

# Republic of Congo

## Country Focus Report

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

The Republic of Congo has experienced a series of political crises since the restoration of democratic rule following the 1991 national conference and the first democratic elections held in 1992. The country experienced a period of political instability marked by violent conflicts between 1997 and 2002. Political life then gradually stabilised under the presidency of Denis Sassou Nguesso. In 2015, a [constitutional referendum](#) introduced a new constitution that removed presidential term limits and age limits, thus reshaping the country's political landscape.

Since then, [elections in the Republic of Congo](#) have been constantly contested, with opposition parties and independent observers expressing concern about the lack of transparency in their organisation. With the presidential election scheduled for March 2026, tensions are increasingly noticeable in the run-up to these elections, leading to a narrowing of civic space and growing restrictions on fundamental freedoms. This repressive trend responds to the need to retain power, which further impacts the environment in which civil society organisations (CSOs) work. In principle, this could potentially limit their ability to support and guarantee the integrity of the electoral process.

In addition, the Republic of Congo's economic structure is heavily dependent on oil revenues. However, poor governance and [corruption](#) limit the impact of exploiting natural resources for the benefit of citizens. Oil [generates](#) half of the gross domestic product (GDP), just over half of budget revenues, and almost 90% of export revenues in 2024. Forests cover 70% of Congolese territory, but the forestry sector only contributes 5.6% to GDP. This fragility has a direct impact on the Congolese population, given the worrying social indicators, including the weakening of purchasing power, [galloping](#) inflation and serious food insecurity affecting 59% of individuals. These difficulties prevent the State from honouring its commitments and give rise to demands from the population, prompting the authorities to take excessive measures that reduce access to rights and freedoms.

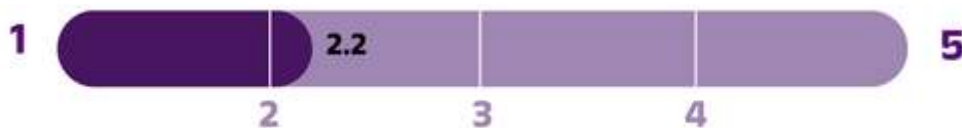
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# B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: <sup>1</sup>



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This score highlights the limits imposed on the exercise of rights and freedoms in the Republic of Congo, with recurrent violations leaving little room for the enjoyment of freedom of association, assembly and expression.

#### 1.1 Freedom of Association

Freedom of association is recognised and guaranteed by Article 27 of the Constitution of 6 November 2015. In addition, the [Law of 1 July 1901](#) on contracts of association is the main legal and regulatory framework governing the creation of associations in the Republic of Congo. It defines the procedure for examining applications and other measures taken by the State to promote the registration of associations. It enables civil society actors to form, register and carry out their activities.

However, registration is neither automatic nor guaranteed, but subject to certain restrictions imposed by the administration, in particular the prefecture under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. In accordance with the [Law of 1 July 1901](#), NGOs and associations are required to register with the Ministry of the Interior. In return, the Ministry of the Interior must issue them with a receipt certifying their existence and validation by the government, whereas the Law of 1901 establishes a declaratory system in principle.

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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 classified as 'repressed' in the Monitor, with a score of 30 out of 100, which has been converted to fit our scale of 1 to 5.

This registration procedure can be [cumbersome](#) and discriminatory, with the issuing of receipts at the discretion of the government. This particularly exposes groups that are critical of the authorities, to whom the administration may refuse to issue the said receipt without a valid reason. Indeed, associations whose aim is to defend human rights or promote good governance and the fight against corruption face enormous difficulties in obtaining legal recognition and a receipt. Their applications are generally given special treatment, with the procedure taking an unusually long time, and their applications are unlikely to succeed, given the nature of the advocacy suggested by their activism.

The Congolese citizens' movement Ras-le-bol [Fed up] was a victim of these practices. It was ordered to change its name to obtain a receipt, following steps taken with the administration on 7 December 2021, which slowed down the process of obtaining said receipt. Members of the movement reported deliberate administrative delays in obtaining the receipt for no valid technical reason, and the requirement by the Brazzaville prefecture to change the name and purpose of the movement before it could be obtained. Despite the payment of 15 000 CFA francs in procedural costs, and despite the appeal lodged on 29 December 2021, which went unheeded, the receipt has never been issued since. Under these conditions, the NGO encounters numerous operational challenges linked to the absence of a legal personality in order to be able to officially address the public administration, open a bank account to hold potential funds, acquire a physical headquarters, or take legal action on behalf of the association. In order to exist and function, the Ras-le-bol association receives fiscal and administrative sponsorship from partner CSOs.

## **1.2 Freedom of Assembly**

Freedom of assembly and demonstration is guaranteed by Article 27 of the [Constitution](#) of 6 November 2015. The Republic of Congo is also a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Articles 21 and 22 of which recognise the rights of assembly and association, subject only to such restrictions as are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, order, health or the rights of others.

However, this right is severely restricted in practice. Order No 62-28 of 23 October 1962 on public demonstrations prohibits any gathering on public roads without prior authorisation. It introduced an authorisation system rather than a declaration system, which paved the way for the repression of demonstrations and public meetings. Authorisations for meetings are also often restricted by the authorities without good reason, or demonstrations are excessively repressed by the police.

For example, a peaceful march planned for 10 July 2025 was [stifled](#) by the Central Intelligence and Documentation Agency (CID), leading to the [arrest of lawyer Bob Kaben Massouka](#) and six other people. The arrests were motivated by their support for a group of young people organising a march scheduled for 10 July 2025.

In March and April 2025, the organisation RPDH [was prevented](#) from carrying out its activities and from meeting with local communities and indigenous peoples (LCIPs) in the oil villages of Kayo and Banga Kayo, operated by a private company in the Tchiamba Nzassi district. This restriction is clearly a violation of freedom of assembly, as a meeting with communities does not require prior authorisation.



In July 2024, Brazzaville police also [arrested](#) activists Castellin Cédric Balou, Melvin Louwamou and René Manaka, who were organising a peaceful march to protest against poverty in the Republic of Congo. As the authorities had not responded to their request for authorisation, the activists felt free to organise their peaceful march. In these circumstances, attempts to hold gatherings or demonstrations, particularly in public places, risk being classified as a disturbance of the peace or a threat to State security and may be repressed by the security forces.

To counter the ongoing repression of freedom of expression, civil society actors seized the opportunity offered by the Republic of Congo's evaluation under the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2024 to [highlight](#) the [restrictions](#) linked to the system of authorisation for public demonstrations and meetings provided for in Order No 62-28 of 23 October 1962. Following this challenge, which was echoed in several recommendations made by the countries examining the Republic of Congo, the executive undertook [to repeal](#) this provision, a commitment that was included in the UPR 2025 report. However, no action has yet been taken in this area. The CSO members interviewed felt that the 2026 electoral timetable was not conducive to speeding up the implementation of the UPR recommendations, given that in practice this type of context (elections) tends to pave the way for restrictions on civic space. Civil society actors therefore prefer to meet in closed spaces, as this does not require prior authorisation.

### 1.3 Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by Article 25 of the [Constitution of 6 November 2015](#). In addition, [Law No 8-2001 of 12 November 2001](#) on freedom of information and communication broadens the scope of freedom of the press by stipulating that all citizens have the right to express their ideas and opinions through all means of communication.

However, the climate characteristic of [the repressive State](#), which should be associated with [the deaths in custody that occurred](#) during the same period, had a decisive impact on the exercise of this right.

While these texts make neutrality a professional obligation, the reality in practice is quite different. State media outlets are directed and controlled by those in power. These public bodies are required to comply with the '*government's editorial line*'. This editorial line is used to avoid coverage of subjects deemed sensitive and likely to offend the government, such as cases of fraud or corruption involving politically exposed persons, or denunciations of serious human rights violations. In this way, self-censorship is encouraged, as the press seeks to minimise the risk of being exposed to sanctions.

For example, Tsiéléka Média was [reprimanded in July 2024](#) by the High Council for Freedom of Communication (CSLC) for allegedly publishing a report deemed defamatory of the Prime Minister and damaging to political stability.

Journalists have also been victims of violence in the exercise of their profession, with no protection or reaction from the State. On 21 February 2025 in Pointe-Noire, an altercation broke out between a group of [journalists](#) from the MCRTV-NF media outlet, who had come to inquire about the suspension of construction work on a drainage collector ordered by the Minister of the Environment, and security guards from a private company, who assaulted them and tried to seize their press equipment. This infringement of press freedom and Article 25 of the 2015 Constitution, although reported to the authorities, has gone unpunished. The silence of the authorities and the media regulator is symptomatic of the ongoing challenges in the area of press freedom.

In early July 2025, [journalist Rosie Pioth](#), France 24 correspondent and director of Fact Checking Congo, was forced to flee the country following a series of [threats and intimidation](#) after her investigation into the 1982 bombing at Brazzaville's Maya-Maya airport. There was also an [assassination attempt](#) against journalist Ghys Fortuné Bemba Dombé in September 2024 in Paris, France, believed to be linked to his work. The journalist is in exile in France, partly because of his criticism of the government.

Another infringement of freedom of expression concerns the case of Constant [Ebara Pea](#), political scientist and lecturer in political science at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM). In June 2025, he was threatened with expulsion from the university by his superiors and received anonymous telephone threats following his critical comments in the media about the Republic of Congo's candidacy for Director-General of UNESCO.

Consequently, the recognition and legal protection of human rights defenders, whistleblowers, trade unionists, journalists and other members of civil society remain a challenge in the Republic of Congo. Effective protection will contribute to the achievement of broader objectives, namely helping to ensure respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy, good governance, sustainable development, respect for the rule of law and an enabling environment.

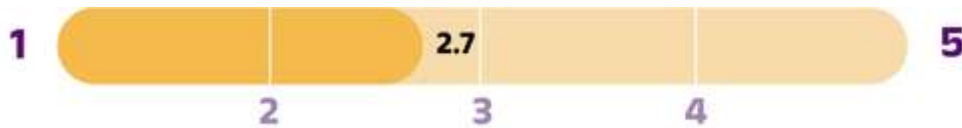
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# PRINCIPLE SCORE

## 2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



### 2.1 Registration

Although CSOs are in principle created and operate under [the Law of 1901 on associations](#), in practice they are subject to administrative control by the Ministry of the Interior, which makes this right conditional on obtaining a registration receipt. Registration is therefore not automatic, and the administrative procedure can be complex and lengthy, which in some respects can discourage CSOs and limit their access to legal recognition.

Restrictions on registration generally target CSOs that are active in the fields of human rights, governance, anti-corruption and transparency. In addition, delaying tactics are frequently used against CSOs deemed 'sensitive' for reasons that are political, purely ideological and non-technical. These CSOs, which are perceived to be aligned with the opposition (or even close to it), are more often than not at risk of having their registration procedure prolonged or refused in the absence of specific protective legislation. The case of the Ras-le-bol citizens' movement, whose members stated that they had been ordered by the prefectural administration to change their name in order to obtain a receipt in December 2021, illustrates the complexity of registration procedures. Given their refusal to comply with this requirement, the application has not been successful since, leaving the association in a situation of legal, administrative and fiscal instability to this day.

In addition, the registration and creation of associations are sometimes subject to bribes in order to speed up the processing of files. This was the case for a women's association in the Kakamoeka district, which almost suffered this injustice in 2024. According to one of its members, an official from the Kouilou prefecture demanded money before they could access the registration files. In the end, the association did not pay the required bribe, thanks in particular to the intervention of a departmental director who insisted that the request be dealt with promptly.

Complaints against these illegal registration practices are generally ineffective. When cases of intimidation or obstruction are reported, the authorities recommend that victims contact the judicial institutions. However, complaints are generally not followed up.

Article 238 of the Constitution of 6 November 2015 establishes an Advisory Council of Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations, headed by a permanent secretary. The Council is composed mainly of members of civil society appointed by presidential decree. Its main mission is to issue opinions on issues relating to the participation of citizens in the life of the nation, with a view to promoting citizens' rights and freedoms and republican values. It is funded by the State budget.

Based on experience and the testimony of the CSO experts involved in gathering information for this report, it is clear that the Advisory Council's management team and affiliated NGOs (non-governmental organisations) work more on promoting rights than on defending and protecting them. They never criticise the government's actions and do not engage in advocacy work. Thus, Organic Law No 32-2017 [stipulates](#) in Article 2 that the Council is placed under the authority of the President of the Republic, which leaves no doubt as to its lack of independence. This body, which is part of the executive, is the umbrella organisation for CSOs and in reality, acts on behalf of the government in its ambition to control, instrumentalise and monitor civil society. NGOs that are not members of the Council are marginalised, demonised and treated as opposition bodies because of their critical view of public governance and their independence of action. In this regard, and on the basis of the provisions of Organic Law No 32-2017 of 7 August 2017 on the organisation, composition and functioning of the Civil Society Advisory Council, it is established that *the President of the Republic shall refer matters to the Council when faced with issues relating to the participation of citizens in the life of the nation with a view to promoting rights and freedoms*.

The Advisory Council has also established a mechanism for recognising NGOs and associations, which acts as a CSO registration office. The Council keeps a register of NGOs, thereby strengthening their recognition by the State. To be registered and recognised, an organisation must obtain a receipt from the Ministry of the Interior, as well as meeting other criteria such as submitting its articles of association, rules of procedure and activity reports. This recognition may be an asset for the association or NGO in terms of funding its activities from the State budget, but it also risks compromising its independence from the State.

## **2.2 Operating Environment**

The Law of 1 July 1901 on freedom of association allows CSOs to define their governance and internal affairs without direct interference from the State. CSOs draw up their own statutes and internal regulations, which define their internal organisation and functioning, without external or State interference.

While CSOs have the freedom to define their objectives and activities in accordance with their mission, some of their priorities are not well received by the authorities. Although no formal bans have been reported in the last twelve months covered by this report, in practice CSOs that choose to focus on critical areas of public policy are not well perceived by the authorities – as noted in section 2.1. They are generally stigmatised and seen as hostile. These CSOs are subject to surveillance, their activities are scrutinised by the security services, and their presence is tolerated rather than accepted. In addition, civil servants may also create obstacles to thwart or simply hinder the functioning of CSO activities. For example, the

authorities may boycott an activity or project whose outcomes depend on their involvement, such as advocacy meetings linked to legal reforms. This context may limit the relevance of CSO action and encourage self-censorship in the conduct of projects or reduce the ability of CSOs to express themselves freely.

On the other hand, in theory ad hoc and sectoral discussion frameworks have been set up within certain ministries, such as the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples, and the Ministry of Health and Population, with the aim of strengthening citizen involvement in the monitoring of public policies. In practice, these dynamics are part of the ambition to control and limit civil society action.

In this context, ministries have signed memorandums of understanding with CSOs to provide a framework for dialogue. Outside these frameworks, CSOs should not address certain issues without the prior agreement of the relevant ministry. Thus, any organisation that is a signatory to this framework for dialogue must under no circumstances publish the results of a survey, report or study before the subject has first been discussed within this framework.

Furthermore, CSOs that are not signatories to this agreement are considered hostile by the ministry, which never gets involved in their activities and does not invite them to participate in the ministry's activities.

CSOs are only required to submit financial and annual reports to their technical and financial partners. These reports are submitted at regular intervals. The content of the reports, supporting documents and procedures required varies and depends on the operational policy of each donor. CSOs must therefore comply with the partners' guidelines. The Civil Society Advisory Council is the only body that requires annual and financial reports from all NGOs and associations that register with it.

Foreign funds received by civil society actors are sometimes viewed with suspicion by the State. This leads to lengthy verification procedures with banks, particularly at the request of the National Financial Investigation Agency (ANIF), which delay the implementation of projects. Indeed, CSO budgets are largely dependent on external support for their activities, as statutory contributions, donations and legacies from their members are not enough to guarantee the functioning and development of their programmes. This justifies the use of grants from foreign partners, which ultimately arouses the suspicion of the public authorities, who see such support as external interference.

## **2.3 Protection against Interference**

Article 27 of the 2015 Constitution and the [Law of 1901](#) on the regime for associations provide the guarantees, rights and freedoms necessary for the independent and effective operation of CSOs, in particular against excessive interference by the State and third parties, such as interference by the administration in defining the name and purpose of associations, as illustrated by the constraints imposed on the Ras-le-bol citizens' movement. In practice, civil society is free to define its own areas of work, without any 'legal' hindrance from the public authorities. The State may dissolve an association, but only in strict compliance with established standards, in particular Order No 11-60 of 11 May 1960, which authorises the dissolution of associations that are contrary to the public interest. This provision is confirmed by Article 27 of the Constitution of 6 November, which makes the exercise of freedom of association subject to compliance with the law, public order and public morality, and also repeated in Article 3 of the Law of 1901, which extends this requirement to the integrity of the

national territory and the republican form of the State. Thus, freedom of action in the field of associations is guaranteed insofar as it in no way contravenes the laws and regulations of the Republic. However, the application of protection measures remains selective and sometimes politicised. For example, interference by the public administration requiring an NGO to change its name or designation suggests coercion.

In theory, the authorities do not exercise control through inspections and surveillance, but the activities of CSOs are nevertheless closely monitored by the security services, particularly in the case of independent CSOs. This surveillance, although informal, takes the form of monitoring the CSO's publications, the people it meets and the subjects it addresses. In some cases, the organisation's headquarters may even be subject to discreet physical surveillance by the services. In other cases, members of RPDH reported being bugged, according to the indiscretions of certain security service agents. It is also the case that agents from the Central Intelligence and Documentation Agency (CID) impose their presence at workshops, conferences and other activities carried out by CSOs, with the aim of monitoring what is said by participants and, to a certain extent, dissuading them from having free and peaceful discussions.

In addition, civil society actors working on issues such as public governance, environmental degradation or violations of rights and freedoms are often subjected to pressure and veiled threats during informal interactions with the authorities. Institutional and legal reforms are needed to guarantee the effective independence of CSOs. These reforms include the adoption of specific legislation on access to public information and a law on the protection of human rights defenders and whistleblowers.

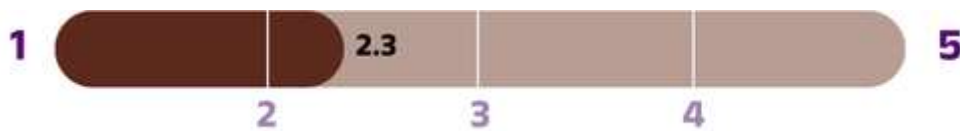
In summary, although the legal and regulatory framework does not in itself restrict the activities of associations, there are nevertheless practical difficulties that limit this freedom in terms of access to registration, which is highly dependent on the purpose and focus of CSO activities, and restrictions on access to public funding.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



#### 3.1 Resource Accessibility

CSO funding in the Republic of Congo is heavily dependent on external funding from development partners, foreign governments and foundations. In general, this funding is provided through restricted or open calls for proposals issued by technical and financial partners such as the French Development Agency (AFD), the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and certain embassies. In some cases, there are discretionary grants based on the relationship of trust established between a donor and a CSO.

However, the Republic of Congo is not a priority country for many international donors. Given the country's small size and considerable natural resources, some donors believe that the problem lies not in a lack of funding, but rather in governance. Nonetheless, most funding, particularly for independent CSOs, comes from external sources, which has implications for the continuity and sustainability of their work. This problem of over-dependence on foreign funding was highlighted by the freeze on US funding in January 2025. Therefore, independent civil society faces serious problems of sustainable and equitable funding, which hamper its institutionalisation and the sustainability of its work.

Furthermore, certain themes have difficulty in obtaining the support of international partners, given their sensitive nature. For example, financial support for CSOs to defend high-level corruption cases involving politically exposed individuals does not always find favour with development partners, for obvious diplomatic reasons.

In addition, the strict conditions and cumbersome and complex procedures for accessing international donor funds require CSOs to have a certain level of expertise and professionalism to ensure operational compliance with the requirements of these donors. To

address this problem and bridge the technical and financial gap, some donors are organising capacity-building sessions on fundraising and grant management for local CSOs.

Ideally, a national funding mechanism should be created to support CSO activities and reduce dependence on external sources, but no such mechanism currently exists. There are no CSO funding laws. In the absence of such a mechanism, the government allocates available public funding on a case-by-case basis, targeting mainly organisations deemed to be of public utility, such as Samu Social, ACBEF (Congolese Family Welfare Association), APEEC (Association of Parents of Pupils and Students of the Congo), the Sounga Foundation, and the Congo Assistance Foundation, etc. These organisations are often headed by people close to the government, such as the Congo Assistance Foundation, which is run by the wife of the President of the Republic.

Discriminatory disparities are also evident in certain co-financing agreements between the Congolese government and its international partners. Indeed, the executive pays more attention to CSOs that are members of the Civil Society Advisory Council, which it has chosen as partners for projects financed by foreign funds. As a result, CSOs that are not part of the Council are rarely eligible and are penalised for their independence and critical stance towards the executive. This also reduces the effectiveness of projects, as the government selects CSOs not on the basis of their expertise, but on the basis of their level of allegiance to the government.

Finally, access to funding is hampered by banking restrictions. On several occasions, external funds received by private banks have been blocked pending verification of their origin, justification of their destination and the legal compliance of the beneficiary CSOs, generally at the request of the National Financial Investigation Agency (ANIF), among others. These blocks are sometimes lengthy and delay the planning and implementation of CSO activities, with constraints such as delays in the payment of staff salaries, in the implementation of their programmes and in the submission of project reports.

### **3.2 Resource Efficiency**

As funding for Congolese civil society comes mainly from external sources, managing relations with donors and the conditions for awarding grants and using these funds are not always within the reach of CSOs and their management capacities. However, their commitment is sincere, their social and public utility is well known, and their presence and commitment on the ground are useful, given their role and their ability to contribute to resolving the problems that hamper the country's development.

Although their relationships are certainly collaborative, CSOs have an obligation to comply with donors' requirements if they wish to retain their funding. Some donors engage in preliminary discussions with local CSOs to better understand their contextual reality before launching calls for projects, while others do not. The opinions of CSOs are sometimes taken into account regarding the themes to be covered by calls for projects.

### **3.3 Resource Sustainability**

The long-term stability and predictability of CSO funding in the Republic of Congo is often compromised by a series of economic, political and social factors: dependence on external funding, action limited to project cycles (lack of resilience), lack of diversification of funding



sources and the need to build capacity. In most cases, CSOs do not have their own funding mechanisms, such as income-generating activities (IGAs), which prevents them from running their programmes over the long term, as donor funding is cyclical.

Without the resources to ensure consistent remuneration for staff and operations, CSOs risk losing their expertise at the end of the project implementation period. The grants available generally run for a maximum of three consecutive years, and the initiative is badly affected once the grant has ended due to a lack of prospects in terms of the initiative's sustainability. Project cycles are not systematically renewed, and when renewal is guaranteed, it may take some time to become operational, which has a negative impact on the programme and project beneficiaries. This situation compromises the sustainability of the project's results. In addition, some of the expertise contributed during the project may be withdrawn once the funding has ended, which constitutes a loss for the CSO concerned. Some CSOs are considering strategies to diversify their funding sources and strengthen their financial autonomy.

However, donor priorities can change depending on the political, economic and social context, which has an impact on CSO funding. The consequences of [the suspension](#) of USAID funding for the work of several Congolese CSOs by the Trump administration is a perfect illustration of this. This has had a serious impact on staff paid through American projects. Other national social and educational programmes have also been halted as a result of this decision.

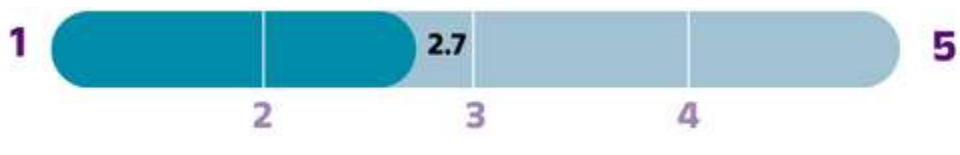
All these factors justify the score awarded, given that while access to financial resources is within the reach of Congolese civil society, issues relating to the sustainability and effectiveness of this funding still pose a number of challenges.

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# PRINCIPLE SCORE

## 4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



### 4.1 | Transparency

The [Law of 2001](#) on freedom of information and communication is the main law governing access to information. However, it is weak and poorly applied, which limits the ability of CSOs to obtain official information. It does not include any specific provisions to strengthen public access to information. Several media outlets and media professionals have encountered obstacles linked to difficult, if not impossible, access to sources of information. This constitutes a violation of the provisions of international law, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and specifically Article 19(2): *‘Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression, this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kind...’*

Similarly, the Law establishing the Code of Transparency and [Accountability](#) in Public Finance Management does not have implementing regulations to make it effective, applicable or enforceable, which would then guarantee CSO access to public information. The problem of the Code’s inapplicability is all the more glaring in that it violates the requirement for compliance with [standard EITI 2023](#) (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative), which requires access to information in order to promote public debate on the governance of extractive resources.

Government institutions are often reluctant to share certain information, particularly information relating to governance, the management of public resources or national security, which limits transparency. As part of their research and investigations, CSOs often encounter resistance from the administration, which refuses to disclose certain data. For example, experts have stated that the internal regulations of the Ministry of Water and Forests prohibit civil servants from disclosing information without the prior authorisation of their superiors. This contravenes Annex 10 of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), which lists the information that must be disclosed, including [information on forest taxes and royalties](#).

Governance mechanisms such as the VPA or the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI), which involve dialogue between the authorities and civil society, are part of the international drive to combat global warming. These open and inclusive mechanisms provide frameworks for exchange that enable CSOs to engage in dialogue with decision-makers and, in this context, to access certain public information or data.

CSOs continue to encounter difficulties in obtaining financial reports from the Forest Fund on the management of forest taxes and royalties, even though this is mandatory under Article 3 of [Law 33-2020 on the Forest Code](#) of the Republic of Congo. This article establishes the principles of transparency of procedures, traceability and legality of timber, and consultation and participation of stakeholders involved in sustainable forest management, with civil society featuring prominently among these stakeholders.

## **4.2 | Participation of Civil Society**

There are few formal frameworks for discussion between the executive and CSOs in the Republic of Congo that can guarantee the [effective participation of civil society](#). Dialogue often only takes place as part of ad hoc processes initiated by international financial [institutions](#) and international [partnerships](#), such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), initiatives related to [forest and climate governance](#) (VPAs), or the letter of intent with the [Central African Forest Initiative](#) (CAFI). On certain occasions, civil society has been able to share its contribution to the drafting of legislation, such as [Law No 33-2020 of 8 July 2020](#) on the Forest Code of the Republic of Congo, the [Law on Transparency and Accountability in Public Finance Management](#), and the [Law on the Register of Beneficial Owners](#).

However, there are still sectoral consultation frameworks initiated by certain ministries in an attempt to limit the action of CSOs. These frameworks are usually informal. They reveal a strong element of State control. The experience of CSOs, based on the signing of a charter drawn up by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, one of the clauses of which sets out a principle limiting the activities of civil society, is a perfect illustration of this. Similarly, the Ministry of Health had established a discussion forum with civil society in which all issues of interest to CSOs were to be discussed before publication. This too was a thinly veiled means of controlling the actions of civil society and filtering out any information unfavourable to the government. The effectiveness and implementation of these mechanisms may vary depending on the political and social context at national and international levels. The dynamics of this type of mechanism often work when they are accompanied by monitoring by international partners. These challenges hamper the transparency and accountability of the State, while limiting the contribution of CSOs to participatory governance and sustainable development.

[Advisory councils](#) have also been established for specific groups such as civil society, dialogue, women, young people, traditional elders, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. These are institutions emanating from the 2015 Constitution in Title 19, Articles 227 to 239, designed to guarantee that the sensitivities listed are represented at the level of State bodies. In practice, most of these councils do not function as they should, due to a lack of budget and real independence, and have no real influence on the conduct of public affairs. They are advisory bodies and do not have the right to vote in debates. Their autonomy is also limited by the fact that they are under the control of the President of the Republic.

This interaction is not very inclusive, given the low representativeness of the CSOs consulted, the closed processes for appointing the heads of these constitutional bodies, and the limited relevance of the issues and/or themes addressed. The Civil Society Advisory Council is not

open to CSOs that deal with sensitive issues by questioning public governance and denouncing human rights violations and corruption.

Although the participation of civil society is guaranteed by certain texts and governance mechanisms, it remains limited and is most often reserved for associations recognised as being of public utility and aligned with the executive's agenda, under the aegis of the Civil Society Advisory Council. However, this participation does not mean that CSOs fundamentally influence the decision-making process. In practice, civil society has the status of partner/observer, but without any real influence on decision-making. In addition, the quota reserved for CSO members at meetings is often much lower than that of the public or private sector. This further weakens their influence.

The Publish What You Pay Congo platform participated in the process of drafting and adopting the law on the creation of a public register [of beneficial owners](#) in the Republic of Congo. However, several of its contributions were ultimately not taken into account in the law adopted in December 2024. The campaign contributed to the drafting of the bill, but in the end was not involved in the parliamentary and administrative process of validating and enacting the law.

During election periods, the government organises dialogues with the main actors and stakeholders in the process, and it is often CSOs close to the government that are taken into consideration and invited, in particular to participate in election observation missions. Consequently, for any dialogue or initiative involving civil society, it is the Civil Society Advisory Council that is consulted to designate the CSOs, and it generally only designates CSOs whose actions are favourable to the government.

The [CSOs that are critical of public governance are denied accreditation to observe elections](#). RPDH and other NGOs suffered this fate during the last elections in 2021, 2016 and 2015. Representing the State, the Civil Society Advisory Council has an influential voice that is listened to. It shapes the opinions of decision-makers on the actions and consideration given to certain CSOs, and can easily contribute to their exclusion. There has been no substantial improvement in this context, as evidenced by [Order No 3269/MID-CAB](#) appointing the members of the offices of the administrative committees for the revision of electoral rolls, issued on 28 August 2025 by the Minister of the Interior based on the electoral law and Article 3 of Order No 1856 of 10 July 2025 setting the number of registration offices of the administrative committees for the revision of electoral rolls. These texts stipulate the participation of the administration, political groups (opposition, centre) and civil society in all operations of the electoral process. The civil society actors appointed to these administrative committees are all pro-government and are selected by the Civil Society Advisory Council in an opaque manner.

Since 2024, the prospect of adopting a law on the regime for associations has again been introduced into discussions, mainly at the initiative of the Civil Society Advisory Council. This law, [initially proposed in 2016](#) by a member of the current majority, was blocked at the time of its enactment by the President of the Republic, thanks to the EITI validation process. [The protocol](#) guarantees the effective participation of civil society in the EITI process, ensures an environment in which it can express itself freely without fear of reprisal, and involves it in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the process, including in public debate. This protocol is essential to the success of the EITI. As a result, the government had to abandon the enactment of this law to avoid the risk of being suspended from the EITI. The aim of the law was to criminalise the external funding of CSOs and to punish actions deemed a threat to State security. These debates are seen as linked to the motivations and

considerations of the Civil Society Advisory Council in the run-up to the 2026 presidential elections, raising concerns that such a law could be used to further restrict CSO funding and civic space for independent CSOs.

### 4.3 | Accountability

Given the weakness and shortcomings of formal mechanisms for the structured participation of CSOs in dialogue with the State, government accountability to civil society is weak. The executive does not feel obliged to provide clear, detailed or transparent information on how CSO contributions influence decision-making. With a few exceptions, CSO contributions are not recognised and there is little evidence that they influence public policy outcomes. The exceptions are generally initiatives monitored by international cooperation agencies, such as the EITI or climate initiatives (CAFI, REDD+, NDCs), where its responsibility is limited.

CSOs, individually or [within networks](#) such as [the campaign Publish What You Pay Congo](#), regularly publish reports and recommendations that are rarely taken into account in the processes, and CSOs are not systematically invited to participate in discussions on the issues raised in these reports. There are some isolated examples of government recognition of the contribution of CSOs to supporting public governance. For example, in 2024, during a visit to Pointe-Noire, the [Minister of the Environment, Sustainable Development and the Congo Basin](#) praised the contribution of the Justice and Peace Commission, whose report on [environmental damages](#) caused by a Chinese company in Banga Cayo informed certain public decisions. In May 2025, at a meeting in Brazzaville, the Minister publicly praised the work of RPDH in strengthening the rule of law and promoting responsible [governance](#) of natural resources. This is finally some recognition at government level of the contribution made by civil society.

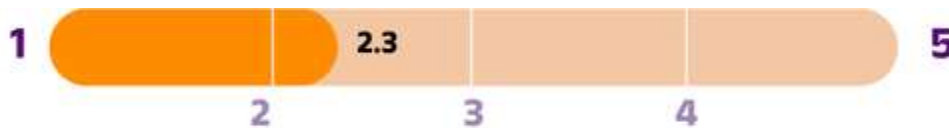
While existing laws enshrine a relative openness and responsiveness on the part of the State towards civil society, these must be reinforced by concrete measures aimed at effectively including CSOs in public decision-making processes, improving access to information and ensuring ongoing accountability.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

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

Score:



#### 5.1 | Public Discourse and Constructive Dialogue on Civil Society

Public discourse is generally negative and stigmatising towards CSOs that are critical of public governance. For example, the government reportedly criticised and discredited the Tournons la Page Congo [Let Us Turn the Page] (TLP Congo) campaign following the publication of an observation report on the legislative and local elections which denounced poor governance and acts of corruption in the electoral process. TLP Congo's member CSOs were accused of acting on behalf of the political opposition and of being foreign agents.

To a certain extent, CSOs are only tolerated when they are supported by development partners and when they participate in governance improvement initiatives motivated by international commitments. In other cases, the executive acts as if it were unaware of the existence of civil society, while relying on its analyses. In the run-up to the 2026 presidential election, and in the face of the deteriorating human rights situation and the restriction of civic space, the government is displaying indifference, and even blatant insensitivity. The denigration of political opponent Lassye Mbouity on RFI by the Congolese Prime Minister, when Mbouity has been subjected to [inhumane and degrading treatment](#) because of his activism, is concerning.

In addition, a civil society leader reported that she had been publicly booed by senior forestry officials at a preparatory meeting of a Joint Implementation Committee on 31 July 2025 in Brazzaville, in the context of forest and climate governance. On this occasion, civil society was invited to present the contents of the [position paper](#) published on the granting of illegal permits to logging companies whose agreements have expired, proof of the persistence of mistrust between the public authorities and civil society, despite existing initiatives and frameworks for dialogue.

While CSOs need to strengthen their communication strategies to improve their visibility, demonstrate their independence and better explain their work to third parties, the lack of



recognition and constructive dialogue makes their environment fragile, conditional and subject to political manipulation.

On the other hand, civil society is generally well regarded by the media, with the exception of government-controlled media outlets, for its role as an interface between the authorities and the population. CSOs regularly [involve](#) media professionals in their activities, and a relationship of trust has been established over time. It is clear that disseminating information to the public and communities would be a real challenge without the media. It must be said, however, that the Congolese press is divided between media outlets that are supported and funded by the government and those that are marginalised and distinguished by their independence of thought and action. Independent civil society works with the latter. It helps to build the capacity of journalists in the areas of governance, integrity, transparency and accountability. This proximity has enabled CSOs to improve public visibility of their actions, thanks to constant coverage of their activities in the independent media.

In addition, civil society has been able to mobilise and alert national and international public opinion whenever journalists have been harassed for their opinions, as was recently the case with Rosie Pioth and many others before her.

## **5.2 | Perception of Civil Society and Civic Engagement**

In addition to elections, civic engagement also takes the form of collective actions, demonstrations and local initiatives such as [citizen mobilisations](#) led by CSOs with the aim of, for example, cleaning up major urban centres or combating [the high cost of living](#). These mobilisations reflect a desire to play an active part in the public governance process. As a result, this commitment has sometimes led to significant changes in the Republic of Congo, such as decision-makers becoming more aware of citizens' expectations, [tax exemptions](#) on a number of essential products in order to combat the high cost of living, and [the suspension of agreements between the Republic of Congo and Rwanda](#) concerning the sale of agricultural land.

Despite this potential, civic education initiatives remain underdeveloped. Congolese CSOs do not carry out enough civic education projects due to insufficient funding. The absence of democratic transfer of power, coups d'état and political violence established as a system of governance contribute to reinforcing incivility, with the result that there is little confidence in civic education programmes.

At State level, initiatives of this type are carried out, but exclusively as part of political campaigns, without being sustainable projects. This creates a climate of anti-values in the country in general, underpinned by systematic impunity. Citizens take little interest in issues relating to civic education in an environment where anti-values are neither punished nor sanctioned, because the judicial system is not independent.

Civil society is also perceived differently depending on the actors involved. In an environment where citizens no longer have any recourse against the excessive power of the State, where checks and balances are ineffective and political opposition is stifled and paralysed, civil society is seen as the last bastion of democracy, a lifeline insofar as it acts as an interface between the population and decision-makers. This perception encourages citizens to engage with CSOs to take collective action that can promote change in the conduct of public affairs. This observation is corroborated by the [results of the Afrobarometer survey](#) on citizen

engagement in Congo-Brazzaville, which revealed that 34% of citizens joined forces with others to demand action from the government in 2025.

### 5.3 | Civic Equality and Inclusion

Article 15 of the 2015 [Constitution](#) strongly affirms equal rights for all citizens, regardless of gender, ethnic origin or socio-economic status. However, this provision has not been effectively implemented, and citizens do not enjoy these rights equally.

Inclusion remains low and the implementation of policies to encourage the participation of marginalised groups still presents significant challenges. This observation is [corroborated](#) by the June 2024 report on the in-depth reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This report states that the representation of women in public life and in the institutions of the Republic is still inadequate, and that women face [some additional obstacles](#) which limit their effective inclusion in civic life and in various sectors of the economy, with 10.5% in government, 16.55% in the National Assembly and 25.44% in departmental and municipal councils. According to surveys conducted in January 2024 in Congo-Brazzaville, there are significant gender gaps in education and control of assets, employment and land rights, as well as political participation.

Divisions persist in Congolese society, with certain organisations and individuals excluded and stigmatised. Marginalised communities such as women and girls, children and people with disabilities have no influence on decision-making. They are generally not consulted. Stereotypes and ethnic prejudice limit their access to decision-making and political processes, despite the creation of a ministry responsible for the promotion of women and their integration into development, and the enactment of Mouebara Law No 19-22 of 4 May 2022 on combating violence against women in the Republic of Congo.

When marginalised communities [are consulted](#), it is a mere formality. This is particularly true of indigenous peoples who, despite the adoption of a specific law guaranteeing their protection, continue to see [their fundamental rights violated](#). CSOs are mobilising and conducting advocacy at national and international levels to end the discrimination suffered by these marginalised groups.

Socio-economic barriers are a challenge, as people from disadvantaged backgrounds find it difficult to get involved due to a lack of resources, inadequate education or marginalisation.

[Civil society movements](#) and NGOs continue to [promote equal rights](#) and encourage civic participation. These groups endeavour to raise awareness and educate citizens about their rights. As part of the forest governance, markets and climate and integrity projects within climate initiatives such as REDD+, the CSOs OCDH, RPDH and Fern have strengthened the capacities of LCIPs with regard to their rights, in particular in relation to specific specifications and management plans, referral to the Independent System Auditor (IAS) of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), the use of conflict resolution mechanisms in the context of REDD+, the fight against corruption through the use of the Centre for Legal Assistance and Citizen Action (CAJAC), compliance with environmental and social safeguards, and benefit-sharing mechanisms. On the ground, most forest communities are unaware of their rights. They are also not consulted or informed by forestry companies about the companies' activities. Finally, they are afraid to assert their rights for fear of reprisals.

Ultimately, although the legal framework promotes equal rights in the Republic of Congo, a number of obstacles prevent genuine equality in terms of participation in civic processes, requiring ongoing efforts to overcome these challenges.

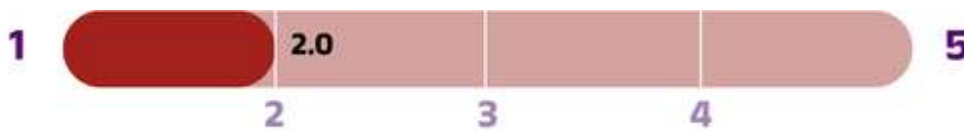
In summary, civil society and civic engagement in the Congo are seen as potential drivers of change, but their ability to influence governance is often hampered by systemic obstacles and political tensions. Their work is not always well received, particularly in the context of defending and promoting human rights.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



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#### 6.1 | Digital Rights and Freedoms

Digital rights and freedoms are governed by a number of pieces of legislation which, on paper, aim to guarantee freedom of expression online, access to information, and protection against censorship and unwarranted surveillance. These legislative texts include:

- Article 25 of the 2015 Constitution, which guarantees every citizen freedom of expression and the dissemination of their opinions through speech, writing, image or any other means of communication.
- [Law No 9-2009](#) of 25 November 2009 regulating the electronic communications sector, Article 3 of which gives everyone the right to benefit from electronic communications services.
- [Law No 29-2019](#) of 10 October 2019 on the protection of personal data, which aims to protect the personal data of Congolese citizens against abuse and violations. It establishes fundamental principles such as consent, transparency and data security.
- [Law No 26-2020](#) of 5 June 2020 on the general organisation of cybersecurity, which establishes the legal framework for the general organisation of cybersecurity in the country.
- The protection of personal data under Law No 5-2025 of 29 March 2025, which strengthens the institutional framework for data protection in the Congo. Its remit is as follows: to ensure the protection of citizens' personal data, to provide information on data rights and obligations, to receive and handle complaints and claims, to authorise and monitor data processing and to punish breaches of the law.

In addition, the Head of State enacted [Law No 27 of 5 June 2020](#) on the fight against cybercrime in the Republic of Congo. Although little known, this law aims to define and punish

offences committed online, linked to the use of new information and communication technologies.

However, while this law protects users' sensitive personal data, it can also be used by the authorities against citizens and CSOs to suppress their activities on social media. The filtering and monitoring of digital communications and content by the Central Intelligence and Documentation Agency (CID) led to the arrest of Maître Bob Kaben Massouka for supporting a peaceful youth march planned for 10 July 2025 in Brazzaville. According to the Attorney General of the Brazzaville Regional Court, the lawyer [had been under surveillance](#) for some time through his telephone communications and posts on social media, which led to his arrest.

The Republic of Congo has also ratified the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection, also known as the Malabo Convention. The convention aims to establish a harmonised legal framework for cybersecurity in Africa, protect citizens' personal data and promote trust in digital services.

However, implementing these laws remains a major challenge in practice. There is no protection mechanism against cyberbullying. Conversations are read and monitored by internet service providers, who collaborate with the security services by passing on information about users when it is deemed sensitive. The public interest is invoked to justify the interference of the security services in users' private lives, and internet service providers have no choice but to collaborate. Here, the above-mentioned example concerning Me Kaben Massouka is clear. Although this phenomenon has not been the subject of a report or article, it is common in the run-up to elections, when activists from RPDH, OCDH, MCC, CDP and many others have in the past received threatening messages via mobile phone networks.

## **6.2 | Digital Security and Confidentiality**

The situation regarding the protection of civil society actors in the country against cyber threats, state surveillance and online harassment is complex. Existing legal provisions on data protection and cybersecurity, such as Law No 29-2019 on the protection of personal data, are not applied and can sometimes even be used to restrict freedom of expression online and monitor the activities of civil society actors. The security of human rights defenders and CSOs is a cause for concern, particularly with regard to the repression and criminalisation of their online activities. Thus, the political context and the implementation of these laws can constitute significant obstacles to the security and freedom of civil society actors, particularly through the surveillance of CSOs' digital activities by the security services.

While access to digital information is guaranteed by the Constitution, there are restrictions or service interruptions that limit access and digital security. Similarly, sharing information on social media remains problematic, given the constant surveillance exercised by the security services, according to the private testimony of activists on the Publish What You Pay and Tournons la Page platforms, who are careful about the content they publish and consult online. This surveillance is intensifying as the elections approach. As soon as information is targeted by the authorities, the activist's account is immediately blocked and the individual sought, or even arrested. Restrictions on internet access, particularly during political events, reinforce these concerns. [Social media may be blocked or monitored](#), thus limiting citizens' freedom of expression.

In a State of the Nation address to a joint session of Parliament on 28 November 2023, the President of the Republic warned parliamentarians against [the destabilisation](#) of the country through social media. This statement follows the President's comments in 2018 on the misuse of social media by Congolese citizens and the [threat made by the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications](#) in February 2017 to filter or completely shut down social media in Congo, including the most popular platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Skype, Google+, etc.

### 6.3 | Digital Accessibility

There were a total of 6.33 million active mobile cellular connections in the Republic of Congo at the start of 2025, equivalent to 98.7% of the total population. 2.46 million people were using the internet in the country at the start of the year, while the internet penetration rate stood at 38.4%. There were 1.10 million social media users in the Republic of Congo in January 2025, [representing 17.1% of the total population](#).

Access to digital technologies and the skills needed for effective online participation by civil society actors vary considerably. The main challenges are limited access to the internet, inequalities in digital skills, the still limited nature of public initiatives to train civil society, weak security guarantees for online engagement, and limited space for digital participation.

The Republic of Congo has adopted a strategic framework and concrete initiatives to promote digital accessibility. [The national strategy](#) for the development of the digital economy, Congo Digital 2025, aims to transform the country into an information and knowledge society. It is based on three main pillars.

- **e-citizen:** promoting the digital inclusion of the population.
- **e-government:** modernising public administration using ICT.
- **e-business:** stimulating the digital economy and online commerce.

The strategy also provides for the development of digital infrastructures, skills training and the establishment of a regulatory framework conducive to innovation. The Digital Transformation Acceleration Project (PATN), launched with the support of the World Bank, aims to improve access to broadband internet and electronic communications for underserved populations. It aims to strengthen the capacity of the public sector to provide appropriate digital services and is a response to the digital divide that still limits widespread public access to the internet throughout the country, particularly in rural areas.

Organisations have access to social media, but do not make sufficient use of these digital media and networks dedicated to regular monitoring. In summary, although progress has been made, challenges remain in terms of digital access and skills, sometimes limiting the ability of civil society actors and the public to participate effectively online. Further efforts are needed to improve access and educate citizens.

In terms of challenges, the following points stand out:

- **Limited resources:** CSOs often lack the financial, human and technical resources needed to meet the challenges of obtaining and verifying information.
- **Difficult political and social context:** the sensitivity of certain subjects and the fear of repression or sanctions may dissuade CSOs from requesting or publishing certain information.



- **Limited access to digital technologies:** low penetration of information technologies and weak digital infrastructures hamper research, dissemination and verification of data.
- **Threats and restrictions:** repression, intimidation or harassment of CSO members may limit their ability to access information or share it publicly.

In addition, internet and mobile phone network outages are becoming a recurrent phenomenon during election periods in Congo Brazzaville, violating citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms, without any reasonable explanation from mobile phone operators or public authorities. Such events are to be feared in the run-up to the presidential election in March 2026. Against this backdrop, it can be said that the desire to filter and control digital technologies exclusively remains a priority for the country's authorities, with a negative impact on the environment conducive to civil society.



## C) Recommendations

In any case, it is clear that none of the enabling environment principles are at either extreme (e.g. a score of 1 or 5). However, the situation is worrying insofar as the effectiveness of the principles, although supported by a positive legal and institutional framework, poses challenges in terms of practical implementation and effective enforcement. In this context, the report makes the following recommendations to ensure an enabling environment for civil society in the Republic of Congo:

### **To the Government of the Republic:**

#### **1. To the Prime Minister, in particular:**

- Ensure a civic space and an environment conducive to civil society in the Republic of Congo through reforms aimed at strict compliance with international commitments on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Work towards the effective inclusion of civil society in existing multi-stakeholder dialogue processes in order to guarantee its participation in public decision-making, on the basis of an inclusive and open appointment process that guarantees the independent appointment of equally independent actors within CSOs, drawing on their expertise and field of work;
- Strengthen the participation and inclusion of CSOs in governance processes relating to natural resource management, climate and the environment, such as the VPA/FLEGT and the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI);
- Monitor and strengthen interministerial synergies in activities aimed at implementing the recommendations and corrective measures of the [Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative \(EITI\)](#), and in particular the adoption of a law protecting civil society in order to guarantee its autonomy and independence;
- Support and oversee the adoption of a multi-sector plan to implement the [recommendations](#) of the [Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#) and, in particular, support the adoption of a law to protect defenders and whistleblowers, including women defenders, over the next five years.

#### **2. To the Minister of Justice and Human Rights:**

- Work for the imminent adoption of a law to protect human rights defenders and whistleblowers, on the basis of the draft law submitted by RPDH and the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), and in accordance with the model laws on the protection of defenders;
- Adopt the implementing regulations of the various laws adopted by the country, guaranteeing the participation and independence of civil society in the Republic of Congo, namely the Law on the Code of Transparency and Accountability in Public Finance Management, Law 33-2020 on the Forest Code, Law 28-2016 on the Hydrocarbons Code, Law 21-2018 on Land, and all the legislative texts governing digital rights and freedoms;

- Remove from the legislative process any prospect of legislation aimed at controlling the actions of civil society and hindering digital security, in particular as regards the draft law criminalising civil society action, which has been reintroduced for discussion at the initiative of the Advisory Council of Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society, with a view to the 2026 presidential election;
- Work to implement the recommendations and corrective measures of the [Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative \(EITI\)](#), and in particular the adoption of a law protecting civil society in order to guarantee its autonomy and independence.

**3. To the Minister of Finance, Budget and Public Portfolio:**

- Implement the recommendations and corrective measures of the [Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative \(EITI\)](#), and in particular the adoption of a law protecting civil society in order to guarantee its autonomy and independence.

**4. To the Minister of the Interior:**

- Involve independent CSOs in the debate and activities relating to the monitoring of the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral process in 2026 and, more generally, in the monitoring of all operations in the value chain of the electoral process;
- Effectively implement the Congolese government's commitment to abolish [the system of prior authorisation](#) for peaceful demonstrations and gatherings in July 2024, following the country's fourth Universal Periodic Review by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

**To the International Community: UNDP, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, European Union, African Union, United States, France, Germany, etc.**

- Provide technical and financial support to implement the recommendations and corrective measures of the [Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative \(EITI\)](#), and in particular the adoption of a law protecting civil society in order to guarantee its autonomy and independence;
- Encourage and support compliance with requirements relating to the inclusion and participation of civil society in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank;
- Support the implementation [of the recommendations](#) of the [Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#), the adoption of the law protecting defenders and whistleblowers, including the [protection of women defenders](#) over the next five years.
- Support [the Congolese government's commitment to abolish the system of prior authorisation](#) for peaceful gatherings in July 2024, following the country's fourth Universal Periodic Review by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

**To Civil Society:**

- Adopt the principles of an enabling environment for civil society and promote this concept to a wide audience throughout the country;
- Maintain citizen monitoring of developments in the enabling environment for civil society in the Republic of Congo;
- Work together to lobby the Congolese authorities for reforms to strengthen the enabling environment for civil society.

## 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 panel for this report was convened in <month>.** 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.  
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# EU SEE

SUPPORTING  
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT  
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**EU SEE**

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