfering in the internal processes of labour organisations, and imposing limitations on the exercise of collective bargaining. These dynamics create a restrictive environment that contrasts with the constitutional guarantees and international commitments made by the Ecuadorian State in relation to labour rights and freedom of association.

Freedom of peaceful assembly

In the last twelve months, there have been specific reports of instances where state security forces have repressed peaceful protests or other forms of exercising the constitutional right to peaceful assembly, mainly in response to demonstrations against extractive projects. Furthermore, concerns persist regarding the Ecuadorian government's willingness in recent months to suspend this civil liberty in the context of the declaration of internal armed conflict and the militarisation of indigenous communities in the context of protests against extractive projects.

The *Business and Human Rights Resource Centre* has documented cases of militarisation of indigenous communities and repression against protesters opposed to mining projects. Between 2024 and 2025, instances of this type of aggression were recorded in the communities of [Palo Quemado](#) (March-October 2024) and [Las Naves](#) (June 2025). In Palo Quemado, 36 protesters were reportedly arrested and 70 people were charged with terrorism, while in Las Naves an unknown number of [people](#) were reported injured, including at least one [minor](#).

Since January 2024, President Daniel Noboa has issued or renewed six states of emergency in which freedom of assembly was suspended, arguing the existence of serious unrest and internal armed conflict. The Constitutional Court has ruled, in two different instances ([11-24-EE/24](#) and [3-25-EE/25](#)), that interrupting this right is not a strictly necessary measure to combat the insecurity and criminal violence that the country is experiencing. Despite this, in response to the anti-government protests called in November 2024, the National Police warned demonstrators that the security forces were authorised to [use legitimate force](#).

Freedom of expression

Over the last twelve months, freedom of expression in Ecuador has been affected by an increase in violence against journalists. Between January and August 2025, the civil society organisation [Fundamedios](#) reported 23 cases of attacks and other types of physical assaults against journalists; this is nine more incidents than were reported in the whole of 2024. There have also been 47 attacks by non-state actors and 58 by state actors.

On the one hand, organised criminal groups [have](#) targeted journalists investigating corruption, drug trafficking and other issues related to insecurity. Although in most cases the perpetrators are criminal structures, the Ecuadorian state has an obligation to prevent, investigate, punish and redress attacks against journalists. The lack of effective responses in the investigation of attacks, as well as the lack of security guarantees for those who work as journalists, create a climate of impunity that exacerbates risks and encourages self-censorship. This has a direct impact on the exercise of peaceful freedom of expression, as it limits the possibility of reporting on matters of public interest and restricts democratic debate. This situation has already been noted by organisations such as [Reporters Without Borders](#), [CIVICUS](#) and even [the United States Department of State](#).

Among the most emblematic cases of attacks on journalists' freedom of expression is that of Jorge Navarrete, a journalist for the digital media outlet La Posta and author of a report on the existence of illicit coca crops in Ecuadorian territory administered by Colombia's National Liberation Army (ELN). After the report was published, Navarrete and his family received [death threats](#). Having received concrete evidence that his life was in imminent danger, Navarrete temporarily left the country. The murders of journalists [Xavier Ramos](#) and [Patricio Aguilar](#) have also been reported

under circumstances that, as of the end of August 2025, have not been investigated by the competent authorities; however, it is known that Aguilar [reported on crime and corruption issues](#) in a local media outlet. These attacks reflect the fragility of state guarantees to protect the press and the need for robust public protection policies that ensure the free and peaceful exercise of freedom of expression in Ecuador.

There have also been specific cases of interference and censorship ordered by national government actors. In June 2024, the television channel RTU cancelled its programme "Los Irreverentes" amid [alleged pressure](#) from the national government through the Telecommunications Regulation and Control Agency. This programme generally took a critical stance towards the government of President Daniel Noboa. Days later, on 25 June, journalist Alondra Santiago was notified of the revocation of her visa on the grounds that she had committed acts that threatened public safety and the structure of the state. Santiago, also a critic of the national government, [has not yet been able to access information](#) essential to appealing her case, as the revocation was based on a classified report from the Ministry of the Interior. Finally, on 13 September 2024, the news segment on Radio Poderosa was [interrupted](#) by a telephone call from the then Minister of Government, Arturo Félix Wong. Wong accused the programme of lying about the government's handling of the energy crisis affecting the country.

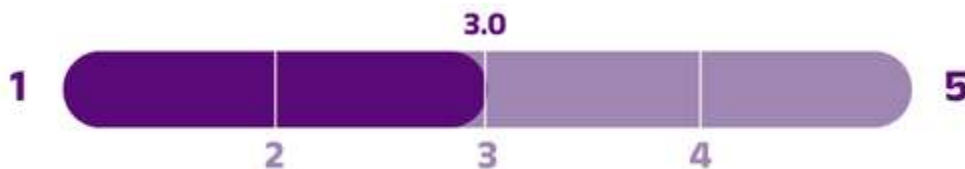
Conclusion

The national government's security policy and the constant state of emergency have eroded fundamental civil liberties in Ecuador. This has created an atmosphere of uncertainty and concern that the state, using the fight against organised crime as a justification, will increase repression against those who speak out against the national government. Furthermore, the increase in attacks on journalists by non-state actors has reinforced fears that the state is unable to guarantee the exercise of freedom of expression.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score: 3/5



Both the Constitution and the Organic Law on Citizen Participation recognise the right to free association, and even enshrine the State's obligation to facilitate registration, provide support and strengthen the technical capacities of social organisations (Articles 31, 32 and 33). All CSOs, defined normatively as corporations, foundations or other types of national and foreign social organisations, are governed by Executive Decree 193 of 2017. Despite what the law states, limitations persist in Ecuador when it comes to registering an organisation and carrying out day-to-day activities, while the State has not satisfactorily fulfilled its role of strengthening civil society. Furthermore, as they are governed by an Executive Decree, organisations are vulnerable to sudden and potentially restrictive changes in the regulatory framework.

Registration

Articles 12 and 13 of Executive Decree 193 of 2017 ([D.E. 193](#)) detail the procedure that all citizens who wish to establish a civil society organisation must follow. Although the process is detailed and there are no additional regulatory documents that hinder the right to establish a CSO, successfully completing it requires a high degree of technical and legal knowledge and financial capacity. Even with these resources, the bureaucratic process of incorporation can take a long time. For example, an organisation working for environmental conservation and the proper management of natural resources reported that its establishment took more than a year due to administrative barriers and the lack of adequate technical support from the Ministry of the Environment. As a result, the organisation incurred high financial and non-financial costs that affected its operational capacity during its first months after being legally established.

There are obstacles to registration related to the fact that in Ecuador there is no single governing body, as regulations require organisations to register with the national government ministry or secretariat that is most closely related to the issues the organisation plans to address. First, as a result of the national government's recurring practice of eliminating and merging ministries, technical knowledge about social organisations among public officials responsible for managing registration is highly dispersed. As a result, some aspiring organisations have access to more resources and assistance than others. In turn, this dispersion means that the speed of procedures

varies significantly between different organisations. For example, it is known that organisations working on digital rights and data science issues are able to register more quickly with the Ministry of Telecommunications, while at the Ministry of Women and Human Rights it depends on the issues the organisation will be working on.

Local social organisations agree that there is a concentration of technical knowledge and resources in Quito or provincial capitals, which means that in other cities there are no guidance or training resources for those who wish to establish a CSO. This forces many to apply for registration in Quito or in the capitals of their provinces, incurring even higher costs (both economic and non-economic).

Operating environment

The regulations do not significantly restrict the activities that organisations can carry out as long as they comply with the objectives set out in their internal regulations. Furthermore, there are no restrictions on acquiring, owning, managing or selling property, establishing agreements with other entities or accessing certain sources of funding (Article 18 of D.E. 193).

However, the dispersion among different governing bodies and the lack of coordination between levels of government has led to obstacles in carrying out certain activities related to the execution of their projects or when completing bureaucratic procedures after their legal incorporation. At the local level, CSOs often face restrictions on the use of public space in the context of the projects they implement, due to municipal governments' limited knowledge of their non-profit nature and the type of activities they carry out. For example, local environmental organisations face long waiting times to obtain land use authorisations or to carry out activities related to their projects; in addition, they are often penalised or subject to unnecessary requirements because their actions are mistakenly classified as commercial. This is because there is a high level of ignorance among municipal (local) governments about civil society organisations, their non-profit economic nature, and the type of work and activities they carry out. At the national government level, the procedures that CSOs must carry out once they are registered (for example, reforming their internal statutes to expand their scope of work) are often subject to bureaucratic delays due to a lack of officials with knowledge of the subject matter.

Protection against interference

Civil society organisations are vulnerable to interference by state actors because the regulatory framework is uncertain and provides for ambiguous grounds for dissolution. As it is enshrined in an executive decree that can be repealed and replaced at the discretion of the Presidency, the fundamental regulations governing CSOs are unpredictable and can change abruptly, giving way to a potential new regulatory framework that represses the work of civil society. Furthermore, the regulations allow the state to dissolve any organisation that, in its opinion, deviates from the purposes and objectives for which it was established or engages in political-partisan activities. Furthermore, although CSOs are recognised as having the right to take legal action in such cases, this can only be done once the competent ministry/secretariat has notified the organisation that it has been dissolved (art. 21 of D.E. 193).

Although there have been no cases of forced dissolutions in the last twelve months, it is important to note that the national government has expressed its intention to carry out regulatory reforms that would allow it to interfere with and dissolve organisations more easily. On 18 June 2024, the General Secretariat for Public Integrity (part of the executive branch) presented the [Integrity Strategy for Civil Society Organisations](#) under the argument that the document seeks to promote accountability, transparency of CSOs, and even justice and equality through 12 mandatory provisions. To this end, all organisations must submit an annual report with specific actions, indicators and targets related to the provisions. In the event of non-compliance, or if the State

considers that the provisions are not being satisfactorily complied with, the General Secretariat for Public Integrity and the rest of the executive branch are empowered to "take the necessary corrective measures" including the suspension of the organisation's legal status. Thus, this strategy, which [was not developed](#) in collaboration with civil society actors, reinforces the current government's ability to intervene at its discretion in CSOs.

On 26 August 2025, the National Assembly approved the [Organic Law on Social Transparency](#), submitted by President Daniel Noboa. This law has caused [concern](#) because, in addition to not having been developed in collaboration with civil society and being justified through [stigmatising rhetoric](#), it imposes disproportionate controls and obligations on CSOs and includes ambiguous grounds for dissolution. For example, a CSO can now be dissolved for carrying out "any activity that violates the fundamental rights of individuals, public order or state security." Years ago, a similar cause for dissolution led to the closure of the [Pachamama Foundation](#) (2013), whose case reached the [Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#). In addition, the law includes reporting requirements that will be difficult to meet for organisations with fewer financial and technical resources.

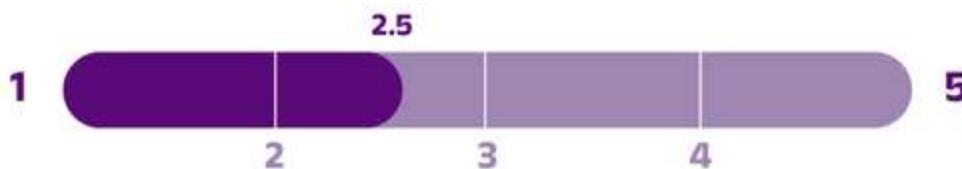
Conclusion

There is a wide gap between what is stipulated in the regulations and what happens in practice, since, despite the existence of constitutional guarantees on freedom of association and the promotion of citizen participation, the regulatory framework governing civil society organisations is inadequate and restrictive. The centralisation of the state in the country's largest cities and the national government's lack of political will to fulfil its role of encouraging civil society work have made organised civic participation a privilege reserved for a limited percentage of the population. Furthermore, organisations that have managed to overcome the obstacles presented during their registration and the exercise of their activities now fear that the state is seeking ways to control CSOs and eliminate those that are inconvenient.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score: 2.5/5



Civil society organisations depend on international funding to carry out their daily activities. This has made them vulnerable to changes in the agendas of foreign donors as a result of Ecuador's classification as an [upper-middle-income](#) country, the thematic realignment towards promoting economic productivity ([European Union](#)) and combating insecurity ([United States](#)), and the closure of the United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)), which have tested the economic solvency of CSOs and the availability of human resources. Despite this unfavourable context, the competent authorities and the national financial system have not imposed highly restrictive measures on CSOs that limit their ability to receive funds from domestic and foreign sources.

Accessibility

Over the last twelve months, the availability of funding sources has decreased considerably, mainly due to changes in the international cooperation landscape, with funding cuts from cooperation agencies such as [USAID](#). Furthermore, although the State also opens calls for competitive funding, CSOs generally avoid receiving funds from the national government. This is because state funds are often used as a tool to control CSOs, exposing them to delays or non-disbursement of funds if the organisation does not align with the government's interests. On the other hand, the private sector has kept a low profile when it comes to facilitating access to funds, as many companies choose to finance their own foundations and corporate social responsibility projects.

With regard to international funding, there is a concentration of this type of funding in a very limited number of organisations. Local or newly established organisations point out that this is because they do not have the technical capacity to develop long-term funding proposals and to meet the reporting requirements (e.g. audits) demanded by donors; therefore, many CSOs are sustained by small amounts granted in the form of *microgrants* or short consultancy projects. In an attempt to collaborate in knowledge and capacity management among social organisations to attract funding, on 17 January 2025 the Ecuadorian government created the Vice-Ministry of International Cooperation. However, its effectiveness in facilitating access to funding for CSOs is unknown. Nevertheless, this entity is currently drafting a [proposal for an International Cooperation Law](#) with the support of the German Cooperation Agency GIZ.

Effectiveness

CSOs are unhappy with the adjustments made by international donors to align their thematic agendas in order to prioritise direct work with the state in the fight against organised crime or on economic and productive issues. There are also concerns about the thematic conditions imposed by donors, factors that affect their ability to meet their organisational objectives. For example, organisations working on gender issues have stated that their donors have begun to control the topics addressed and the type of language used in the projects they agree to fund. This control ranges from restricting the use of certain terms to adding disclaimers in reports or research, indicating that the donor institution does not promote an "agenda" related to the type of content generated. CSOs have also begun to be required to demonstrate that they have no direct or indirect links to certain governments before receiving funds. These conditions have forced CSOs to constantly modify their lines of work and alter their institutional objectives. This situation not only affects the right of association, but also freedom of peaceful expression, by limiting the ability of organisations to develop their own agendas and participate freely in public debate. The state, in compliance with its international obligations, must guarantee a regulatory and political framework that protects CSOs from undue conditions that restrict their independence and their role as key actors in a democratic society.

Another factor that affects resource efficiency is the fact that organisations with fewer resources do not have the economic and technical capacity to comply with requirements such as audits or other requirements imposed by donors. Once again, this contributes to the concentration of resources in a small number of organisations, which, due to their experience and prior contact with the international donors with the greatest presence in the country, have the capacity to negotiate the issues and approaches to be used in the projects they finance.

Sustainability

Most of the funding opportunities available to civil society organisations in Ecuador are short to medium term, which means that they do not have sufficient certainty to sustain their ongoing operations and a permanent work team. In addition, profound changes in international cooperation as a result of the suspension of US cooperation, as well as the realignment of donor agendas towards funding for the fight against organised crime, have created an atmosphere of uncertainty among CSOs. A [study](#) by the Ecuadorian Network for International Development Cooperation (RECID) found that, based on a sample, 36% of organisations anticipate staff cuts of more than 10 people.

Within this negative outlook, organisations recognise that there are no cooperation mechanisms between them to establish consortia or platforms that would allow for the mutual exchange of information on good sustainability practices, or even expand the possibility of obtaining large multi-year funds.

All of this has an impact on staff retention, as those with greater experience and technical knowledge are constantly seeking job opportunities in other sectors, citing the lack of medium- and long-term stability as reasons for leaving.

Conclusion

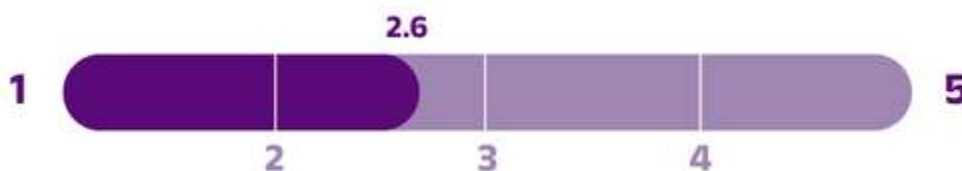
The lack of consistent funding sources prevents civil society organisations from planning medium- to long-term activities, and this uncertainty has been exacerbated by the suspension of funding from the United States. Many organisations fear that this situation will accelerate the departure of experienced technical staff working in the sector and discourage new professionals from joining. On the other hand, it is with great concern that state funds are being used as a mechanism to

interfere with the operational freedom of civil society organisations, in complete contravention of the provisions of current laws. The absence of stable financial conditions seriously jeopardises the long-term sustainability of CSOs in Ecuador and compromises their autonomy, independence and ability to set their own agendas or actively participate in public debate. In this scenario, the state has a responsibility to promote policies that guarantee the full exercise of freedom of association and expression and their sustainability through national and international funding mechanisms free from political conditions.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State

Score: 2.6/5



The [Organic Law on Citizen Participation](#) states that one of the objectives of civil society organisations' participation is to contribute to public policy advocacy and social control at all levels of government. To this end, for example, instruments such as the mandatory convening of sectoral citizen councils by all government ministries are recognised (Art. 52). However, there are neither sufficient conditions nor sufficient information to determine the extent to which CSOs have a real impact on decision-making processes related to policy formulation and governance.

Transparency

At the regulatory level, Ecuador has the [Organic Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information](#) (LOTAIP). This law recognises the right of citizens to access information from state entities, which are required to comply monthly with the digital publication of a series of active, passive, focused and collaborative transparency requirements (related to the publication of information arising from collaborative spaces in which citizens present their information needs). According to the *World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2024*, this regulatory framework places Ecuador [above the regional average](#) in terms of the right of access to information (sub-factor 3.2). However, the same index indicates that Ecuador is a country with low compliance in the publication of laws and quality government information (sub-factor 3.1).

From the experience of civil society, it is common for requests for access to public information, if they occur at all, to take longer than the time stipulated by law (10 to 15 days). In addition, organisations working in sensitive sectors such as health and environmental protection have expressed concern about the lack of capacity of state entities to produce information about their management.

In recent months, there have also been reports of CSOs being identified and "blacklisted" by central government entities with the aim of restricting their access to public information and rejecting requests for information. Generally, the CSOs most affected are those that exercise social control over state management, especially on issues related to transparency and accountability. For

example, on 27 May 2024, the Citizenship and Development Foundation filed a constitutional action for access to public information in response to the National Assembly's refusal to disclose fundamental data on its management. As a result, the court not only ruled that [the organisation's right to access public information](#) had been [violated](#), but also found serious contraventions of the LOTAIP. Similarly, in the current context of the fight against organised crime and in the face of allegations of [human rights violations](#) committed by security forces, the Ministry of Defence has [restricted access to information](#) on operations in which there are clear indications of the illegitimate use of force, arguing that this information is classified for reasons of national security. This is despite the fact that Article 15 of the LOTAIP prohibits denying access to classified information in cases of human rights violations.

Participation

There is openness for civil society actors to participate in state-led decision-making processes. However, there are questions about the effectiveness of these processes and the true degree of involvement of CSOs in public policy-making. Firstly, most of the participatory spaces convened by the state are in fact spaces where government institutions present the decisions they are going to take, without giving civil society the opportunity to make meaningful contributions. This was evident, for example, when the national government convened a feedback meeting with civil society on the controversial Integrity Strategy for Civil Society Organisations (2024). This process only involved a very limited number of organisations, and methodologically there was no way for CSOs to express their opinions on reforming the Strategy, limiting the meeting to a space for presenting the document. In addition, the General Secretariat for Public Integrity presented a proposed decree that sought to replace Executive Decree 193 of 2017, even though this was not part of the agenda, and CSOs have consistently spoken out against being regulated under this legal framework.

Secondly, the State generally consults only with a limited number of civil society actors, mostly well-resourced non-governmental organisations based in Quito. This has caused local and less well-resourced actors to lose motivation to participate in these spaces.

There are cases in which civil society actors have a greater capacity to participate in decision-making; however, this usually occurs when public sector institutions, with the help of civil society actors, convene national consultations as part of projects funded by international cooperation. For example, the co-creation process for the latest [Open Government Action Plan \(PAGA\)](#) (2022-2024), led by a consortium comprising the national government, local governments, civil society actors, the private sector and academia, involved the participation of various actors from different cities across the country.

Accountability

Of the limited participation processes that do take place, those who took part in them do not usually receive reports or information showing how their contributions were taken into account in the decision-making processes. In the case of projects financed by international cooperation, donors do not include in the working agreements the obligation to submit accountability reports to the participants in these processes. This hinders civil society's ability to appeal discrepancies with the outcome of the consultation process or to demand that more information be obtained to complement it. For example, the development of [the National Plan for Public Integrity and the Fight against Corruption \(2024-2028\)](#) included contributions from different actors (including civil society) located in different cities across the country, but so far the institutions in charge of implementing the Plan have not made public how the contributions made were incorporated into the final proposal.

However, there are notable exceptions in the co-creation process of *the Open Government Action Plan* (2022-2024), as it is the only instance identified where, based on a multi-sectoral participation process, a [follow-up report on the contributions](#) made was presented.

Conclusion

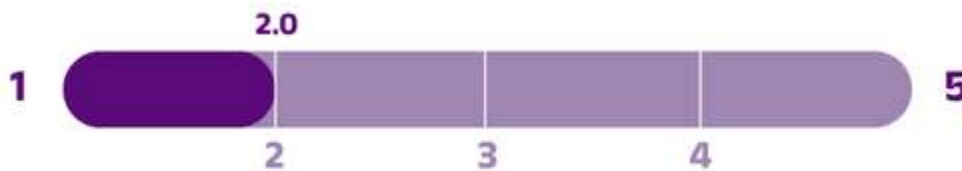
Current regulations related to citizen participation and open government have not yet translated into the full enjoyment of rights. On the one hand, the state's lack of capacity to produce and share data, and the creation of "blacklists" of actors who are prohibited or hindered from accessing information requests, make it difficult for organisations and citizens to exercise social control over public management. Furthermore, in the context of state security policy, there have been cases of information secrecy through the abuse of the concept of 'classified information' for reasons of national security. On the other hand, in Ecuador there is an atmosphere of apathy towards citizen participation due to the obstacles faced by those who wish to exercise their rights and the lack of clarity regarding the use of their contributions.



PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score: 2/5



According to a study conducted by IPSOS, [43% of Ecuadorians believe](#) that civil society will move the country forward, 13 percentage points more than those who believe that the national government will do so, and 25% more than business leaders (data from April 2024). At the same time, data from the Americas Barometer (2023) show that 44.99% of Ecuadorians believe that presidents and leaders of civil society organisations are corrupt; despite this, this perception of corruption is lower than that which exists regarding the main institutions of the State. Although the data indicate that citizens have a positive view of CSOs, the same cannot be said of the Ecuadorian state's perspective. The last twelve months have been characterised by growing stigmatisation of civil society work by state and political actors. Although this has not yet led to the imposition of regulatory obstacles to civic participation, CSOs fear that the state perceives them and presents them to the public as enemies, in turn making them targets of rights violations.

Public discourse and constructive dialogue on civil society

In general, public and private media outlets do not provide significant coverage of civil society work beyond occasional opinion pieces featuring interviews with prominent figures from the country's main CSOs. This varies depending on the political climate in the country at any given time. Following the presentation of the draft Organic Law on Social Transparency at the end of July 2025, civil society organisations were presented by the [national government and representatives of the ruling political party](#) as institutions used by organised crime to launder money and finance destabilising demonstrations against the government. This was also repeated after the announcement of the suspension of US international cooperation in early 2025, when media outlets affiliated with the main opposition political party devoted a significant portion of their coverage to presenting CSOs as [institutions serving the interests of the US government and right-wing political parties](#).

Perception of Civil Society and Civic Participation

The Organic Law on Citizen Participation recognises different forms of citizen participation at the national and local levels (Titles VI, VII and VIII). However, both citizens and civil society organisations generally do not believe that they have sufficient capacity to influence governance and the public policy process. This perception is reinforced by the fact that, according to the *2024 Rule of Law Index*, Ecuador ranks below the regional and global average in terms of the effectiveness of [citizen participation mechanisms](#) (sub-factor 3.3).

Civil society recognises that there is no culture of participation and discussion of ideas in the country, which is why many of the existing mechanisms are rarely used and most citizens limit their civic participation to voting in national and local elections, referendums and popular consultations. It should be noted that voting in Ecuador is compulsory for all citizens between the ages of 18 and 65. However, according to civil society, this underuse of participation mechanisms is due to the fact that citizens who have used them always feel that their contributions are not usually taken into account during the process of developing and evaluating public policies, which discourages their future participation and that of others.

Equality and civic inclusion

Article 4 of the Organic Law on Citizen Participation explicitly prohibits discrimination against persons in instances of participation on the basis of their ethnicity, age, gender identity, language, political affiliation, health status and disability, among others. In addition, the [Organic Law on Elections and Political Organisations](#) enshrines the inclusion of young people and gender parity in the presentation of lists of candidates, presidential pairs and leaders of political parties and movements. However, although there are no legal obstacles preventing civic participation on equal terms, stigma and discrimination against people based on their social characteristics, economic situation, and even place of origin persist.

Within civil society, there are reports of discrimination against women in local productive organisations and against LGBT individuals and organisations. Discrimination is also identified in other institutions such as political parties where, despite the provisions of electoral law and internal party regulations, discriminatory practices against women, young people, and members of indigenous peoples and nationalities still persist.

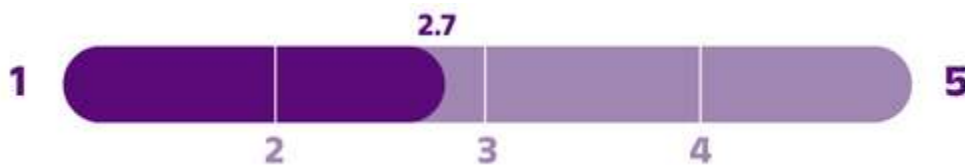
Conclusion

Civil society organisations have faced an increase in stigmatising discourse from various actors beyond the current government, with state-funded media narratives; however, the general public still has a positive view of the work done by CSOs. Even so, citizen participation in political decision-making is not widespread and, in some cases, is limited by social stigmas that generally affect women, indigenous peoples and nationalities, and LGBT people.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score: 2.7/5



In Ecuador, the regulatory and social conditions that would ensure a safe and accessible digital environment for the vast majority of citizens do not yet exist.

Digital rights and freedoms

According to data from [the Internet Society](#), Ecuador has not suffered any deliberate widespread interruptions in internet access since 2019, when cuts were reported amid mass protests against the national government. However, civil society feels that full respect for its digital rights and freedoms is lacking, as there is no law to protect citizens in the event that the state decides to interrupt internet access and censor digital content. It is even the current regulatory framework that potentially enables violations of internet freedom.

Since January 2024, Ecuador has been under various states of emergency in which the inviolability of correspondence has been suspended. This means that the State can intercept and analyse physical or electronic communications in the name of fighting organised crime. Furthermore, according to Article 396 of the Comprehensive Organic Criminal Code (COIP), making comments that could be considered defamatory or dishonourable towards another person can carry a penalty of between 15 and 30 days in prison. This includes comments made through information technology. This same law (Art. 483.1) authorises the use of undercover computer agents, who have the power, among other actions, to patrol telecommunications platforms and share "files or documents with illegal content" with persons under investigation. For example, they are legally authorised to [send a Trojan virus](#) that infiltrates the electronic devices of suspects, allowing the agents to intercept confidential information and passwords, as well as take photographs or record videos without their consent. As a result, the [Freedom on the Net 2024](#) report categorises Ecuador as a *partially free* country.

On 22 August 2025, Fundamedios made public its concern at the revelation that National Police officers had infiltrated at least 18 groups of journalists on the *WhatsApp* communications network. In some instances, the officers had impersonated real journalists in order to join these groups undetected. The national government, through its spokesperson Carolina Jaramillo, [declined to comment](#) on this allegation; nor were there any explanations from the National Police about the

role or activities of the officers within the infiltrated groups. This case highlights a deterioration of privacy rights on the internet and the inviolability of digital communications.

Digital security and privacy

Over the past twelve months, several civil society organisations have reported cases of cyberattacks and intimidation via social media. First, the use of *bots* and fake users to launch coordinated attacks is a common occurrence, usually when civil society representatives express their opinions in digital discussion forums. In recent months, there have been several cases of harassment against journalists for reporting on the national government's management. To this end, digital media outlets [affiliated with the ruling party](#) have even been used. In these cases, the [Organic Law on Personal Data Protection](#) does not provide significant guarantees, as the state does not yet have the capacity to fully enforce it. Furthermore, [inconsistencies](#) have been identified regarding which government entity is responsible for enforcing it and ensuring compliance.

Civil society actors report instances of cyberattacks and intimidation on the internet. On 28 July 2025, the Citizenship and Development Foundation announced that the website of one of its transparency projects had been temporarily disabled by cyberattacks. This occurred after the publication of a report on the Executive Branch's budget execution. Although it is not possible to attribute the authorship of this attack with certainty, the fact that it occurred after the release of this report has raised suspicions about possible intervention by actors linked to the national government.

Digital accessibility

Ecuador has a high rate of mobile phone subscriptions ([101.03](#) per 100 people), while [77%](#) of Ecuadorians claim to have access to the Internet. However, there are social and infrastructure conditions that mean digital accessibility cannot be considered complete.

Outside the country's major urban centres, it is common for internet coverage to suffer from intermittent service due to the poor existing telecommunications infrastructure. Deficiencies in this regard were also evident during the severe energy crisis that the country experienced between mid- and late 2024. During this period, with power outages lasting up to [14 hours a day, prolonged failures in internet and mobile phone service](#) were reported because the communications network does not have the capacity to supply itself with electricity in the event of failures in the national grid, nor does it have the capacity to mitigate the saturation caused by the increase in the number of people trying to access the internet via mobile phones.

On the other hand, official figures indicate that [5.4% of Ecuadorians](#) can be considered digitally illiterate; breaking down this figure, it can be seen that 14.1% of people in rural areas and 23% of the indigenous population can be considered as such. However, the definition of digital illiteracy used by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses consists of simultaneously meeting three characteristics: not having an activated mobile phone and not having used a computer or the internet in the last 12 months. This differs from the methodologies used and accepted by international organisations such as [UNESCO](#) to measure digital illiteracy.

Through their work in different areas of the country, civil society actors observe that a considerable percentage of Ecuadorians lack basic skills in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), particularly adults and residents of rural areas. This hinders access to CSO content in these segments of the population. As a measure to universalise access to ICT in rural and marginal urban areas, the National Government is implementing the [Free Digital Points](#) project. However, to date there is no evidence to measure the effectiveness of this public policy.

Inequality in access to information means that a considerable percentage of Ecuadorians are unable to adapt to the emergence of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence. In fact, as noted by the [European Union Election Observation Mission](#) during the 2025 general elections, the

irresponsible use of artificial intelligence by some actors puts many Ecuadorians at risk of falling prey to misinformation.

Conclusion

The regulatory framework does not guarantee fundamental rights to free access and use of the Internet and information technologies. Despite the existence of state programmes to democratise access in small towns and rural communities, many Ecuadorians lack the basic skills to make proper use of technology. As a result, there is a high potential for citizens to fall victim to misinformation, which could have significant political repercussions in the near future. Another concern to monitor in the future is the use of undercover computer agents in digital space monitoring operations, as it is currently unknown how and to what extent this legal figure has been used.

C) Recommendations

Based on the findings in this report, the following recommendations are issued:

To the Ecuadorian State

- Given the repeated use of presidential emergency powers, it is essential to reassess the need to suspend freedom of assembly and the inviolability of correspondence, provide sufficient guarantees to prevent further violations of fundamental civil liberties, and provide redress to those who have been victims of violations.
- Work together with civil society to establish a regulatory framework that protects and promotes the right of association through social organisations, eliminating the risk of interference that conditions the free exercise of the activities carried out by CSOs.
- Ensure that competitive funds made available by state institutions are awarded to civil society organisations according to their technical capacity, with guarantees that funding will not be arbitrarily interrupted.
- Strengthen the capacity to make information on government management (national and local) transparent in accordance with the provisions of the regulations, without arbitrary or politically motivated conditions.
- Guarantee the right to civic participation and the right of citizens and civil society organisations to participate in the design and implementation of public policies and transparency, providing concrete evidence of how contributions were used.
- Avoid the use of stigmatising language and narratives that seek to delegitimise the work of civil society organisations, especially in the context of the current crisis of violence and insecurity in the country.
- Develop a regulatory framework that protects freedom of access and expression on the Internet in accordance with the recommendations made by international organisations.

To donors and the international community

- Monitor the Ecuadorian government's respect for fundamental civil liberties.
- Recognise the diversity of organisations established in Ecuador, especially those working at the local level or on issues such as human rights protection, the environment, gender, transparency and governance.
- Resume dialogue with civil society organisations to develop cooperation agendas that are in line with national and local realities.
- Require organisations or institutions that receive cooperation funds to publish reports on the use of contributions made by citizens and how these were incorporated into the process, in the event that they carry out consultation processes to influence public policy.
- Provide technical assistance to the Ecuadorian State to establish regulations that protect citizens' rights on the internet, and provide resources to CSOs to strengthen their information management and data protection protocols.

To civil society organisations

- Create cooperation mechanisms that allow civil society organisations, especially local ones and those with fewer resources, to access spaces for influencing public policy and funding opportunities.
- Work with the State to build an enabling regulatory framework that recognises the particularities of organisations operating in the country.
- Generate support mechanisms so that CSOs can establish strategies for good practices in transparency and resource management.



D) 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.

This publication was funded/co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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