



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment

Snapshot

Chile

March 2026

Context

This Snapshot covers Chile’s enabling environment for civil society from October 2025 to 13 March 2026.

The national political landscape is marked by the presidential transfer of power, with Gabriel Boric (Frente Amplio) handing over the presidency to José Antonio Kast ([former Republican Party](#)), establishing the first far-right government in Chile since the country’s return to democracy in 1990.

In the days leading up to the inauguration, tensions between the two leaders became visible regarding the [Chinese fiber-optic cable project](#) and the Senate’s general approval of a [bill](#) regulating the suspension and alternative enforcement of custodial sentences. This bill could potentially be used to release individuals convicted of human rights violations. The organization *Londres 38*, which preserves a former torture centre as part of the country’s historical memory, stated in a [public declaration](#) that the initiative represents a serious setback in access to justice. [The United Nations has already issued a technical analysis](#) of the bill, indicating that it is incompatible with international treaties.

On 11 March, the transfer of power ceremony took place with relative normality. However, protests and barricades were reported in the surroundings of the Presidential Palace, known as “La Moneda.” That night, President Kast delivered his [first speech](#), stating that he would seek to restore order and hope: *“We are being handed a country in worse conditions than we could have imagined. A country with weakened public finances. A country where organised crime and drug trafficking have advanced. A country where families feel abandoned by the State,”* he said.

Following his first day, President Kast [signed a package of decrees and directives representing the priorities of his administration](#). Among them were the creation of a National Border Closure Policy and the declaration of a Military Zone in the most vulnerable section of the border with Bolivia. In addition, he ordered a comprehensive audit of all ministries and state institutions and signed an instruction to resolve delays in permit processing that have blocked projects worth more than USD 16 billion, affecting 51 pending appeals within the Environmental Impact Assessment System.

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

The first couple of months in 2026 were marked by isolated demonstrations and protests. These included mobilisations advocating for the [right to housing](#) and protests emerging from territories affected by the [mega-fires in the Biobío and Ñuble](#) regions. Likewise, 8 March, International Women’s Day, was marked by [massive mobilisations throughout the country](#), bringing together more than 600,000 women, according to sources from the [Feminist Coordinator 8M and various media outlets](#).

The Feminist Coordinator also reported the surveillance and detention of two demonstrators in Iquique and Antofagasta, who had already returned to their homes after participating in the mobilisations. As stated in their [public statement](#): *“Tracking technologies that are not used to find the disappeared but rather to pursue demonstrators, such as the two comrades detained in Antofagasta; police persecution that results in the arrest of women in their own homes after participating in a march commemorating International Women’s Day, as occurred in Iquique.”*

Through coverage by an independent media outlet, it was revealed that the arrest was made thanks to surveillance methods installed in the commune, which reportedly identified that the two women were [defacing the facade of a cathedral](#).

Another issue that has raised concern among civil society organisations (CSOs) working on matters related to sexual and gender diversity, as well as LGBTIQ+ activists and their families and organisations focused on Sexual and Reproductive Rights, is the request for personal information being carried out by the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic through its current director, Dorothy Pérez. This request specifically involves access to [sensitive personal data of minors who are beneficiaries of the PAIG](#) (Gender Identity Support and Trans Health Programme).

The measure is part of an audit that requires all health services across the country to provide key information such as social and legal name, gender identity, legal sex, and RUT (Rol Único Tributario, Chile's main identification number) of individuals who have received care within the system. This directly impacts not only the protection of users' data and the work of health centres but also the enabling environment for civil society, as organisations representing sexual diversity, which are themselves users, family members, and/or promoters of the system, are directly affected.

The organisation [OTD \(Organizando Trans Diversidades\)](#), in a statement released through its Instagram and [Facebook](#) accounts, argued that the Comptroller's Office violates medical confidentiality, given that diagnoses and treatments constitute sensitive data under [Law 19.628](#). The statement further noted:

“Law [21.430](#) (Art. 33) establishes ABSOLUTE CONFIDENTIALITY for the data of children and adolescents. Therefore, auditing public resources does NOT justify exposing them. In addition, [Law 21.120](#) protects gender identity as reserved information. Requiring ‘legal sex’ and ‘social name’ constitutes an act that violates self-determination.

The Comptroller's Office violates medical confidentiality; diagnoses and treatments are sensitive data ([Law 19.628](#)), and their mass disclosure undermines trust between patients and the health system. It also disregards international standards, violating the right to privacy (ICCPR, ACHR) and the Yogyakarta Principles, which require the protection of data related to gender identity.”

As background, the Undersecretariat of Healthcare Networks refused to provide this information, citing [Law No. 20.584](#) and its Regulation (Supreme Decree No. 41), which classifies clinical records and health information as “sensitive, confidential, and of limited access,” a protection that is further reinforced when the data subjects are children or adolescents.

The Comptroller's first official request dates back to November 2025, followed by a new request on 8 January 2026. These requests for information have become increasingly complex, as the most recent letter extended the demand to the Trans Health Program to include the “[details of the pharmacological arsenal used in hospitals within the network for hormone therapy](#).” The Chilean Medical Association also published a [legal report](#) addressed to the Undersecretariat of Healthcare Networks regarding the protection of sensitive data in the PAIG program and in healthcare services for trans persons.

It is also important to note that on the morning of Friday 13 March, it became known that President Kast will sign the first pardon of his administration to former Army captain [José Santiago Faúndez Sepúlveda](#), who was sentenced to 15 years in prison for the crime of unnecessary violence resulting in the death of [Romario Veloz](#) and serious injuries to two other individuals during the 2019 social uprising in the city of La Serena. On that occasion, Faúndez ordered his subordinates to fire live ammunition at demonstrators attempting to enter a shopping centre.

The new Minister of the General Secretariat of the Presidency, José García Ruminot, supported the possibility of granting pardons to state agents convicted of violence against demonstrators, stating with regard to the 2019 social uprising: “I have an absolute conviction to support our Carabineros, support our police forces, and support our Armed Forces, because what we experienced, the wave of violence we faced, is something we never want to see repeated again.”

This issue becomes even more significant within a national and regional context in which political discourse has become increasingly punitive, reflecting the rhetorical line of Chile’s new president. In this context, the enabling environment must pay particular attention to the protection of individual rights.

In this sense, the enabling environment remains dynamic and under tension in the face of certain decisions that could contravene national regulations and place at risk the integrity and rights of historically marginalised and structurally vulnerable groups. This scenario requires careful monitoring by different social actors, as some of these measures could have direct implications for the guarantee and protection of rights.

It is therefore essential to consistently observe situations that may affect or restrict the fundamental freedoms of citizens in general and, in particular, the conditions that enable the functioning of civil society organisations. Ongoing monitoring and active vigilance are key to safeguarding these spaces and preventing setbacks in rights and participation.

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

Among the laws that could directly strengthen the work of the enabling environment in Chile, the reform of Law 20.500 on associations and citizen participation in public management remains particularly relevant. In December 2025, the Internal Government Commission of the Chamber of Deputies approved in [general terms the bill that modifies](#) it, allowing the initiative to move forward to the Chamber floor for its vote in the first legislative stage, and opening space for possible amendments.

At the same time, the Council for Transparency (CPLT) submitted to the new president, José Antonio Kast, its proposal for a new [Transparency and Access to Public Information Law](#). This proposal emerges after more than 16 years of implementation of the current regulation and seeks to update it in response to the challenges posed by digital transformation. According to the CPLT, the initiative was developed with the participation of civil society, academics, and experts. At the same time, it aims to update the Transparency 2.0 Bill. [As stated by the CPLT](#) : “We believe that the ‘Transparency 2.0 Law’ currently under discussion in the National Congress since 2018 has been overtaken by the passage of time, the scale of the challenges to be addressed, and the development of new technologies, therefore this proposal for a new Transparency Law for Chile seeks to respond to those challenges.”

Among some of the proposals are: 1) Establishing the CPLT as the guarantor body with oversight powers over constitutional autonomous bodies and public administration institutions, 2) Proactive transparency as the general rule of the system, 3) New obligations, including the disclosure of public officials’ information such as data on medical leave, statistical data on administrative permits, disciplinary procedures, and absenteeism, among others, 4) Publication in open and reusable data formats, 5) Mandatory use of the State Transparency Portal, and 6) Application of proactive transparency rules to public monopoly enterprises.

In this sense, although the current scenario appears to move toward measures that could strengthen data transparency and the functioning of the State, it remains essential to guarantee the active participation of civil society organisations in oversight, monitoring, and

accountability processes. Their involvement not only contributes to strengthening accountability but also helps ensure that institutional reforms and initiatives respond to democratic standards and to the needs of different social actors.

Likewise, it will be key to sustain advocacy, monitoring, and engagement efforts by civil society so that legislative initiatives relevant to strengthening the enabling environment continue to advance. This implies avoiding situations in which projects aimed at improving participation, transparency, and institutional conditions for organisations become stalled, and instead promoting regulatory frameworks that consolidate and deepen these advances.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

The [Convenios Case](#) continues to have repercussions for social organisations in Chile and their sustainability. In line with this, in January 2026 a new law came into force which, although its objective is to increase transparency and strengthen auditing processes—and thereby reactivate public funds—could also generate additional burdens for civil society and new barriers to accessing funding. This is [Law No. 21.769](#), which creates the [Government Internal Audit Service \(SAIG\)](#). The law establishes a risk-based financial oversight system and introduces a zero-trust approach toward actors responsible for executing public funds, including non-governmental organisations.

For the enabling environment of civil society, the appointment of [two lawyers](#) who led the defence of dictator Augusto Pinochet when he was detained in London has become a matter of concern. These are Fernando Rabat, who assumed the portfolio of Justice and Human Rights, and Fernando Barros, who will head the Ministry of Defence. More than 115 social organisations and associations of relatives of the disappeared and politically executed [signed a statement](#) opposing the appointment of Rabat and Barros, arguing that it constitutes “a direct offence to the memory of the victims of the dictatorship and their families.” “It represents a huge setback for the progress we have made on human rights,” stated [Alicia Lira, president of the Association of Relatives of the Politically Executed](#).

Regarding the preservation of civic memory and the condemnation of the events of the dictatorship, concern has also arisen over the loss of funding for several Museums and Sites of Memory. In November 2025, during the discussion of the national 2026 Budget, the Chilean Senate rejected funds intended for the operation and maintenance of sites such as the Corporation of Former Political Prisoners of Pisagua, the José Domingo Cañas Memory House, and the National Stadium Corporation. Following the backlash generated by this decision, the budget was reviewed by a [Mixed Commission that restored most of the resources](#), except those allocated to the Salvador Allende Foundation. Representatives from that institution argued that the decision [reflected political bias](#), as it was the only one of the three presidential foundations (Casa Museo Frei-Montalva and Fundación Patricio Aylwin) left without funding, just before the start of a government whose president has expressed particular sympathy for the government of former dictator Pinochet.

Regarding progress within civil society, an increase in funding for the Social Communication Media Promotion Fund (FFMCS) and the Public Interest Organisations Strengthening Fund (FFOIP) stands out. [According to government reports](#), between 2022 and 2025 the amount allocated through this fund increased by more than CLP 380 million, representing a cumulative increase of approximately 18.4%.

Overall, both progress and potential difficulties can be observed in relation to the administrative functioning and the broader context in which civil society organisations and the individuals participating in them operate. Within this framework, the protection of collective memory becomes a central issue, requiring the safeguarding of spaces dedicated to its preservation and ensuring the resources necessary for their operation and sustainability.

At the same time, civil society organisations are directly affected by the media coverage of corruption cases and by generalisations that tend to weaken their public image and question their work. In this context, it is essential to promote a constructive relationship with organisations that form part of the enabling environment, recognising and sustaining the value of their contributions as actors closely connected to citizens and to the diverse social groups that make up society.

4. State openness and responsiveness

[The Civil Society Councils \(COSOC\)](#) present within the ministries and services of the Government of Chile have made it possible to maintain dialogue with civil society organisations. Likewise, the reform of Law 20.500—of which these councils are a part—will allow participation to become more influential and binding, strengthening dialogue and enabling meaningful feedback that can enhance public policies. Meanwhile, meetings organised by different ministries continue in order to sustain civil society participation and carry out oversight processes. One example is the meetings held by the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Gloria de la Fuente, and the Undersecretary of International Economic Relations, Claudia Sanhueza, with [civil society organisations](#) to report on the progress made in the implementation of the Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP).

It should also be noted that civil society participation and relations with the government are not homogeneous across a territory that stretches for more than 4,000 kilometres. There are areas such as the Wallmapu (Mapuche territory, particularly in the southern part of the Biobío Region and the Araucanía Region) where [militarisation and broken dialogues](#) persist after three years under a Constitutional State of Emergency. These measures have particularly affected [rural Indigenous communities](#), and there has been no progress in restoring dialogue.

The State of Emergency will be handed over by the government of Gabriel Boric to the government of José Antonio Kast. The latter has indicated that there is agreement on maintaining the current measures: “*We discussed how to continue with the states of emergency in the Southern Macrozone, and we believe it is reasonable that this should continue,*” [he stated in conversations prior to his arrival at La Moneda Palace.](#)

In this context, deepening the participation of civil society in different spaces of public discussion is essential. The enabling environment maintains sustained relationships and a territorial presence that allow it to better understand the conditions in which diverse social actors live, as well as to identify problems and needs that are often not fully captured by state institutions.

For this reason, the continuity and strengthening of the Civil Society Councils (COSOC), together with the development of clearer and more effective citizen participation tools, constitute key mechanisms for expanding these spaces of influence. Proximity and dialogue between the State and the enabling environment cannot be secondary aspects; rather, they must be consolidated as a central component of the relationship between public institutions and citizens, with the aim of advancing policies and decisions that better respond to social needs.

5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

As mentioned in previous Snapshots and in the current one, the *Convenios Case* generated a narrative of distrust toward civil society organisations, resulting in the withdrawal of funding for their work and even negative repercussions for the sector. This situation has not yet been resolved, largely because a number of cases remain under lengthy judicial processes, which

has led to a [sensationalised media treatment](#) of the issue, focusing on images of the women involved rather than on the substance of the matter. At the same time, in the Biobío [region the tax-related branch](#) of the colloquially known “*Lingerie Case*” is still ongoing. This case involved the Fundación En Ti, Camila Polizzi, other defendants, and several former officials of the Regional Government of Biobío. Meanwhile, in the Metropolitan Region, in January 2026 the psychiatrist Alberto Larraín was formally charged, along with other individuals implicated in the [Procultura branch](#) of the investigation. In the Araucanía region, in January a former official of the Regional Government of Araucanía was placed in [pretrial detention](#), along with family members, for allegedly creating shell companies to win public procurement processes.

Although these cases are still under investigation, they already generate direct impacts on the trajectory and work carried out by civil society organisations. In this context, it is essential to reinforce recognition of the role that these entities play in advancing society, protecting rights, and promoting transformations aimed at building more just and inclusive environments.

For this reason, preserving the credibility of the enabling environment becomes particularly important in a context marked by disinformation and the circulation of manipulated content on social networks and digital media, which are often used to question or undermine the work of different social actors. Strengthening public trust in these organisations is key to sustaining their legitimacy and their capacity to contribute to public debate and democratic development.

6. Access to a secure digital environment

After the elections in Chile, the investigative journalism outlet Reportea revealed that the AFP Association, which groups together the main administrators of the private pension system in Chile, [spent at least USD 220,000 on Meta's social networks](#) (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) alone. This was done through payments to a foundation that coordinated messages in defence of the pension industry. Additionally, those behind this funding are also linked to financing troll accounts that were reported a few months ago for promoting a digital disinformation campaign accusing presidential candidate Evelyn Matthei of suffering from Alzheimer's.

Subsequently, the journalistic programme Informe Especial of Chile's National Television revealed that the Association of Pension Fund Administrators (AAFP) [spent over USD 17 million on advertising and consulting against the pension reform promoted by President Gabriel Boric in 2024](#). A large part of this money was used to invest in social media campaigns and to fund influencers close to the current President of the Republic, José Antonio Kast. Such situations create unequal access to information and to civic and democratic participation online, especially when they involve content creators, influencers, and individuals with high public profiles who receive resources to encourage disinformation.

This situation is concerning, particularly because the campaign of President Kast was based on the idea of a country ["falling apart"](#) or on the brink of collapse, where the economy is sinking, and where order needs to be restored. Although data contradict this narrative, the idea of a country in a state of emergency has taken over social media. In addition, after Kast took office on 11 March, the government's institutional social media accounts featured a pinned message stating, ["Chile is in a state of emergency; we are working for you."](#) which promotes a narrative of danger and confusion, especially in the digital space.

These issues are particularly significant because they create unequal conditions for those who seek to exercise their freedom of expression, yet have to contend with large networks of trolls and bots that drive harassment and disinformation in the digital sphere. The misuse of social media to incite conflict, enable online persecution, and reduce the diversity of voices and opinions makes the digital environment increasingly hostile, especially for those who do not share the views of those with greater resources or influence online.

It is therefore essential that civil society has access to safe spaces where individuals can freely express grievances and criticisms of governments or other institutions, without the constant fear of being targeted or attacked on social media.

Challenges and Opportunities

The new Government, together with the change in the political configuration of Congress, creates a scenario of uncertainty for CSOs (Civil Society Organisations). In the coming months, it will be important to observe how the implementation of Law 21.769 will unfold and how it may affect social organisations and the enabling environment. At the same time, it will be necessary to closely monitor certain alerts raised by civil society organisations working on SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights), particularly regarding the [possible withdrawal of funding for projects and support programmes aimed at ensuring the effective implementation](#) of the Three-Causal Abortion Law, the Anti-Discrimination Law, among others.

On the other hand, the final hours of President Gabriel Boric in office included the signing of a decree to protect Chilean seas, making Chile the third country in the world with the [largest area of protected ocean](#). The initiative was promoted by the community of Juan Fernández Island, whose artisanal fishers have sustainably managed lobster fishing for more than a century. The president of the Local Management Council of the protected marine areas, Julio Chamorro, stated: “*Since the early years of the colony our community already protected species and regulated its resources. Our generation was the one that took the step of protecting the sea as well.*” This milestone concludes a process that has spanned different administrations and consolidates Chile as a global leader in marine conservation.

Considering this scenario, the arrival of José Antonio Kast in government marks a new turning point for the enabling environment of civil society in Chile. The beginning of this administration opens a phase in which organisations will need to closely observe the political and institutional orientations adopted by the government, within a regional context where a gradual shift toward more conservative or right-wing positions can be observed in several Latin American countries.

In this context, the role of organisations within the enabling environment will be key to safeguarding the progress achieved in terms of participation, rights, and the strengthening of civil society. This will involve maintaining and expanding spaces for dialogue, monitoring, and public debate, helping to preserve favourable institutional conditions for the work of organisations while promoting improvements in the policies and mechanisms that guarantee their functioning and development.

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