



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Costa Rica

Country Focus Report 2026

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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



Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms



Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework



Accessible and Sustainable Resources



Open and Responsive State



Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society



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

Reporting period covered: October 2025 – June 2026

This report was prepared in a context of political and electoral transition. On [February 1, 2026, Costa Rica held national elections](#) following a campaign marked by tension, polarization, and public disillusionment. Although Article 132 of the Political Constitution prohibits consecutive presidential reelection, outgoing President Rodrigo Chaves remained a central figure in the contest. Laura Fernández, candidate of the Partido Pueblo Soberano (PPSO) and former chief of staff to Chaves, won the presidency in the first round on a platform of political continuity and a break with traditional party culture.

During the campaign, Fernández and the PPSO set a [goal of securing 40 of the 57](#) seats in the Legislative Assembly. That number would have enabled them to reach qualified majorities for decisions of particular significance, such as constitutional reforms and certain appointments or legislative agreements, with considerably less dependence on opposition parties. Although the PPSO did not reach that target, it won 31 seats and thereby secured an absolute majority in the Legislative Assembly. Consequently, the governing party must negotiate support from other caucuses to reach the 38 votes required for decisions that demand a two-thirds majority.

This scenario has heightened concerns regarding the concentration of power and the weakening of democratic checks and balances. Repeated [criticism by the governing party of the Judiciary](#) Branch and other oversight institutions have coincided with budgetary decisions that could affect their autonomy and operational capacity. In July 2026, [judicial authorities warned](#) that cuts to operating expenditures were compromising investigations, trials, and other essential services, and stated that underfunding could weaken the judiciary's role as a counterweight to the Executive Branch. These tensions are especially significant because judicial independence, adequate funding for the branches of government, and respect for institutional checks are essential conditions for preserving the separation of powers and the rule of law.

Political concerns are compounded by public anxiety over the growth of organized crime and the deterioration of public safety. Costa Rica, historically considered one of the safest countries in the region, has become an important transit point for international cocaine trafficking and recorded [873 homicides in 2025](#), the third-highest figure in the country's history. In response, the Rodrigo Chaves administration promoted a hard-line policy inspired by El Salvador's experience. In January 2026, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele was [invited to inaugurate a prison project](#) based on the CECOT mega-prison model, which has been

questioned internationally by human rights organizations because of allegations of torture, inhumane treatment, and violations of due process.

In November 2025, the Office of the Ombudsperson [presented a report](#) on the country's principal democratic and social setbacks. The document noted rising violence, reduced investment in health and education, an increase in femicides, and the persistence of discriminatory practices against women, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, LGBTIQ+ persons, migrants, persons with disabilities, and young people.

Overall, Costa Rica is experiencing a context characterized by greater polarization, the strengthening of the governing party in the Legislative Assembly, tensions among the branches of government, budgetary weakening of fundamental institutions, rising insecurity, and growing acceptance of punitive policies. These conditions test the strength of democratic institutions and directly affect civic space and the enabling environment for civil society organizations.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: ¹



1.1 Freedom of Association

In Costa Rica, the right to freedom of association is constitutionally guaranteed under [Article 25 of the Constitution](#), which recognizes the right of individuals to associate freely for lawful purposes. This provision underpins the work of thousands of civil society organizations (CSOs), community associations, cooperatives, and labor unions operating within the country's democratic framework.

Pursuant to [Article 5 of the Law on Associations](#) (Law No. 218 of August 8, 1939, as amended), Associations must be registered with the Registry of Associations, which is administered by the Ministry of Justice. In practice, however, many groups tend to operate without registration. Article 27 also clearly establishes that associations may not be dissolved administratively and may only be dissolved by judicial decision if requested by one third or more of the associates or any of the circumstances described in [Article 13](#) occur. These circumstances include situations in which the association no longer has enough eligible members to constitute its governing body, has achieved or can no longer legally or materially achieve the purpose for which it was created, becomes insolvent, substantially changes its purpose or legal nature, fails to renew its governing body within the legally established period, or is subject to a judicial dissolution sanction provided for by law.

Despite this legal framework, civic space in Costa Rica in 2026 reflects persistent challenges to freedom of association, particularly regarding the protection of individuals and groups

¹This is a rebased score derived from the [CIVICUS Monitor rating](#) published in December 2025.

involved in defending the public interest. Recent incidents illustrate the range of risks faced by human rights defenders and community leaders.

For example, on January 13, 2026, the Secretary of National Security reported that authorities were investigating an alleged plot to assassinate President Rodrigo Chaves. The National Intelligence and Security Directorate filed a [complaint against Stella Chinchilla](#), an activist known for criticizing the Government, over alleged communications with purported hitmen. [Chinchilla rejected the accusations](#), described them as politically motivated, and warned that their public dissemination had placed her and her family at risk. Several [civil society organizations](#) questioned the strength of the evidence, denounced the possible intimidating use of State institutions, and demanded respect for due process and the presumption of innocence.

Likewise, on International Women's Day, eleven environmental organizations demanded the effective [protection for women](#) environmental defenders, an end to their criminalization, and improved access to justice. This demonstrates that threats, gender-based violence, and criminalization can restrict women's participation in environmental collectives and movements and, in turn, limit their right to association.

1.2 Freedom of Assembly

Freedom of peaceful assembly is enshrined in [Article 26 of the Political Constitution](#). Historically, Costa Rica has maintained a tolerant environment toward demonstrations and public mobilization, even recognizing the right to strike in [Article 61 of the Political Constitution](#). Although the right to strike is primarily rooted in labor rights, in Costa Rica it has historically formed [part of a broader repertoire of civic and political mobilization](#). Teachers' unions and organizations, in particular, have played a significant role not only in defending the employment interests of their members, but also in mobilizing around major national issues, including public services, social rights, economic reforms, and other public policies. Research on the eighty-year political history of the [Asociación Nacional de Educadores y Educadoras \(ANDE\)](#) documents its involvement in causes extending beyond the education sector, including opposition to increases in [electricity tariffs](#), participation in the [movement against the Central America–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement](#) (CAFTA-DR), and broader struggles concerning the country's economic model and public institutions. In this context, restrictions on strike action do more than limit workers' ability to defend their employment interests: they constrain a historically important channel through which organized groups have participated in national debates, built broader social coalitions, and exerted collective pressure on public authorities.

However, one major constraint on freedom of peaceful assembly exists in the form of [Law No. 9808](#), the Law to Provide Legal Certainty regarding Strikes and Their Procedures, commonly known as the "Anti-Strike Law." This law declares political strikes illegal, limits strikes to a maximum of 48 hours when they affect workers' economic or social interests, and prohibits work stoppages in essential sectors such as health, education, security, and transportation. The [Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labour Organization](#) concluded that provisions of the Framework Law on Public Employment and the so-called Anti-Strike Law are contrary to ILO Conventions 87 and 98 and violate workers' rights to collective bargaining and to strike.

Even so, Costa Rica continues to have significant activity by labor, student, feminist, community, environmental, and LGBTIQ+ movements. The most relevant cases include [marches over wages, pensions and education funding](#), [municipal strikes](#), [university protests](#) concerning the [Special Fund for Higher Education](#) (FEES) and [scholarships](#), the [March 8](#) demonstration in commemoration of International Women's Day, the [Pride March](#), [Labor Day](#) and [community mobilizations over public services](#).

These cases show that the right of assembly continues to be exercised in Costa Rica, although legal restrictions, police interventions, arrests, prolonged judicial proceedings, and administrative decisions persist that may discourage or restrict peaceful protest. This is evident in cases such as the Government's warning that it would not permit protests near the National Stadium during the May 8 transfer of power and would [deploy approximately 800 officers](#). On that day, the Public Force did in fact [intervene in protests held near the National Stadium](#) in support of Palestine and against the visit of the President of Israel. Images circulated publicly showed police action against demonstrators, characterized as abuse of authority by the victims.

In addition, in June 2026 the trial began against [three activists arrested during a September 2023 march against police violence](#). According to the defendants, the arrests were arbitrary and audiovisual evidence contradicted the charges brought against them. Several human rights organizations organized solidarity gatherings outside the courts and warned that the case reflected the possible criminalization of social protest and an increase in repressive responses to public demonstrations.

1.3 Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are protected under [Articles 28 and 29 of the Political Constitution of Costa Rica](#). These provisions recognize every person's right to communicate opinions freely, without prior censorship, provided that the exercise of this right does not violate the law, and establish subsequent liability for abuses that may be committed.

Despite this constitutional protection, between 2022 and 2026 Costa Rica experienced a sustained deterioration in the conditions for exercising freedom of expression and freedom of the press. According to the 2026 [World Press Freedom Index](#), the country fell from eighth place in 2022 to 38th place in 2026, its lowest position in the past two decades. This consecutive decline demonstrates an increasingly complex environment for journalistic work and critical expression.

The [Fourth Report on Freedom of Expression and Journalism in Central America](#) warns that Costa Rica is beginning to reproduce some of the pressure mechanisms observed in other countries in the region. These include stigmatizing [discourse against the press](#), [coordinated attacks on social media](#), the judicialization of journalists and media workers, and economic and administrative decisions that particularly affect critical or independent media outlets. Various publications also indicate that [self-censorship](#) has become a strategy used by some media workers to reduce personal, employment-related, and [professional risks](#).

Another troubling factor is the use of legal proceedings against individuals who criticize public officials. The [Colegio de Periodistas y Profesionales en Ciencias de la Comunicación Colectiva](#) warned that criminal complaints and civil actions may operate as strategic lawsuits against public participation, known as SLAPPs, by creating financial, personal, and professional burdens and producing a chilling effect on freedom of expression. Cases cited by COLPER include [journalist Marlon Mora Jiménez](#), who would reportedly face a third trial and a monetary claim exceeding ₡70 million, and Limón-based media worker Juan García Martínez, who was sued by Mayor Ana Matarrita McCalla over criticism expressed on his radio program. These actions can foster self-censorship, especially among regional media outlets with fewer resources to bear the cost of a prolonged legal defense.

A similar case involved [environmental activist Juan Bautista Alfaro](#), known as Juamba, who faced a criminal complaint and civil action filed by a development company because of his reports concerning a tourism project in Playa Panamá. In August 2025, a court ordered his accounts frozen as a precautionary measure, although he was subsequently acquitted in June

2026. The case was identified as an example of an intimidating lawsuit capable of discouraging public reporting, community participation, and collective environmental defense.

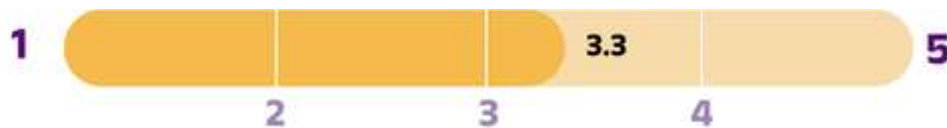
By contrast, relevant advances were also recorded during the period. In March 2026, the Legislative Assembly approved the [repeal of Articles 7 and 8](#) of the 1902 [Printing Press Law](#), which provided prison sentences for offenses against honor committed through the press. The reform eliminated provisions considered incompatible with the American Convention on Human Rights and reduced their potential chilling effect on journalism, although [journalism experts](#) noted that other regulatory challenges still remain to fully guarantee freedom of expression.

Also noteworthy is a [Constitutional Chamber](#) ruling issued in November 2025 and made public in February 2026, which determined that students' booing of a governing-party legislator at the National University constituted a legitimate exercise of freedom of expression. This decision demonstrates that judicial oversight mechanisms continue to provide protection against attempts to restrict political expression that is critical, uncomfortable, or contrary to public authorities.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



2.1 Registration

Costa Rica has a legal framework that generally supports the creation and registration of civil society organizations (CSOs). [Law on Associations No. 218](#) regulates the procedure for establishing associations with legal personality. Likewise, [Law on Foundations No. 5338](#) recognizes the possibility of establishing private nonprofit foundations with their own legal personality. Consequently, from a regulatory standpoint, there is no general prohibition preventing people from organizing, nor are there restrictions directed at particular groups seeking to establish an organization.

Positive elements of the Costa Rican system were identified. First, there is clear regulation of the legal forms available to nonprofit organizations and a formal procedure for obtaining legal personality through registration with the National Registry. In addition, the legal system provides [appeal mechanisms](#) when a registration application is denied, which constitutes a safeguard of administrative due process. In general terms, the country provides a solid legal foundation for the exercise of freedom of association and for the legal recognition of civil society organizations.

Nevertheless, the framework for registration is not fully enabling because administrative practice reveals significant access barriers. Although the registration procedure is governed by [Law on Associations No. 218](#) and its Regulations, the process is often described as bureaucratic, slow, and complex, especially for small, community-based, or rural organizations. During the discussions, it was noted that the lack of institutional guidance, the use of technical language, the need to use a digital signature, and difficulties with electronic platforms create obstacles that do not affect all organizations equally.

A particularly relevant issue is that, although the legislation does not expressly require hiring an attorney for every stage of the procedure, in practice many organizations ultimately require

the professional services of attorneys or notaries to properly comply with registration requirements. This significantly increases the cost of incorporation and represents an economic barrier for organizations made up of people with limited resources, excluding certain sectors. Other expenses established by law must also be considered, such as stamp duties, registration fees, and publication of the corresponding notice in La Gaceta, in addition to the legal requirement that an association have at least ten founding members.

For community-based, rural, or newly established organizations, these costs constitute an entry barrier that makes it difficult to obtain legal personality and limits their ability to open and manage bank accounts, access funding, enter into agreements, or carry out projects. It may be required to assume notarial, registration, and professional advisory costs, which create a practical inequality between organizations with greater financial capacity and those that depend exclusively on volunteer work.

Other problems related to the administrative practices of the National Registry are noted differences in criteria among registrars, resulting in repeated requests for corrections, duplicated procedures, and considerable delays. Although the legal system provides administrative remedies against denials or requests for correction, practical experience shows that these mechanisms may take several months or even more than a year, affecting the operational continuity of organizations.

In the case of foundations, there are additional requirements arising from [Law on Foundations No. 5338](#) and the [Regulations to Article 11](#) of that law, particularly the participation of representatives of the Executive Branch and local governments, as well as the link between the procedure and the foundation's registered domicile. Although these requirements seek to strengthen institutional oversight, they may also increase administrative complexity for organizations whose scope of action is national.

Finally, these difficulties have a more intense impact on historically discriminated groups or organizations with weaker institutional capacities. The lack of technical advice, difficulties in accessing professional services, and experiences of inconsistent institutional treatment may discourage the formalization of organizations belonging or representing vulnerable or traditionally marginalized populations, including community-based, rural, Indigenous, and LGBTIQ+ organizations.

Consequently, although Costa Rica's legal framework broadly guarantees [freedom of association](#) and permits the [establishment of civil society organizations](#), existing economic and administrative barriers prevent the process from being considered fully accessible to everyone.

2.2 Operating Environment

Costa Rica has a legal framework that recognizes the [autonomy of civil society organizations](#) but, in practice, imposes administrative, tax, and compliance burdens that hinder their operation, especially for small, community-based, rural organizations or those largely composed of volunteers. Although articles 5 and 7 of Law No. 218 recognize the statutes as the basic framework governing and association and allow associations to define key aspects of their internal structure and carry out their activities, the set of obligations arising after incorporation creates an operating environment that is only partially enabling.

The law does not require prior State authorization for organizations to define their agendas, objectives, or internal governance structures. Associations may [elect their boards of directors](#), [hold assemblies](#), and adopt their own decisions in accordance with their bylaws. Another

important safeguard is provided by Article 27 of Law No. 218, which establishes that the [judicial authority is the only authority competent](#) to order the dissolution of an association before the expiration of its natural term, on the grounds established by law. This prevents the Executive Branch from unilaterally ordering the dissolution of an association and constitutes an important safeguard for organizational autonomy.

However, formal autonomy does not eliminate the administrative burdens that CSOs must address to maintain their operations. Their principal obligations include [holding ordinary assemblies, submitting internal reports](#), complying with tax obligations, and maintaining accounting records. Although these requirements pursue legitimate transparency and oversight objectives, the experts noted that they are especially burdensome for organizations with limited resources that do not have permanent administrative staff or the capacity to hire professional advisers.

One of the principal examples mentioned was the [Registry of Transparency and Ultimate Beneficial Owners](#) (RTBF), through which legal entities must report information on their ultimate beneficial owners to the Tax Administration and the Central Bank of Costa Rica. Although this mechanism responds to international standards for preventing money laundering and terrorist financing, compliance with it is considered a disproportionate burden for many CSOs. Small organizations must devote time, financial resources, and technical capacity to administrative obligations that, in many cases, are removed from their primary mission and absorb efforts that should be directed toward social or community projects.

Other obligations that increase operating burdens are monthly tax returns, compliance with obligations before the Costa Rican Social Security Fund when applicable, occupational risk insurance, banking controls, and obligations arising from financial regulations. In addition, these requirements are often accompanied by possible financial penalties in the event of noncompliance, forcing organizations to frequently rely on accounting services or specialized legal advice. Consequently, regulatory compliance entails a permanent financial requirement that constitutes a barrier for organizations operating primarily through volunteer work and limited budgets.

Consequently, Costa Rica's operating environment is only partially enabling. Although CSOs may freely define their governance structure, objectives, and activities without prior State authorization, the multiple administrative, tax, financial, and compliance obligations create significant burdens for their daily operations. These burdens disproportionately affect small, community-based, Indigenous, and rural organizations, as well as organizations composed of historically discriminated populations, which have fewer resources to meet the financial and technical costs associated with regulatory compliance.

2.3 Protection from Interference

Costa Rica has a legal framework that provides important safeguards to protect civil society organizations (CSOs) from arbitrary dissolution and recognizes mechanisms to preserve their autonomy. One of the principal positive aspects identified is that, under [Law on Associations No. 218](#), early dissolution may only be ordered by a [judicial authority](#) and on [grounds provided by law](#), preventing the Executive Branch from closing an organization at its discretion for political or administrative reasons.

This constitutes a relevant safeguard of due process and legal certainty for CSOs. The legal system also provides judicial protection mechanisms when an organization considers that its fundamental rights have been violated. Organizations may file constitutional remedies, such as an amparo action (an appeal for protection of constitutional rights) before the Constitutional

Chamber, to challenge administrative actions that affect their operations or limit the exercise of freedom of association.

Nevertheless, it is considered that the principal current threats to CSO autonomy do not arise from formal dissolution proceedings, but from subtler mechanisms of intervention and indirect forms of interference, such as administrative pressure, excessive inspections, disproportionate bureaucratic burdens, or differential treatment by public institutions.

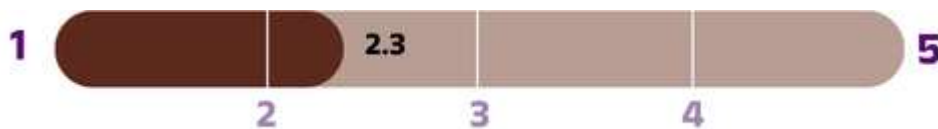
One example shared during the expert panel involved a foundation which has been subject to more rigorous oversight due to having the name of a national political figure. These heightened requirements can interfere with an organization's operational capacity by increasing administrative burdens, requiring additional legal and accounting support, delaying financial procedures, and diverting limited human and financial resources away from its substantive activities. Among other measures, it has been required to provide more extensive accountability and submit to stricter controls over its income and expenditures. This situation could also affect other organizations that maintain a critical position toward Government actions, a trend that has increased in the region, as seen in [Nicaragua](#) and [El Salvador](#).

The panel also argued that there is still no general law protecting human rights defenders, as exists in countries such as Mexico and Colombia, nor a policy promoting CSOs, as exists in Honduras and the Dominican Republic. This is compounded by the absence of an anti-SLAPP as mentioned previously under section 1.3. These regulatory gaps leave CSOs increasingly exposed to intimidation and arbitrary interference by third parties.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



3.1 Accessibility of Resources

Access to resources for civil society organizations in Costa Rica is increasingly limited and competitive. One reason is that the World Bank classifies the [country as high-income](#) since 2025, meaning that it is no longer a priority for most international cooperation programs. This classification ultimately “penalizes” organizations, because the country is treated as though all its organizations have substantial financial capacity, which may translate into higher membership fees, exclusion from calls for proposals, or lower priority for international funding. The change in the country’s status has led to fewer calls for proposals and less available funding, as well as a transition from viewing Costa Rica as a recipient country toward expecting it to act instead as a cooperating or contributing country.

This status is also associated with reduced access to official development assistance, concessional funding, and preferential treatment. Although some international funding opportunities still exist, effective access to them is unequal, and organizations with limited technical or administrative capacity in project formulation, donor relations, financial management, English-language proficiency, and related areas are at a disadvantage compared with those that have robust technical teams.

Along the same lines, according to the experts the opportunities are becoming fewer or more concentrated. Platforms exist where calls for proposals are posted, but the opportunities are limited, available only in English, and highly competitive. Consequently, only organizations with established networks or direct contacts receive information in time, while rural, community-based, or smaller CSOs frequently remain unaware of existing opportunities. In addition, some calls require capacities, resources, or procedures that many small organizations do not have or do not know how to develop. Such requirements include providing financial or in-kind counterpart contributions and preparing and implementing internal policies on transparency, gender equality, protection of minors, environmental sustainability, prevention of conflicts of interest, and other matters whose requirements vary among donors.

High technical requirements limit groups that lack solid structures for preparing proposals, developing budgets, meeting administrative requirements, or sustaining accountability

processes. These difficulties show that the problem lies not only in the existence of funding, but also in organizations' actual capacity to compete for it.

A positive aspect is that Costa Rica does not have a Foreign Agents Law like those in El [Salvador](#) and [Nicaragua](#), where funds from international cooperation may be subject to levies of up to 30 percent. In Costa Rica, the Income [Tax Law](#) establishes that associations and foundations engaging in profit-making activities must pay tax only on the portion of income generated through those activities. Therefore, international cooperation funds intended for project implementation and fulfillment of the organization's purposes are not subject, because of their foreign origin, to an additional specific tax, allowing a greater share of resources to be used for planned activities. specific tax, allowing a greater share of resources to be used for planned activities.

At the national level, State funding mechanisms and certain tax exemptions are available to CSOs. One example is [Puntos de Cultura](#), a competitive grant program administered by the Ministry of Culture and Youth through the Directorate of Sociocultural Management. The program provides public funding to civil society organizations whose sociocultural work has an impact on communities, particularly through projects that promote cultural participation, community organization, local identity, and social inclusion. Other public competitive funds also exist in the cultural sector, including programs such as [Becas Taller](#) and [PROARTES](#).

CSOs may also benefit from certain tax provisions. Under Article 3 of [Law No. 7092](#) (Income Tax Law), trade unions and foundations, as well as associations declared of public utility by the Executive, are not subject to income tax provided that their income and assets are used entirely and exclusively for public or charitable purposes and are not distributed, directly or indirectly, among their members. This treatment does not apply automatically to all associations. However, according to the experts consulted, their application is often complex, unequal, and conditioned by strict and discretionary bureaucratic requirements. Access to public funds is limited not only by varied eligibility criteria, but also by the need for multiple declarations of suitability, updated registrations, and compliance with detailed administrative rules that many organizations find difficult to meet because they are highly restrictive.

Although all organizations may receive donations, one way to encourage such contributions is to allow [donor companies to deduct a portion of them from income tax](#). For this benefit to apply, the recipient organization must obtain authorization from the General Directorate of Taxation of the Ministry of Finance and comply with a series of legal, tax, administrative, and documentary requirements. In practice, this procedure can be bureaucratic and difficult to complete. Some experts also noted that application of the requirements may vary according to the judgment of the official handling the request, generating uncertainty, possible obstacles, and a perception of discretion. This is compounded by the absence of a sufficiently strong philanthropic culture and of simple, accessible incentives that encourage recurring donations to civil society organizations.

In addition, the rules as [Resolution DGT-R-03-2022](#) allow the Tax Administration to conduct inspections and verifications regarding the use of authorized donations and provide for suspension of the benefit in cases of misuse. This reinforces the need for accounting, legal, and administrative capacities that many grassroots organizations do not possess, meaning that the tax incentive does not always translate into real and straightforward access to tax-deductible donations from individuals or legal entities.

Significant difficulties were also identified in relations with banks and other financial service providers. Banks have numerous policies and requirements, while commercial banking is not an accessible channel for many organizations because its products are designed for businesses or individuals with regular income, guarantees, and predictable cash flows. For grassroots organizations operating through volunteer work, variable donations, and non-reimbursable project funds, these requirements do not fit their reality. In addition, compliance obligations related to preventing money laundering and terrorist financing can make opening, maintaining, or using bank accounts more complex.

Within the country, non-reimbursable seed funding may be available, but it is generally limited to particular themes, small amounts, or models oriented toward individual entrepreneurship, while civil society organizations work through collective dynamics and pursue advocacy or community service objectives. In the view of the expert panel, Costa Rican organizations do not have public support options comparable to those in countries where annual funds are allocated for civil society organizations to pursue their objectives. As an example, panelists [determined that feminist organizations](#), organizations defending the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community, or organizations of persons with disabilities do not benefit from a strong public policy of direct funding for organizations devoted to human rights, gender equality, and related issues. These organizations depend mainly on international cooperation, private donations, and their own resources.

3.2 Effectiveness of Resources

Although some sources of funding exist for civil society organizations in Costa Rica, available resources are not always sufficiently flexible, sustained, or aligned with organizations' actual priorities. Funding is usually conditioned by donor agendas, limited to specific projects, and oriented toward discrete results or activities rather than toward institutional strengthening of civil society organizations. As a result, resources may enable the implementation of specific actions, but do not necessarily strengthen organizational autonomy, institutional capacity, or continuity of civil society work.

Experts from civil society organizations note that relationships with donors have improved compared with previous years. Some criticisms previously raised with donors have had positive effects, as there is now greater dialogue and openness. However, barriers remain. For example, some calls do not allow organizations to submit repeated proposals in the same area, even when the social need continues. This creates an important tension: organizations may have a clear understanding of their community, territorial, or population priorities, but are forced to reformulate them to fit what the call for proposals is willing to fund.

The issue has become a shared concern among the experts participating in the panel: available funding does not always begin with local needs or the strategic planning of civil society organizations, but rather with externally defined priorities. As a result, organizations may be compelled to adapt their language, outputs, activities, and even part of their agenda in order to access resources, thereby reducing their operational autonomy.

Another problem is the rigidity of funds. Civil society organizations may need to quickly adapt their advocacy strategies in response to political, legislative, or regulatory changes. For example, an organization may move from providing technical support for a bill to having to defend an executive decree, responding to pressure from commercial industries affected by proposed regulations (such as the [tobacco](#), alcohol, or food industries), or produce evidence for an urgent public debate. However, when funds are tied to rigid activities, outputs, or schedules, the organization cannot always redirect resources toward emerging contextual needs. This constitutes a barrier to resource effectiveness, because available funds do not always adapt to the actual ways social and community movements organize or to their needs.

This is related to donors' limited capacity to respond to the security risks, pressures, or potential harms faced by organizations. The experts panel state that donors do not appear to devote sufficient attention to civil society organizations' security concerns or to mitigating risks associated with advocacy work. This is relevant because many organizations work on sensitive issues, such as corruption, human rights, the environment, public health, gender equality, sexual diversity, or oversight of public administration. In this context, they may [face attacks, stigmatization](#), institutional pressure, or reputational risks. If funding does not include protection measures, legal support, strategic communications, or organizational care mechanisms, its effectiveness is reduced.

In a regional and national environment marked by [setbacks in human rights](#), project rigidity represents a concrete problem. Governments and actors opposed to these rights have

promoted restrictions and narratives affecting the work of these organizations. In this context, resources are less effective when they do not enable organizations to respond rapidly to adverse events or [emerging risks](#).

In general terms, available resources may be adequate for implementing specific projects, but do not always allow civil society organizations to pursue their objectives effectively and autonomously. Funds are commonly directed toward specific activities, with short timeframes, restricted budgets, limited coverage of operating costs, little flexibility for adjustments, and insufficient support for institutional strengthening. In addition, donors do not always sufficiently incorporate concerns related to security, organizational burnout, protection, or the sustainability of organizations working on sensitive issues.

3.3 Sustainability of Resources

The expert panel observes that the financial sustainability of civil society organizations in Costa Rica is weak, unpredictable, and highly dependent on specific projects, temporary calls for proposals, volunteer work, and self-generated income activities. Although some organizations succeed in implementing concrete projects, most face significant difficulties in sustaining permanent operations, retaining staff, planning for the long term, and consolidating their own institutional capacities.

A major problem faced by civil society organizations is that available funding is usually project-based and short-term, generally lasting between six and twelve months, rather than structural or core funding. Sustainability is negatively affected by the nature of these projects, because many have timeframes that are too short to sustain processes over time, undermining institutional continuity and the ability to hire and retain staff.

For the organizations participating in the expert panel this short-term project funding model creates gaps between contracting and implementation cycles. When one grant ends and the next has not yet been approved, organizations are left [without resources to cover salaries](#), professional services, rent, communications, accounting, transportation, community follow-up, or systematization of results. These gaps can lead to the loss of human talent and institutional memory, as trained personnel move to other workplaces when the organization cannot guarantee continuity. This situation weakens the ability of civil society organizations to sustain technical and advocacy processes in the medium and long term.

Funding also rarely covers basic operating costs. Although some calls fund specific activities, workshops, research, campaigns, or products, they often do not allow coverage of essential expenses for the stable functioning of an organization, such as administrative staff, legal advice, accounting, institutional communications, leadership development, monitoring, evaluation, or strategic planning. As a result, organizations may be able to carry out a specific activity but not necessarily consolidate institutionally.

The expert panel points out that associations and foundations require contacts, technical capacities, and funding to generate income or access resources, but funds are not always available to develop those institutional capacities. This reveals a difficult cycle to break: professional capacities are needed to access funding, but resources are also required to build those capacities, something many organizations lack.

The problem may be described as a “vicious cycle.” The search for resources exhausts staff, and organizations need support to identify opportunities, prepare proposals, and generate alternatives for financial self-sufficiency. Information platforms, advisers, and support services for these processes exist, but many are fee-based. This means that even searching for funding requires prior resources, placing small, community-based, or volunteer-supported organizations at a disadvantage.

The expert panel notes that many organizations manage to remain active through their own initiatives, but these generally generate minimal income. They organize raffles, sales, events,

paid courses and workshops, symbolic membership fees, or community activities that can help address immediate needs. These strategies demonstrate organizational resilience, but do not constitute a sufficient or stable financial base for continuous operation.

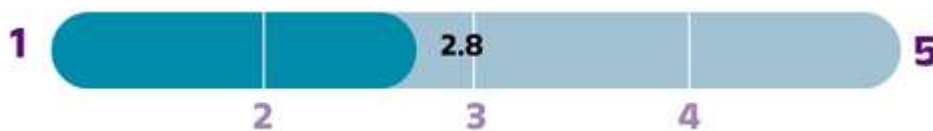
Dependence on volunteer work is considered fundamental to organizational sustainability, although it is insufficient and vulnerable to people's availability. Volunteers play a central role in organizational life, but it must also be recognized that they cannot indefinitely replace the need for permanent administrative and professional staff. When an organization depends almost entirely on volunteer work, its response capacity is conditioned by the time, energy, and personal resources available to its members.

Likewise, dependence on a single funding source or unpredictable sources increases organizational vulnerability. When an organization depends on one call for proposals, a specific donor, or a temporary project, any delay, change in priorities, budget cut, or closure of the fund can interrupt entire programs. This dependence limits strategic planning, reduces the ability to retain personnel, and forces organizations to remain in a constant search for resources.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



4.1 Transparency

Costa Rica has a solid legal framework regarding access to public information and transparency. At the constitutional level, [Article 30 of the Political Constitution](#) guarantees free access to administrative offices for the purpose of obtaining information on matters of public interest, except for State secrets. This recognition has historically been reinforced by the case law of the Constitutional Chamber.

Costa Rica also adopted the Framework [Law on Access to Public Information, Law No. 10554](#), which establishes principles and obligations intended to guarantee access to public information and strengthen government transparency. The country also adopted the [Law to Promote Transparency in the Provision of Information in the Public Sector](#), whose purpose is to strengthen the publication and provision of information by public institutions. The adoption of the latter law is considered an important step toward consolidating strong constitutional case law, a fundamental instrument for promoting an open State. Procedures are clear, and the legislation provides for proactive and accessible disclosure of information through digital platforms.

Despite these regulatory advances, the regulations implementing the Framework Law on Access to Public Information, Law No. 10554, have remained pending since May 1, 2025. This is the case even though, in [Decision 2026011637 of March 27, 2026](#), the Constitutional Chamber gave the Executive Branch two months to issue them, a judicial requirement that has also not been met. In addition, institutional practice continues to present important limitations. Although legislation currently in force supports organizations, searching for information can be very difficult in practice, especially for individuals or organizations with limited knowledge of digital or technological tools. According to the experts, the complexity of the processes and the manner in which public information is organized area genuine barrier.

Similarly, although the application process is generally free of charge, searching for information is often burdensome. Organizations frequently have to go through lengthy procedures to obtain the information they actually need. This shows that the problem lies not only in the absence of information, but also in the difficulty of locating, understanding, requesting, and receiving it in a timely manner. This delays and obstructs CSO advocacy, their ability to oversee public policies, develop evidence-based proposals, and participate in an informed manner.

Organizations dedicated to monitoring and following up on public policies also frequently have to submit repeated information requests or even file, or warn that they will file, amparo actions in order to obtain complete responses concerning consultation processes, regulations, or executive decrees. Despite the existence of adequate legislation, the recurrent need to resort to the Constitutional Chamber demonstrates that many institutions respond only after a judicial ruling, rather than promptly from the outset. In this regard, [it is estimated that approximately 3,000 amparo actions](#) concerning requests for information are filed each year.

The Constitutional Chamber has recently heard cases involving violations of the right of access to public information. Through [Judgment 2026-011637](#), the Chamber granted an amparo action filed by environmental attorney Álvaro Sagot Rodríguez and ordered the Executive Branch to issue regulations for the Framework Law on Access to Public Information within [a maximum period of two months](#). In June 2026, the Chamber also declared unconstitutional a rule that allowed the University Council of the [University of Costa Rica to hold portions of meetings “off the record”](#), without broadcast or a complete record. [Judgment 2026-022271](#) determined that this practice violated the right of access to public information, as well as the principles of transparency, publicity, and accountability. Although the Constitutional Chamber protects access-to-information rights, it is significant for the civic environment that effective access to public information still requires judicial intervention in some cases.

The country may have favorable laws, but their application depends on the responsible public officials. Some institutions demand more requirements than those established in the regulations, centralize the receipt of requests, and create what the experts described as a genuine “administrative maze” in which submissions can become lost. Institutional authorities often never even learn about complaints or requests because they are channeled through a single administrative route.

From a gender and inclusion perspective, the problem is not merely whether information exists, but whether it is useful for identifying inequalities. There is still a lack of robust official data on the situation of the LGBTIQ+ population and, more broadly, insufficient information disaggregated by sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, territory, disability, and ethnic background. This gap limits the ability of relevant organizations to monitor public policies, identify disparities, evaluate results, and formulate evidence-based proposals.

Another limitation identified under this principle is the absence of full transparency and sufficient access to information because information is not available in Indigenous languages and is therefore inaccessible to these populations. This reinforces concerns about the gap between the legal framework and the actual experience of Indigenous individuals and organizations attempting to access public information.

4.2 Participation

Costa Rica has relevant institutional experience in open government and formal mechanisms for citizen participation and public consultation. The country is a member of the Open Government Partnership, and its [2023-2027 Action Plan](#) includes commitments related to transparency, participation, and institutional co-creation. The Open Government Partnership notes that this plan is the first co-creation effort developed under the National Open State Commission (CNEA) and includes participation by the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial

Branches. This framework demonstrates the existence of formal channels and commitments aimed at promoting a more open and responsive State.

However, the existence of formal spaces does not guarantee genuine and effective participation. The CNEA has not met since early May 2026, according to Jimmy Bolaños González, a civil society member of the CNEA., and the new Government transferred it to [Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica](#) (MIDEPLAN) through [Decree No. 45.808](#) of June 2, 2026. In any event, participation in the various forums is generally consultative and the main concern lies not in its non-binding nature, but in the extent to which participation is meaningful and inclusive. Not all sectors are included, and consultations tend to be superficial, without necessarily entailing genuine consideration of the contributions received. This shows that although civil society organizations may be invited to participate, their contributions are not always taken into account in public policymaking.

This must also be reviewed in context, because these participation mechanisms operate alongside a more confrontational relationship between the Executive Branch and some critical sectors of civil society and consultation processes that, in practice, are unequal or merely formal. One of the principal problems is that consultations are often conducted at late stages of decision-making. In many cases, decrees, regulations, or decisions have already been drafted when the consultation opens, demonstrating that these mechanisms do not provide a genuine opportunity to influence the content of the decision. This limitation especially affects civil society organizations that contribute technical evidence, community proposals, or specialized knowledge, because their observations arrive when the room for modification is very limited.

There is also a marked asymmetry in the influence of different actors. In certain technical forums, such as those related to [front-of-package nutrition warning labels](#), the interests and criteria of business and industry chambers appear to receive greater openness and political weight from decisionmakers than contributions from civil society and academia. This difference creates unequal conditions of participation between actors with [greater advocacy capacity](#) and [civil society organizations](#).

The experts also noted that, although consultation spaces exist, it is not easy to know when a consultation opens or how to participate. Prior knowledge of available channels is required, and State institutions do not always broadly publish or publicize that a particular document is under consultation. Nor is there a single website where the public can obtain this information.

There are numerous consultation spaces, but almost no follow-up to measure the actual impact of contributions on final decisions. In other words, a consultation may formally exist but lose its meaning if organizations do not know whether their contributions were considered, rejected, or partially incorporated. The absence of follow-up mechanisms also weakens civil society's trust in participatory processes.

The panel's experience also points to a specific concern: although opportunities for cooperation and participation exist, not all organizations participate on equal terms. Organizations with a longer institutional track record, paid staff, established political networks, and a presence in San José are more likely to be invited or to learn of opportunities in time. By contrast, grassroots community, territorial, Indigenous, rural, feminist, and LGBTIQ+ collectives face concrete barriers, including lack of timely information, scarce resources to attend participation spaces, dependence on volunteer work, inaccessible schedules, technical language, and limited capacity to sustain lengthy consultation and participation processes.

This inequality deepens in polarized contexts involving issues such as gender equality, sexuality education, reproductive rights, or the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons. Some organizations perceive a [reduction in spaces for dialogue](#) or less institutional receptiveness to their recommendations. Participation cannot be considered meaningful if it does not include all sectors, especially those facing vulnerability or systemic discrimination. In this regard, representation and diversity within civil society are necessary conditions for legitimate participatory processes.

Barriers associated with participation modalities were also identified. The expansion of virtual consultations since the pandemic may have broadened geographic coverage and reduced some travel costs. However, by itself it does not resolve inequalities in access, because some individuals and organizations continue to face obstacles such as irregular connectivity, digital divides, lack of technical training, inaccessible schedules, short deadlines, and institutional language that is difficult to understand. For this reason, online participation options are not always effective or inclusive.

4.3 Accountability

In practice, accountability is often limited to institutional reports, general communications, or presentations of activities performed, without adequately explaining the impact that policies or actions have on people and their quality of life.

The Law to Improve Accountability, [Law No. 9398](#), requires ministerial authorities, decentralized entities, and bodies with maximum administrative deconcentration to prepare, publish, and disseminate an annual written report on the management of institutions under their responsibility. This framework is important because it recognizes the State's obligation to report on its management and allows the public to learn, at least in general terms, about actions carried out by public institutions. However, it should be noted that the law lacks implementing regulations.

The Framework Law on Access to Public Information, [Law No. 10554](#), also includes among institutional obligations the promotion of accountability mechanisms in accordance with Law No. 9398. In addition, institutions such as the Comptroller General of the Republic, the Office of the Ombudsperson, and the Constitutional Chamber provide formal channels to oversee State action, report noncompliance, or demand the protection of rights.

However, these general mechanisms do not [amount to effective accountability](#). Rather than genuine accountability processes, what often exists are general reports published on institutional websites. There are no formal institutional platforms devoted to tracking how civil society contributions are used. The Government and the Legislative Assembly rarely provide a technical justification or detailed matrix explaining why proposals submitted by civil society organizations were accepted or rejected. Records of participatory processes are also published only sporadically, preventing systematic and transparent follow-up.

Public explanations and public knowledge of accountability processes remain deficient. Although reports, broadcasts, and formal disclosure mechanisms exist, they do not always make it possible to clearly assess the results of public administration, identify responsibilities, or understand the reasons behind government decisions. This is compounded by a highly centralized [digital communications strategy](#) centered on the presidential figure and official broadcasts, capable of setting the agenda and widely disseminating a government interpretation of reality.

At the municipal level, the [Municipal Code](#) establishes annual accountability obligations linked to the mayor's government plan. However, these mechanisms could be strengthened by incorporating more specific information on citizen participation, consultations with civil society organizations, resources allocated to strengthen such organizations, and concrete results of participatory processes. This is relevant because many organizations work at the local level and depend on municipal decisions to implement projects, access public spaces, or participate in territorial policies.

Regarding the Indigenous population, it is not always clear that institutional information, response, and accountability mechanisms are effective or culturally appropriate. A recent example is the case of [the Alto Coen Indigenous community](#), whose residents requested in September 2025 that the State correct a territorial boundary that placed them under Cabécar jurisdiction, even though they identify as part of the Bribri people through their language, culture, spirituality, and forms of organization. The community reported that it had sent

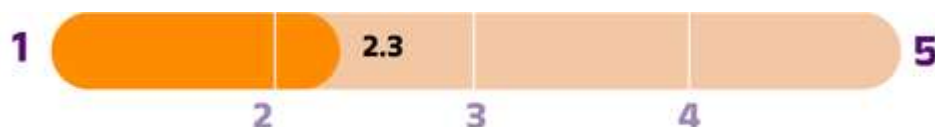
numerous communications to different institutions without receiving a solution and that territorial decisions had been made without adequate consultation.

As additional regulatory support for Indigenous peoples, the Law on Access to Justice for Indigenous Peoples, [Law No. 9593](#), expressly recognizes the right of Indigenous persons to receive information in their mother tongue and requires interpreters and translators to be provided when necessary. Although this law refers to the judicial sphere, it establishes a useful standard for evaluating any State information and accountability process: it is not enough for information to exist; it must be understandable and accessible to its intended population. This standard is not always met.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



5.1 Public Discourse and Constructive Dialogue on Civil Society

In the expert panel's view, public discourse on civil society in Costa Rica has become more polarized, confrontational, and, in some cases, openly delegitimizing toward organizations that oversee public power, defend human rights, promote environmental agendas, work with historically discriminated populations, or contribute technical evidence to public policy debates. Although Costa Rica maintains a democratic tradition and some sectors recognize the role of civil society organizations, the current discursive environment limits opportunities for respectful, inclusive, and evidence-based dialogue.

Public discourse tends to have a chilling effect: some political leaders present certain civil society organizations as unnecessary, problematic, or contrary to particular national interests, while political debate becomes increasingly [confrontational and ideological](#), leaving little room for [technical evidence or critical voices](#).

A visible narrative of confrontation has emerged from political and government spaces. In recent public statements and press conferences, critical environmental actors have been described as "[stupid](#)", while oversight bodies and judicial institutions have been portrayed as [obstacles to government action](#) or as acting against the public interest. This discourse can blur the distinction between legitimate technical or institutional scrutiny and partisan opposition, contributing to the delegitimization of critical, scientific and academic voices in public debate. This narrative contributes to delegitimizing the [scientific and academic contribution](#) of civil society.

According to the experts, rather than promoting dialogue, the current environment encourages [confrontation between supporters and opponents](#). A constructive appeased dialogue is not being strengthened. Instead, the Executive Branch has [promoted attacks against other branches of government](#) and against critical individuals. This observation is relevant because

the quality of public discourse depends not only on the formal existence of spaces for opinion, but also on respect, legitimacy, and the genuine possibility of dissenting without being stigmatized.

Media coverage likewise does not sufficiently help make civil society's contributions visible. The media can play a positive role by highlighting the work of civil society organizations, but they can also amplify negative narratives, reproduce polarization, or focus debate on partisan conflicts, relegating organizations' social, technical, and community contributions to the background.

On social media, public discourse is influenced and opinion is manipulated through social networks, [fake accounts](#), or artificially amplified narratives. A relevant example is the 2025 "[Cayó la mordaza](#)" case, in which official government social media accounts were used to disseminate a politically charged message that was later questioned before the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) for potentially generating confusion and distorting information in the electoral context. Actors with greater economic or political power have a stronger capacity to influence media outlets and digital platforms, which may [reduce the visibility of independent or critical voices](#). This is connected to a broader context of hate speech, disinformation, and polarization on social media.

In June 2026, organizations and activists involved in defending LGBTIQ+ rights warned of an [increase in hate speech and discrimination in digital spaces](#), as well as a deterioration in relations and communication between the State and organizations working with these populations. This hostile environment affects democratic coexistence, effective access to rights, and the public participation of sexually diverse persons. Although [digital attacks](#) are not directed exclusively at civil society organizations, they directly affect their working environment by discrediting their agendas, intimidating their members, and [reducing](#) the willingness of people, particularly women and sexually diverse persons, to participate publicly in defending equality and human rights.

At the same time, civil society organizations do receive some recognition. There is no absolute denial of the role of civil society, nor systematic criminalization of all organizations. However, recognition is unequal and depends on the issue addressed, the actor involved, the level of criticism directed at the Government, and the degree of alignment with certain political agendas. From some territorial or population perspectives, public dialogue may therefore be perceived as virtually nonexistent.

5.2 Perception of Civil Society and Civic Participation

Public perceptions of civil society and civic participation in Costa Rica are mixed. On the one hand, community organizations, local networks, volunteer initiatives, development associations, environmental groups, health organizations, human rights collectives, and social movements are [recognized in their communities](#) and play an important role in the country's democratic life.

On the other hand, broad sectors of the population show distance and distrust toward traditional structures of political representation, as well as a limited perception of their ability to influence public decisions. The [IDESPO-UNA](#) survey on the political situation and the 2026 electoral process recorded low ratings for political parties and the Legislative Assembly, while fewer than half of respondents identified with any political party. In addition, [OECD regional studies](#) show a significant gap between the formal possibility of participating and the perception that public views are actually taken into account by authorities. These conditions may encourage apathy, withdrawal from institutional spaces, and the perception that individual participation has little effect on government decisions.

Important civic practices and an active community base exist, but they coexist with political disillusionment, disinformation, electoral abstention, low levels of institutional trust, and inequalities in genuine opportunities for participation.

In practice, numerous organizations pursue concrete objectives, such as protecting natural areas, addressing specific diseases, or defending community causes. This shows that civil society continues to be present in the country's daily life. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine how important these organizations are to the population as a whole, because sufficient studies or clear measurements of public perceptions toward them are not always available.

Public opinion concerning these organizations is divided. Some people value the work of civil society organizations, while other sectors do not fully understand their function or do not fully trust them. Low credibility and participation are associated with apathy and limited knowledge of public processes. This is compounded by concern [over high levels of disinformation](#), the presence of movements opposed to human rights and gender equality, and hate speech, all of which create an unfavorable environment for participation.

[Institutional distrust also affects civic participation](#). Although Costa Rica maintains a recognized democratic tradition, recent data show low and uneven levels of public trust, which is a [fundamental condition for participation](#). When people perceive that consultation processes do not produce visible results or that civil society contributions are not incorporated, their motivation to become involved declines. This situation worsens when there is a perception that public decisions respond more to groups with political or economic power than to the general interest.

Civic education is another central issue in this analysis. Civic education is compulsory within the Costa Rican education system. Although the current curricula are broadly aligned with international good practices, research conducted for the 2025 [State of Education Report](#) found that 60% of surveyed teachers considered that the programmes should be updated to address twenty-first-century challenges, including digital citizenship, disinformation, populism and authoritarian trends. The Ministry of Public Education has [Civic Education curricula](#) for lower and upper secondary education, intended to develop citizens who understand their rights, fundamental freedoms, and democratic responsibilities. However, the formal existence of this subject does [not guarantee civic education that is sufficient](#), practical, current, and connected to today's challenges of democratic participation. Considerable work remains to be done in education so that the public better understands both the role of civil society organizations and its own role within democracy.

Community participation is also not distributed evenly. In some communities, [local organizations](#) remain important [spaces for solidarity](#), territorial [defense](#), health, [the environment](#), education, or [service management](#). In other sectors, however, greater individualism, distrust, or lack of time to become involved in collective processes prevails. These [differences depend on factors](#) such as territory, social class, access to education, connectivity, community networks, working conditions, and previous experiences with public institutions.

5.3 Civic Equality and Inclusion

Costa Rica has a legal framework that formally recognizes equality, nondiscrimination, and the political participation of different population groups. [Article 33 of the Political Constitution](#) establishes that all persons are equal before the law and prohibits any form of discrimination contrary to human dignity. This principle is supplemented by specific legislation such as the [Electoral Code](#), which incorporates gender parity and alternation in party structures and candidacies for elected office, and [Law No. 8901](#), which promotes balanced participation by women and men on the governing bodies of associations, labor unions, and solidarist organizations.

Likewise, [Law No. 7600](#) recognizes equal opportunities and accessibility for persons with disabilities; the General [Law on Young Persons](#) promotes the social, political, cultural, and economic participation of young people; and the [Indigenous Law](#), together with the [Law on Access to Justice for Indigenous Peoples](#), recognizes the collective, cultural, and participation

rights of these communities. [Article 90 of the Political Constitution](#) establishes that citizenship comprises the political rights and duties corresponding to Costa Rican persons over eighteen years of age. The country also has gender parity and alternation principles in electoral matters and [Law No. 10235](#) to Prevent, Address, Punish, and Eradicate Violence against Women in Politics, whose purpose is to protect women's free exercise of political rights and combat discrimination, sexism, gender stereotypes, and political violence. Other national and international instruments against racism and discrimination also apply. Nevertheless, social, economic, territorial, cultural, and institutional barriers persist that prevent truly equitable civic participation for all. Formal equality is recognized in various laws, but does not always translate into substantive equality for women, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant populations, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, migrants, rural, coastal, and border communities, or the organizations representing these sectors.

Representation and participation by historically marginalized populations exist in some institutional spaces. [The Office of the Ombudsperson](#), for example, maintains dialogue, consultation, and coordination mechanisms with organizations and representatives of persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant populations, migrants, and other groups. Nevertheless, these spaces for dialogue and protection do not replace the need for different populations to have their own representation and effective capacity to intervene directly in public decisions affecting them. In addition, although there is general recognition of the importance of inclusion, prejudice, territorial inequality, economic exclusion, discrimination, and social resistance to diversity persist.

Although regulations such as gender parity, [alternation](#) of women and men on electoral candidate lists, as well as [Law No. 10,235](#) to Prevent, Address, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women in Politics, provide important formal protections structural [socioeconomic barriers](#) continue to hinder participation by certain sectors.. [Indigenous populations](#) in peripheral regions in particular, as well as [migrants and refugees](#), face economic exclusion, obstacles related to regularizing their documentation, and, in some cases, expressions of social xenophobia that restrict their ability to formally organize and influence local decisions.

Coastal, rural, and border areas experience marginalization and neglect that [deepen barriers to participating on equal terms](#). Institutional centralization in the Capital has a major impact because ministries, regulatory agencies, legislative offices, and decision-making spaces are concentrated there. This is important because it shows that exclusion depends not only on people's identity, but also on where they live, their distance from decision-making centers, and the material conditions needed to organize, travel, connect, or sustain advocacy processes.

For women, barriers to participation are not limited to formal access to positions or political spaces. [Women bear a disproportionate burden of domestic and care work](#), reducing the time available to participate in organizations, community processes, political spaces, or advocacy activities.

Regarding feminist and LGBTIQ+ organizations, formal equality does not guarantee substantive equality. These organizations face obstacles in accessing resources, participating in decision-making spaces, receiving institutional feedback, and sustaining advocacy processes in a context characterized by increasingly hostile discourse. Costa Rica's withdrawal from the LGBTI Core Group of the Organization of American States (OAS) was also interpreted by civil society organizations as a troubling sign of [regression in the State's commitment to diversity](#) and inclusion agendas.

The experience of sectors that do not feel effectively represented or included in civic processes even allows the conclusion that "equality does not exist for Indigenous populations", according to the Indigenous expert who participated in the panel. This observation is especially relevant to Indigenous peoples and other historically excluded communities, which face barriers related to language, territory, access to information, cultural recognition, poverty, and limited influence over decisions directly affecting their rights and territories.

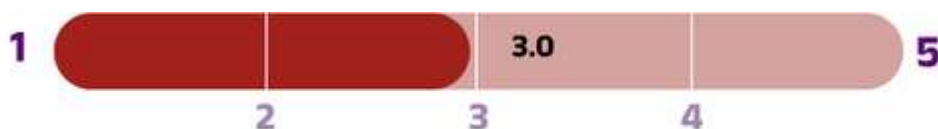
In general terms, barriers to civic equality are multiple and tend to reinforce one another. Poverty, geographic location, lack of connectivity, low educational attainment, discrimination

based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, language, or nationality, and unequal access to political and institutional networks create very different conditions for participation in public life. Therefore, although some individuals and organizations are able to participate, not all begin from the same position or have the same capacity to influence decisions.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



6.1 Digital Rights and Freedoms

Costa Rica maintains a relatively free digital environment compared with other countries in the region. One positive element is that Costa Rica does not display a pattern of State-imposed Internet shutdowns or widespread blocking of social media. Freedom House, in its [Freedom on the Net 2025 report](#), classifies Costa Rica as a country with a free Internet and highlights the strength of freedom of expression and association. There are no shutdowns of civil society organization websites or deliberate interruptions of Internet service for political reasons. The country retains an important foundation of digital freedom, and civil society organizations can use the Internet to inform, report abuses, organize campaigns, share evidence, and participate in public debates.

Although digital freedom remains broadly protected in Costa Rica, recurrent controversies over public and political figures blocking users on social media have raised concerns about access to information and participation in digital public debate. Costa Rican courts have repeatedly addressed this issue. For example, the Constitutional Chamber ordered the [Minister of Health to unblock](#) a citizen from a Facebook account used to communicate public-policy matters, and previously ruled against the [Municipality of San Ramón](#) and a legislator in similar cases. More recent complaints involving [political figures during 2026](#) show that tensions over the boundaries between personal accounts, public communication and citizens' right to engage with authorities continue to arise. Blocking a user is not equivalent to Internet censorship or a service shutdown, but when an account is used to disseminate information of public interest, arbitrary restrictions can limit access to information and opportunities for civic interaction. This is compounded by problems such as [self-censorship](#), content classification and filtering, intimidation campaigns, the use of trolls, disinformation, and different forms of [digital violence](#) directed against critical voices, journalists, activists, and organizations.

Another emerging problem concerns content moderation, profiling, and algorithmic distribution. Although people may formally access the Internet and publish their views, private platforms use opaque systems to determine which posts gain greater visibility, which are recommended, and which are classified, restricted, or removed. The [United Nations](#) warned about the risk of polarizing algorithms and called for ethical regulation of these technologies in a national context marked by growing hate speech and political attacks on social media. This distinction highlights the difference between formal freedom of access and expression on the Internet and the effective exercise of digital rights, which also depends on platform transparency, [protection from profiling](#), information diversity, and a genuine possibility for critical or minority voices to be visible. information diversity, and a genuine possibility for critical or minority voices to be visible.

Insults, the dissemination of false information, and [disparagement on social media](#) are increasingly common, even when a person merely comments on news published by media outlets. Coordinated attacks and the [use of trolls](#) to stigmatize journalists and activists who question government policies increase self-censorship and reduce the participation of critical voices in digital spaces. There has been an increase in threats, hate speech, and gender-based [digital violence](#), particularly against [women journalists](#), environmental activists, and human rights defenders. Against this background, the experts state that the current legal framework is insufficient to adequately address digital violence. This concern is tied to the fact that the exercise of digital rights depends not only on the State refraining from blocking content, but also on conditions allowing participation without intimidation, harassment, persecution, or smear campaigns.

Private platforms also play a relevant role in Costa Rica. As one expert noted, platforms such as Facebook and X apply their own moderation rules. At the same time, she highlighted risks of persecution and digital violence associated with insults, false accounts, misinformation and the denigration of people who participate in online discussions. For civil society organizations, these dynamics can create a hostile digital environment that affects their ability to communicate, participate in public debate and express critical positions freely.

6.2 Digital Security and Privacy

Costa Rica has basic legislation and institutional structures for the protection of personal data, but its environment remains fragile in terms of digital security and privacy. The [2025 State of Cybersecurity in Costa Rica report](#) documents incidents involving cyberfraud, exposure of vulnerabilities, ransomware, data theft and unauthorized access. It also identifies weaknesses in institutional follow-up: only 13.29% of surveyed institutions reported having filed a complaint with the judicial system after a cyberattack, while 37.76% reported that no complaint was filed and 48.95% did not know whether one had been filed. These weaknesses are particularly relevant for civil society organizations operating in an environment also affected by disinformation, bots, trolls and online harassment. At the regulatory level, Costa Rica has the Law on the Protection of Persons with regard to the Processing of Their Personal Data ([Law No. 8968](#)), whose purpose is to ensure respect for people's fundamental rights, particularly the right to informational self-determination in relation to their private lives and personal data. The country also has the Agency for the Protection of Personal Data (PRODHAB) as the authority responsible for overseeing personal data protection.

However, the existence of Law No. 8968 is not sufficient to guarantee effective protection. Enacted in 2011, this law requires urgent structural reforms to respond to current dynamics involving artificial intelligence, cloud storage, international data transfers, and digital transformation. The regulations do not robustly address automated flows of information processed or stored on servers located outside the country, which may leave sensitive information handled by civil society organizations unprotected, especially in areas such as health, human rights, gender, diversity, or community work.

Likewise, although both Law No. 8968 and PRODHAB exist, the institution responsible for data protection has limited human, financial, and technological resources. This reduces its

capacity to supervise, investigate, audit complex systems, or respond promptly to violations of digital privacy. This institutional weakness directly affects civil society organizations, many of which lack the resources to litigate, hire specialized advisers, or demand effective remedies when their data, communications, or platforms are compromised.

Although Costa Rica suffered cyberattacks against key institutions in 2022, primarily attributed to the [Conti ransomware](#) group and, in the case of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund, to the Hive [ransomware group](#), including the Ministry of Finance and the CCSS, [new attacks against public entities continued afterward](#).. These events led to a declaration of national emergency in the public sector and revealed major weaknesses in the State's digital infrastructure.

Although these attacks were not directed exclusively against civil society organizations, the experts noted that they do affect the environment in which such organizations operate. Organizations interact with public databases, institutional platforms, health services, tax systems, consultation mechanisms, and various State entities. When these systems have vulnerabilities, the security of the information that organizations consult, provide, or use to carry out their projects is also weakened.

Civil society actors do not always have sufficient protection or adequate remedies when digital risks or incidents occur, according to the experts consulted. This concern takes place in a broader national context where [significant cybersecurity gaps persist](#): a 2025 national assessment found that 62% of surveyed institutions lacked a fully operational formal cyber-risk assessment mechanism, while 35% conducted no phishing or social-engineering simulations. This problem was summarized by one expert as “a great deal of information is provided, but there is no security”: organizations must submit data, register on platforms, use digital services, and complete procedures online, but they do not always have clear guarantees regarding the protection of that information. The growth of [digital and banking fraud](#), as well as the increase in false news, also demonstrates the [high vulnerability of data](#). These situations affect not only individuals but also organizations that manage funds, donations, databases of beneficiaries, community contacts, or sensitive information. For small organizations, fraud, a data breach, or digital identity theft may have significant financial and reputational consequences.

There is no clear evidence that the Government carries out cyberattacks or uses software for espionage activities against civil society organizations. However, recent developments raise new concerns about potential surveillance capabilities. In [June 2026](#), the Minister of Finance announced that the Government was exploring technologies developed by Israeli intelligence sources to detect tax evasion and smuggling, although the Ministry later clarified that no specific tool had yet been selected. The issue gained further attention when an official-party legislator referred to an “[Operation Pegasus](#)” during a legislative debate on State secrecy and possible surveillance of political opponents; this statement does not confirm that Pegasus is being used in Costa Rica, but it reinforces the need for transparency and safeguards regarding any future acquisition of surveillance technologies. These concerns are particularly relevant given documented experiences elsewhere in the region: in [El Salvador](#), forensic investigations confirmed Pegasus infections on the phones of 35 journalists and civil society members, while in [Mexico](#) journalists and human rights defenders were repeatedly infected, including individuals investigating corruption and military abuses. These cases demonstrate that technologies initially justified for security or law-enforcement purposes can create serious risks for privacy, freedom of expression and civic space when effective oversight and safeguards are insufficient.

Additionally, there is evidence that [trolls and individuals aligned with government positions](#) organize or amplify [attacks against](#) media outlets, journalists, activists, and other critical voices through social media. Reports on [freedom of expression](#) in Costa Rica have documented coordinated harassment, disinformation, and online attacks against critical actors, particularly journalists and media outlets. This distinction is important: the report does not conclude that there is a systematic State policy of digital espionage against civil society organizations, but it does identify a recurring hostile digital environment in which coordinated actors can intimidate,

discredit, or silence critical voices, with consequences for freedom of expression, participation, and digital security. Concern is not limited to possible digital attacks from government actors, but also extends to the absence of sufficiently strong institutions to protect, assist, and provide remedies to those facing harassment, information leaks, or smear campaigns.

There is greater vulnerability associated with people's lack of knowledge about how to protect themselves in the digital environment. This observation introduces an important dimension: [digital security depends not only on laws and institutions](#), but also on practical capacities and public education. Many small organizations lack cybersecurity protocols, information backup systems, two-factor authentication, data management policies, training to prevent phishing attacks, or resources to respond to incidents. This lack of preparation increases risks for organizations handling sensitive information.

6.3 Digital Accessibility

Costa Rica has high levels of connectivity compared with other countries in the region. According to [DataReportal](#), approximately 4.78 million people in the country were Internet users at the end of 2025, representing a penetration rate of 92.6 percent. [The Superintendency of Telecommunications \(SUTEL\)](#) also reported that by 2025 mobile Internet penetration had reached 106 percent and fixed Internet penetration 71 percent, and that seven out of ten households had their own Internet connection.

However, broad national coverage does not eliminate inequalities in access. [Differences between the Greater Metropolitan Area \(GAM\) and areas outside](#) it reveal significant disparities in digital accessibility. In practice, organizations located in rural, coastal, border, or Indigenous territories may face lower connection quality, less stable service, fewer provider options, relatively higher costs, or less access to suitable equipment. These differences affect the ability of civil society organizations to participate in virtual meetings, submit documentation, access State platforms, develop digital campaigns, or sustain online training processes.

The use of digital tools and the transition to the so-called “digital era” are also increasingly required, which may become a [barrier for those without connectivity](#), adequate devices, sufficient mobile data, or digital skills. This is especially relevant because many public institutions have moved procedures, consultations, registrations, and communication mechanisms to virtual platforms without all individuals or organizations being equally prepared to use them.

Although basic digitalization skills may be relatively well established in many organizations, an important technical accessibility gap remains in advanced digital capacities, especially in light of the rapid growth of artificial intelligence, automated information processing, media monitoring, data analysis, and evidence-based digital campaigns. This gap reduces civil society's operational capacity compared with State institutions, large companies, or other actors with greater technological resources. If civil society organizations do not receive training in artificial intelligence, automation, algorithmic bias, data protection, information verification, and the ethical use of digital tools, their advocacy capacity may be weakened in relation to actors that are better prepared technologically.

For some populations, digital accessibility remains insufficient and presents an even greater challenge. This may be related to territorial, linguistic, economic, and cultural barriers that particularly affect Indigenous peoples and historically excluded communities. In these cases, connectivity alone does not guarantee participation if digital information is not available in relevant languages, platforms lack cultural accessibility, or communities do not receive support to use digital tools on equal terms.

Digital accessibility also has implications for protecting minors and sensitive information. Recent initiatives in Costa Rica have highlighted risks related to [children's personal](#) data online, while the country's data [protection framework](#) establishes safeguards for processing personal and sensitive information. This is especially relevant because many civil society

organizations work with minors, health issues, violence, gender, diversity, migration, or populations in vulnerable situations, and require adequate digital capacities to protect personal information, manage consent, securely store data, and prevent improper exposure.

In general terms, Costa Rica has a favorable foundation regarding connectivity and digital access but still faces major challenges in converting that connectivity into effective participation. Gaps between the Greater Metropolitan Area and peripheral regions, the cost of services and technological equipment, differences in Internet quality, lack of digital training, limited preparedness to take advantage of artificial intelligence, low levels of digital security literacy, and the absence of inclusive tools for vulnerable populations prevent all civil society organizations from participating on equal terms in digital spaces.

C) Recommendations

1. Recommendations for the Executive Branch

- Issue clear executive directives requiring senior authorities and State spokespersons to refrain from using disparaging discourse, attacks, or administrative retaliation against media outlets, human rights defenders, and CSOs. Also
- Establish a direct institutional reporting channel for selective inspections, arbitrary blocking or other reprisals or discriminatory administrative action against civil society, human rights defenders, and the media.
- Immediately issue draft regulations for the Framework Law on Access to Public Information, Law No. 10554, and the Law to Improve Accountability, Law No. 9398, ensuring that the draft regulations are subsequently subject to public consultation with civil society and interested stakeholders before their final adoption.
- Implement open-data standards on institutional platforms, including reusable and disaggregated formats, while ensuring the progressive translation of key public information into Indigenous languages and accessible formats for persons with disabilities.
- Regulate public consultation processes to ensure that they are conducted from the earliest stages of developing laws and policies, with reasonable timeframes, plain language, broad dissemination, and accessible modalities. Institutions must incorporate contributions received into the administrative record and publish a response report or matrix indicating which recommendations were accepted, rejected, or partially incorporated, together with the corresponding technical justification, so as to demonstrate that public contributions were genuinely considered and assessed.
- Establish institutionalized citizen follow-up mechanisms for policies and regulations subjected to public consultation, including joint State-civil society committees with transparent, neutral, and publicly defined selection criteria, as well as periodic reports on compliance with commitments. Design and implement a free, decentralized training program for non-profit organisations and civil society organizations on project formulation, tax obligations, regulatory compliance, and digital security, coordinated between the Executive Branch and public universities.

- Enable an interoperable digital portal among the National Registry, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Finance that consolidates procedures and eliminates duplicate documentation requirements for CSOs. The General Directorate of Taxation should also digitize and expedite the procedure for authorizing tax-deductible donations.
- Design simplified and differentiated administrative and tax compliance regimes, avoiding the imposition of the same bureaucratic burdens on small or volunteer-based organizations as on large corporate entities.
- Guarantee inclusive and culturally appropriate participatory processes, with accessibility, translation, connectivity, and support measures for rural and Indigenous populations and other historically excluded groups.
- Guarantee specific mechanisms for youth participation through youth advisory councils, in-person and digital deliberative processes, and methodologies adapted to young people.
- Design and approve, through a participatory process involving social organizations, universities, and youth organizations, a National Policy for Strengthening Civic Space with goals, indicators, and accountability mechanisms.

2. Recommendations for the Legislative Branch

- Reopen the legislative file and ratify the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), ensuring a strong legal framework for environmental protection and environmental defenders.
- Adopt a comprehensive law for the protection of human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and civil society organizations that guarantees permanent prevention, protection, assistance, and reparation measures, including a clear budget, institutional responsibilities, and oversight mechanisms.
- Adopt an anti-SLAPP law allowing for the prompt dismissal of abusive lawsuits intended to intimidate, financially exhaust, or silence the investigative and reporting work of journalists, defenders, and civic organizations.
- Adopt a Law on Citizen Participation, Follow-Up, and Accountability that guarantees early consultation, reasonable timeframes, reasoned responses to civil society contributions, and permanent mechanisms for dialogue, follow-up, and evaluation of participation quality. In appropriate matters, the law should incorporate co-decision forms of participation and ensure territorial, social, and generational representation.
- Adopt and implement an Open Parliament Policy that guarantees legislative transparency, timely access to information, effective participation by the public and civil society organizations, and accountability regarding the Legislative Assembly's processes and decisions, through a public legislative traceability system showing how citizen observations influenced bills.

- Update Law No. 8968 (Protection of Persons with regard to the Processing of Their Personal Data) to regulate the collection and use of data in artificial intelligence environments, biometric processing, automated decision-making, cross-border transfers, and mandatory notification of cybersecurity incidents or data breaches.
- Strengthen the skills, technical profile, and financial resources of the Agency for the Protection of Personal Data (PRODHAB), providing it with the budgetary autonomy and operational capacity necessary to effectively exercise its powers of ex officio oversight, inspection, and imposition of sanctions in the public and private sectors.

3. Recommendations for Donors and the International Community

- Allocate multi-year funding to the administrative, financial, legal, communications, technological, and capacity strengthening of civil society organizations in order to ensure their operational continuity and support sustained processes of community organizing, public advocacy, and democratic strengthening, avoiding the concentration of resources solely in short-term projects.
- Prioritize small, community-based, rural, coastal, border, and Indigenous organizations, while recognising that some national organisations may also be operating under severe funding constraints.
- Design calls for proposals in Spanish, with proportionate requirements and simple, standardized forms, and provide support to organizations that need it including guidance on eligibility criteria, proposal development, budgeting, required documentation, and reporting requirements.
- Make requirements such as counterpart contributions, costly audits, and complex administrative structures more flexible.
- Allow budget adjustments when political, social, or regulatory conditions change.
- Promote regional cooperation and the exchange of good practices in the protection of defenders, transparency, participation, digital security, and sustainable funding.
- Support initiatives among the State, academia, the private sector, and civil society, with clear rules on transparency, balanced representation, and prevention of conflicts of interest.
- Request that international cooperation agencies not condition funding solely on the country's economic classification as high-, middle-, or low-income, but instead assess the actual political barriers, scarcity of local resources, and corporate interference threatening civic space.
- Fund specific initiatives that enable civil society organizations to develop and implement alternative sustainability models, especially in countries that have recently transitioned to the high-income category and, as a result, face reduced access to international cooperation.

4. Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations

- Build networks, consortia, and strategic alliances among organizations, academia, local governments, public institutions, and private companies to share capacities, diversify funding sources, and coordinate joint initiatives that strengthen ethical lobbying and the collective defense of civic space while preventing conflicts of interest.
- Develop internal capacities to explore alternative sustainability models, such as local philanthropy, crowdfunding, partnerships with academia, or the provision of research services, in order to reduce vulnerability to the withdrawal of international cooperation.
- Develop an open national platform for civil society organizations that facilitates resource sharing, dissemination of public consultations, alliance-building, and participation in advocacy processes.
- Guarantee equitable relationships between large and small organizations, respecting the autonomy and leadership of community-based organizations.
- Adopt physical and digital security protocols, including two-factor authentication, backups, access management, and incident response.
- Publish basic information on governance, funding, activities, and results, without exposing sensitive data, in order to promote transparency and strengthen public legitimacy.
- Strengthen capacities in project formulation, financial administration, tax obligations, monitoring, and sustainability.
- Improve strategic communications through evidence-based narratives, information verification, crisis management, and responses to disinformation campaigns.
- Collaborate with media outlets to make organizations' work visible and promote balanced narratives, translating technical and scientific information into plain, accessible language that any person can understand, so as to encourage community support, combat false news, and enable the public to hold authorities accountable.
- Share alerts, funding opportunities, protection protocols, and technical knowledge among organizations.
- Promote mentoring, leadership, and generational succession programs that strengthen the participation of young people in governing bodies, representative spaces, and public advocacy processes.

5. Local Governments

- Design and implement participatory budgeting processes through which a defined proportion of municipal investment is prioritized directly by the public, ensuring the participation of community organizations, young people, women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and other historically underrepresented groups.
- Establish permanent cantonal councils or roundtables for dialogue among municipalities, community organizations, youth collectives, development associations,

academia, and the private sector to co-create solutions to the territory's principal challenges.

- Promote the use of participatory mechanisms provided for in the Municipal Code, such as town hall meetings, consultations, community assemblies, and deliberative forums, to discuss projects with major territorial, environmental, or social impacts before approval.
- Implement accessible digital citizen participation platforms, complemented by non-digital channels such as community radio, in-person consultations, local outreach, and other appropriate mechanisms, to promote the participation of young people, rural populations, and remote communities.
- Develop permanent training programs for community organizations, development associations, youth collectives, and emerging leaders on citizen participation, proposal development, social oversight, community management, legal and regulatory compliance, tax obligations, and other administrative requirements that are particularly challenging for smaller organizations to navigate.
- Institutionalize annual accountability spaces in which the mayor's office and municipal council present results, receive public observations, and agree on verifiable improvement commitments for the following period.

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 June. 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 by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



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