



SUPPORTING  
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT  
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

# Enabling Environment Snapshot

Chile

October 2025



**Multitudes**

## Context

In mid-2025, Chile entered a decisive pre-electoral phase marked by growing polarisation and the rise of outsider candidacies. In June, the ruling coalition's primary confirmed Jeannette Jara as its candidate, while on the right José Antonio Kast and Evelyn Matthei chose to move forward separately, each aiming to consolidate their share of the conservative electorate without holding joint primaries. Five additional candidates also entered the race: [Marco Enríquez-Ominami](#), [Franco Parisi](#), [Johannes Kaiser](#), [Harold Mayne-Nicholls](#), and [Eduardo Artés](#). Against this backdrop, a survey conducted by the Centre for Political Studies between [May and June 2025](#) found that [62% of respondents viewed Chile's current political situation as bad or very bad](#) (slide 66).

In parallel, civil society organisations suffered the impact of the Convenios Case and this was reflected in a survey of [the Universidad Católica de Chile and Sociedad en Acción](#), which surveyed 268 executive directors of foundations and corporations across the country. This document revealed that 88% of organisations believed that the case will continue to affect their work. Furthermore, at the 25th Pride March in Santiago, [various organisations called for the long-delayed reform of the Zamudio Law \(Ley 20609\)](#). According to them, the law still lacks preventive public policies and an institutional framework that guarantees effective protection against discrimination. The reform has been in parliamentary process for seven years, and they demanded it be addressed with the seriousness and urgency that it deserves. On the other hand, after several protests and marches led by fishing associations defending artisanal fishing quotas—alongside broader social mobilisation on the issue—[Law 21,752](#) was passed. This law establishes clear rules to protect artisanal fishing quotas against concentration by large industrial fleets, ensuring a fairer distribution of marine resources and safeguarding the livelihoods of coastal communities. [President Gabriel Boric publicly recognised and praised the advocacy efforts of these organisations](#) during the law's debate, highlighting how sustained citizen mobilisation can shape public policy. The law is significant not only for protecting artisanal fishers but also as an example of how civic participation and collective action can successfully influence legislation, thereby strengthening civic space in Chile.

Also, on 7 June 2025, President Gabriel Boric Font led the signing of the bill creating the National Care System ([Chile Cuida](#)), recognising care as a human right and state responsibility. In July, Congress passed the [“More Women on Boards”](#) Law, requiring gender balance in corporate governance, a milestone shaped by sustained advocacy from groups such as Comunidad Mujer and Chile Mujeres. On 11 August 2025, President Boric promulgated the law, stressing that “women must be present where decisions are made.” The ceremony underscored both the scale of inequality—54% of major company boards remain all-male—and the role of civil society groups such as Comunidad Mujer, RedMad, and Chile Mujeres in shaping the reform. In parallel, on 16 June 2025 Congress approved a comprehensive reform to the [Adoption Law](#)—after sustained advocacy by child rights groups—and it was subsequently promulgated on 31 July 2025 by President Boric. These initiatives illustrate the ongoing role of social organisations in pushing forward gender and social rights agendas.

Another milestone occurred on 19 August 2025, when Chile formally applied to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), following the creation in [December 2024 of a tripartite Multi-Stakeholder Group composed of representatives from the government](#), civil society, and the mining industry, who developed a regulation and a 2025-2027 work plan. On 25 September 2025, it was announced that the application had been accepted, making Chile the fifty-fifth country and the eleventh in Latin America and the Caribbean to implement the EITI Standard. The multi-stakeholder group will work together for the first time to oversee EITI implementation.

Finally, on 1 September, and after a lengthy consultation process involving more than 6,600 people, the government submitted to Congress [the bill to reform Law 20,500](#) (approved in 2011) on associations and citizen participation in public management. Although this law had been a major step forward in terms of the promotion of citizen participation spaces in public institutions, it was insufficient. The current proposal incorporates the opinions of social leaders, Civil Society Councils, municipalities, experts in citizen participation, and the citizenry and is projected to have a significant impact on the enabling environment for civil society by recognising participation as a right and aiming to provide participatory mechanisms with a more impactful and deliberative nature, moving beyond their mere advisory role.

## 1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

While the second [snapshot](#) mentioned persistent challenges related to the disproportionate use of force, this was not as clearly evident during this period. Although there have been demonstrations, no violations of fundamental freedoms have been reported.

This was reflected on 21 June during the 25th Pride March in Santiago which went ahead without major problems. The March brought thousands of people to the streets under the slogan of inclusive democracy and greater protection of sexual and gender diversity, with special emphasis on the long-delayed reform of the [Ley Zamudio](#).

There were also some fishermen's protests calling for the approval of the [Fisheries Fractionation Law, which was finally passed on July 10](#). The Law modifies the current Fisheries Law and expands the artisanal sector's participation in the country's global catch quotas.

These examples illustrate how social protest is strengthening the capacity of diverse social groups to assert their rights and influence legislative debates.

## 2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

An important milestone to highlight is the submission to Congress of a bill to reform [Law 20,500](#) on associations and citizen participation in public management. Between 2023 and 2024, the Ministry of the General Secretariat of Government led a participatory process with more than 6,600 people across the country to gather opinions, with the goal of modernising the law. The proposal seeks to recognise participation as a right, transcend merely consultative mechanisms by granting deliberative and binding powers, strengthen Civil Society Councils with real authority, and promote parity, inclusion, and territorial relevance. The [reform bill promotes six fundamental pillars](#): i) recognise participation as a right; ii) strengthen existing mechanisms; iii) strengthen institutions with clear rules and resources; iv) guarantee territorial equity and inclusion; v) improve oversight and accountability; and vi) modernise the Public Interest Organisations Fund. Together, these measures seek to move Chile from a consultative model to a more deliberative, binding, and inclusive democracy.

On the other hand, we should highlight some findings from the 2025 survey of foundations conducted by the Universidad Católica de Chile and Sociedad en Acción. This survey revealed that 63% of the CSOs in Chile believe the Chilean regulatory framework allows for freedom and autonomy. Furthermore, 88% of foundations believe that state bureaucratic control has increased, mainly in increased documentation requests and more extensive narrative, financial, and compliance reporting processes. In this context, foundations emphasise the need to modernise regulations to streamline resource management.

## 3. Accessible and sustainable resources

In mid-2025, Chilean CSOs continued to operate in a strained financial environment, heavily shaped by the ProCultura chapter of the *Caso Convenios*. Caso Convenios is the name given to a 2023 scandal of large embezzlement of public resources to foundations. Although only a small fraction of organisations was involved, the entire sector has been subjected to heightened scrutiny. This has been particularly acute in the context of the 2025 electoral period, where access to timely resources is crucial for grassroots organisations to influence public debate. The [2025 Universidad Católica de Chile Survey on Foundations \(Sociedad en Acción\)](#) revealed that 30% of organisations reported a decline in income, and 88% foresee the scandal will keep affecting their work.

Moreover, 88% of foundations identified greater bureaucratic oversight, which has translated into stricter compliance requirements that disproportionately burden small and community-based organisations with limited administrative capacity. This climate of distrust has not only slowed disbursements from state programmes such as the Fund for Strengthening Public Interest Organisations 2025, but also narrowed access to municipal and regional grants, which now face delays and heavier administrative controls.

[The 2025 Fund for Strengthening Public Interest Organisations](#) (FFOIP) allocated CLP 1.8 billion to 832 projects nationwide—a 10% increase from 2024—with budget lines for childhood, rural territories, and diversity (migrants, women caregivers, people with disabilities, and the homeless). While showing continuity in state support, CSOs stress that funding remains modest and, in some cases, insufficient. It is important to highlight the context of reduced international funding over the last year, which has also complicated the operations of many social organisations in Latin America.

Even though limited state support and international cooperation continue to provide relief, access remains unequal, favouring professionalised NGOs and creating distance from grassroots organisations. As the electoral period approaches, this unequal distribution could become a threat to inclusion and diversity in Chilean civic space.

## 4. State openness and responsiveness

At this principle, it is important to mention that during the period covered by this document, laws have been passed or bills introduced in which civil society organisations have advocated and participated in legislative debates. The signing of the bill [National Care System \(Chile Cuida\)](#) and the [“More Women on Boards” Law \(Law No. 21.757\)](#), on 19 August 2025, reflected meaningful civil society input, given the participation of organisations such as the Red de Mujeres en Alta Dirección (RedMad) or the Instituto de Directores de Chile.

In parallel, Congress approved a comprehensive [reform of the Adoption Law](#) on 16 June, subsequently promulgated on 31 July. After sustained advocacy by child rights organisations, the law strengthens transparency, streamlines procedures, and prioritises the best interests of children, representing one of the most substantive child protection reforms in years.

Also, on 25 September 2025, the EITI [International Board approved Chile's application to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative \(EITI\)](#). Helen Clark, Chair of the EITI International Board, noted that Chile's participation in EITI is a strong signal to investors and citizens that the revenues generated from the country's critical minerals are managed with integrity. For civil society, being a member of the Multi-Stakeholder Group EITI is an opportunity to actively participate in raising the transparency of the extractive mining industry and its value chain, promoting greater social justice focused on sustainable development.

Finally, the bill to [reform Law 20,500](#) on associations and citizen participation in public management was also introduced in Congress. This bill promotes establishing citizen participation as a right and establishing participatory mechanisms that are incidental and deliberative in nature, moving beyond a consultative role. It also proposes dignifying leadership work by legally recognising social leaders and ensuring free and non-discriminatory employment. It also proposes strengthening public institutions and the functioning of Civil Society Councils in public administration.

On the other hand, [the reform of the Ley Zamudio](#) against discrimination remains pending. The lower house of Congress rejected the changes to the Law by 69 votes against, 63 in favour, and 13 abstentions, sending it to a joint committee to resolve differences with the Senate, which had already approved it, and it must now be addressed by a [joint committee in Congress](#).

## 5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

The "Caso Convenios" and the adverse media environment have impacted the image of organisations, as evidenced by the Universidad Católica de Chile survey conducted through Sociedad en Acción. [This survey found that 77% perceived media coverage to be negative, and 72% reported](#) less appreciation and recognition of foundations' contributions to the country. The Caso Convenios scandal, electoral volatility, and selective recognition combine to erode the legitimacy of civil society as a whole, while contextual issues such as access to funding generate disparities in favour of a small group of more professionalised organisations. [This has been highlighted in the Country Focus Report](#). However, the capacity of mass movements to mobilise and demand visibility illustrates that civil society maintains public resonance even in a hostile narrative environment.

## 6. Access to a secure digital environment

By mid-2025, Chile's digital environment revealed a dual reality: while civil society continues to operate without systematic censorship or shutdowns, electoral disinformation has emerged as the most pressing threat to digital rights. [In September 2025, a Chilevisión \(CHV\) investigation uncovered a coordinated “bot network”](#) linked to ultra-conservative sectors, which carried out a smear campaign

against presidential candidates Evelyn Matthei (Chile Vamos) and Jeannette Jara (PC). The attacks included manipulated videos aimed at questioning Matthei's mental health and systematic discrediting of Jara, framed as part of a broader "dirty digital war." [The report linked accounts such as Neuroc and Patito Verde to operators close to the Republican Party](#), triggering resignations and legal debates. Although the Republican Party's presidential candidate José Antonio Kast denied any connection, the revelations were widely covered by national media and described by victims as a direct attempt to distort the democratic process. This episode underscored how online manipulation, cloaked as "freedom of expression," corrodes public trust and exacerbates polarisation. For CSOs, the precedent is clear: the main risk is not state censorship, but opaque campaigns of harassment, defamation and misinformation that exploit regulatory gaps in Chile's electoral framework. It's also very concerning that a director of a major Chilean television network, in other words a media outlet, was in some way implicated in disseminating disinformation with a possible political target.

From a digital rights and freedoms perspective, these dynamics compromise the ability of CSOs and vulnerable groups—particularly women leaders, Indigenous activists, and LGBTQI+ communities—to participate without fear of targeted disinformation.

On the other hand, Chile has a new [Data Protection Law](#) that updates current legislation and raises the bar for protecting individuals' rights. This brings the Chilean standard in line with that established by the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which is the international benchmark for the protection of individuals' rights and their personal data. Furthermore, it creates an institution for the protection of personal data called the [Personal Data Protection Agency](#), which will oversee compliance with the provisions of this law and apply sanctions. The law was passed in late 2024 but will go into effect on 1 December 2026.

Finally, it's important to highlight that civil society has also mobilised to combat disinformation. In June, the [AFP news agency and Chilean fact-checker Mala Espina launched the collaborative journalism alliance Comprueba](#), which brings together more than 40 media outlets to combat disinformation surrounding the Chilean general elections.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Heading into the November 2025 elections, Chile's civil society shows **clear gains in agenda-setting and institutional influence**: organisations helped move landmark reforms on care, gender parity in leadership, and child protection; advanced the participatory reform of **Law 20,500**; and strengthened tripartite dialogue in extractive governance. Mass mobilisations are increasingly translating into **lasting organisational capacity** and channels for deliberation, not only episodic protest. At the same time, **structural constraints persist**: weak trust in institutions, uneven implementation of participation mechanisms, tighter administrative burdens for smaller groups, and a **more hostile digital sphere** marked by disinformation and harassment that chills participation among vulnerable communities.

Resource access remains **uneven**, and oversight advances have not yet closed accountability gaps. This evolving context must be closely monitored, as it carries both risks and opportunities for the enabling environment: on one hand, strong democratic institutions encourage civic debate, pluralism, and participation; on the other, the increasing visibility of polarised narratives and digital misinformation poses risks to public trust, social cohesion, and inclusive political discourse. In this sense, there are narratives from some candidates that are seen as threats to certain advances that have been achieved and others that are still being processed in Congress, for example [abortion and euthanasia](#). At the same time, this is also a moment of strategic opportunity. Given the electoral context, civil society actors can play a key role by participating in the definition of political agendas and being part of the candidates' government platform proposals. Civil society has demonstrated that its participation is key to democratic legitimacy, the promotion of rights-based policies, and the fostering of inclusive debates on democracy, governance, and social justice. The coming months, in which the next President of Chile will be elected, are crucial for civil society to continue its oversight role and influence in the design of public policies.

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