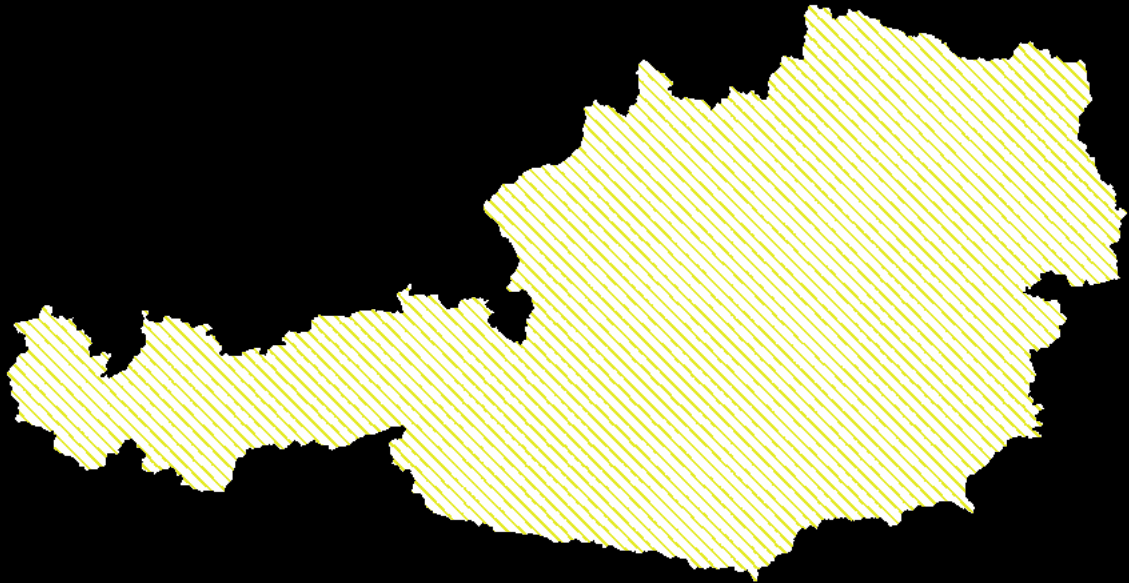


CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2026

# Austria

by Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit / Civil Society Alliance Austria



BÜNDNIS FÜR  
GEMEINNÜTZIGKEIT

INTERESSENVERTRETUNG  
DES GEMEINNÜTZIGEN SEKTORS &  
DER FREIWILLIGENORGANISATIONEN



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

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This report was published by the European Civic Forum (ECF) in May 2026, with chapters written by its secretariat, member organisations, and partner organisations. Much of the content originally appeared as part of ECF's submission to the European Commission's Rule of Law consultation, while some country reports were first published under the Monitoring Action for Civic Space (MACS) project. Each chapter reflects the views and analysis of its respective author. For more information about the European Civic Forum, please visit [www.civic-forum.eu](http://www.civic-forum.eu).

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit** is the umbrella organisation of non-profit and voluntary organisations in Austria. Its 100+ members range from small and local associations to large organisations such as the Austrian branches of Red Cross, Caritas, Amnesty International, WWF, Transparency International or Birdlife and include sector-specific umbrella organisations such as Sozialwirtschaft Österreich and arbeit plus (social and health) or Ökobüro and Umweltdachverband (environment). Members cover all areas of civil society – from environment to human rights and inclusion, from culture to social issues, education, and humanitarian aid. Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit advocates for general civil society matters and provides accessible consulting services to the entire Third Sector.






**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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About the author ..... 3  
Key Trends ..... 5  
Summary ..... 5  
Freedom of Association ..... 6  
Access to Funding ..... 6  
Freedom of Peaceful Assembly ..... 8  
Freedom of Expression ..... 9  
Participation in Decision-making ..... 9  
Safe space .....10  
Recommendations .....12

# Key Trends

-  Economic turmoil, financial instability, and a prevailing budget deficit puts CSOs financial resilience at risk.
-  Media landscape shrinks as outlets face significant financial burdens, while independent journalism diminishes, limiting people's access to quality media and information, crucial for a thriving democracy.
-  Anti NGO narratives undermine the legitimacy of civil society actors.

## Summary

Civic space in Austria is rated as “Open” by the CIVIUS Monitor.<sup>1</sup> There were no recommendations on civic space for Austria in the European Commission’s 2025 Rule of Law report. The report noted the positive impacts for civil society organisations (CSOs) due to the implementation of the recent reform of the tax framework.

In 2025, there were concerns around the growing influence of right-wing actors trying to undermine the legitimacy of NGOs. For example, the far-right FPÖ party submitted almost 30,000 questions to the federal

government targeting specific CSOs. The funding environment continues to be shaped by economic uncertainty, political volatility, and persistent administrative burdens. Meanwhile, there are concerns that newly proposed measures which give the authorities enhanced surveillance capacities, could have a chilling effect on assemblies, especially on marginalised groups or participants in politically sensitive demonstrations. While there is generally an enabling environment for civil society, some groups continue to face structural discrimination and interpersonal threats to their safety.

1. <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/austria/>

# Freedom of Association

Freedom of association remains well protected in Austria. The Austrian constitution guarantees the right to freedom of association for both natural persons and legal entities. An association, club or society is recognised as such if it is composed of at least two people with the objective of achieving a common, non-material goal. The registered office of the association must be located in Austria. Under the Associations Act (*Vereinsgesetz 2002 - VerG*), an association cannot be profit-oriented, and its funds may only be used in pursuit of its original purpose.<sup>2</sup>

To acquire public benefit status and associated tax benefits for the purpose of the federal tax code (*Bundesabgabenordnung — BAO*), an organisation has to follow certain legal and organisational requirements.<sup>3</sup> A reform of this law, which entered into force on 1 January 2024, has simplified administrative procedures, reducing the waiting period for acquiring public benefit status from three years to one, and simplified the process for independent auditors to confirm eligibility. It has also widened the scope of public benefit purposes, extending eligibility to organisations from all fields of activity (such as culture, human rights, sports, education, or animal protection, which were formerly illegible). This change has made public benefit status more accessible and attractive to smaller non-profit organisations and positively influenced their financial viability.<sup>4</sup> Since the introduction of the law in the beginning of 2024 an additional 1,300 organisations gained public benefit status, an increase of around 86%.<sup>5</sup>

In practice, CSOs continue to enjoy a favourable environment for exercising the right to association,

## Access to Funding

Access to stable, transparent, and diversified funding remains a central pre-requisite for the long-term resilience of CSOs in Austria. While the regulatory environment has improved in recent years, especially regarding public-benefit status and tax deductibility (see previous section), the sector continues to operate under conditions shaped by economic uncertainty,

with no reported restrictive legislation targeting them. Nevertheless, the practical enjoyment of this right is increasingly shaped by broader political dynamics. Research indicates that the operating conditions for organisations can vary depending on the stance of the government of the day, underscoring a degree of dependence on political goodwill. This is particularly evident where cooperation with ministries is informal and where organisations rely heavily on public funding, creating potential vulnerabilities should political priorities shift.<sup>6</sup>

Emerging political trends heighten these concerns. The growing influence of right-wing actors that try to undermine the legitimacy of NGOs<sup>7</sup> and the intensification of polarised rhetoric, particularly on migration and climate justice, contribute to apprehension among organisations active in these areas. Although no direct legal restrictions have been introduced, these developments may result in increased scrutiny or pressure on specific segments of civil society. CSOs therefore emphasise the importance of vigilance to safeguard the substantive exercise of freedom of association, ensuring that political changes do not translate into administrative hurdles or informal constraints.

Overall, the legal framework remains robust and recent reforms have improved the environment for many organisations. However, the continued protection of freedom of association will depend on stable political conditions, the consistent implementation of reforms, and the recognition of civil society as a legitimate and essential democratic actor.

political volatility, and persistent administrative burdens. Public funding remains the most significant financial source for many organisations. While this ensures stability, it also creates dependencies that may become critical when the political climate shifts and in times of economic turmoil. Both scenarios are

2. <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20001917>

3. <https://www.bmf.gv.at/themen/steuern/spenden-gemeinnuetzigkeit/spendenbeguenstigung-neu.html#unser-verein-ist-noch-nicht-spendenbeguenstigt-und-wir-moechten-die-spendenbeguenstigung-beantragen-welche-voraussetzungen-bestehen-dafuer--0-7>

4. <https://www.parlament.gv.at/gegenstand/XXVII/ME/299>

5. <https://www.fundraising.at/wp-content/uploads/media/69f/fva-spendenbericht-2025.pdf>

6. <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2019-0029>

7. <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000276797/ngos-im-blauen-visier-fpoe-flutet-ministerien-mit-tausenden-fragen-zu-geldfluessen>

very likely to negatively influence CSOs in Austria in the upcoming months and years.<sup>8</sup>

Public funding plays a pivotal role in financing CSOs: over half of the income of organisations comes from performance-related payments by the public sector to fund at least one staff member. An additional 16.5% comes from other public funding sources. There have been no major changes in the financing structure since these last numbers were published in 2013.<sup>9</sup> While public funding has become the most important source of income, bureaucratic burdens associated with accessing such funds have steadily increased. To ensure long-term efficiency, it is essential to simplify funding processes, improve legal certainty, and reduce administrative hurdles.

In addition to structural challenges, the sector faces heightened political risks. As seen elsewhere, political forces undermine the legitimacy of CSOs. Notable examples include an inquiry by the freedom party (FPÖ) concerning CSOs' government subsidies and the response thereof. On 14 August 2025, the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) initiated an extensive parliamentary inquiry into the funding of non-governmental organisations in Austria, submitting more than 2,000 questions to various ministries concerning over 700 organisations. The inquiry framed the work of CSOs as "NGO-industry" and sought detailed information on public financial support, legal grounds, internal reporting, and the involvement of civil servants in civil society organisations.<sup>10</sup> Actions to undermine the legitimacy of CSOs also jeopardise their financial stability by discouraging private donations — particularly to organisations engaged in politically sensitive fields such as migration, anti-discrimination, or climate justice. Developments like this further illustrate how the changing political environment is increasing pressure on NGOs, especially those perceived as critical or oppositional to government priorities.

Private donations remain another vital financial source for the sector. According to the Austrian Fundraising

Association, €1.07 billion was donated in 2024. Although the total donation volume decreased slightly, survey data simultaneously indicates that the proportion of donors among the population remains not only consistently high — unlike in many other leading philanthropy nations — but even reached a new peak (79%) in 2024.<sup>11</sup>

Philanthropic giving through foundations is also becoming increasingly relevant. Recent reporting indicates a strong rise in newly established foundations, with around one-third of Austrian foundations now active in charitable work. A 2025 mid-year review even noted a record number of newly established charity foundations, indicating a growing interest in structured, long-term philanthropic engagement within Austria's civil society landscape.<sup>12</sup>

Despite these positive developments, the overall financial outlook for NGOs is shaped by broader socio-economic factors. Austria faces a significant budget deficit that even exceeds EU Maastricht rules, and recessionary tendencies persist.<sup>13</sup> These economic conditions directly impact both public funding availability and private giving. Economic instability affects NGOs and independent journalism alike and further demonstrates how challenging economic environments can reduce the resources available to civic actors and public-interest media. Such constraints highlight the need for stable, predictable, and diversified funding structures across the sector.

Overall, while Austria's civic sector benefits from a comparatively supportive legal framework and a strong culture of public engagement, its financial viability remains exposed to political, economic, and administrative pressures. Ensuring a resilient funding landscape will require safeguarding the independence of media, strong political and public acknowledgement of the importance of CSOs, reducing administrative burdens in public funding systems, and supporting diversified funding streams — including philanthropy and donations.

8. <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/288503/umfrage/sonntagsfrage-zur-nationalratswahl-in-oesterreich-nach-einzelnen-instituten/>, <https://orf.at/stories/3410593/>

9. Pennerstorfer, A., and Schneider, U. (2022). Der Nonprofit-Sektor in Österreich, in R. Simsa, M. Meyer, & C. Badelt (eds.), *Handbuch der Nonprofit-Organisationen. Strukturen und Management* (55-72). Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel Verlag.

10. <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000285018/die-regierung-tappt-bei-ngos-in-die-falle-der-fpoe>

11. <https://www.fundraising.at/wp-content/uploads/media/69f/fva-spendenbericht-2025.pdf>

12. [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20250806\\_OTS0006/halbjahresbilanz-gruendungsrekord-bei-gemeinnuetzigen-stiftungen-in-oesterreich](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20250806_OTS0006/halbjahresbilanz-gruendungsrekord-bei-gemeinnuetzigen-stiftungen-in-oesterreich)

13. <https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/announcement/2025/03/20250331oeffentlicheFinanzen2024.pdf>

# Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Freedom of peaceful assembly is guaranteed under the Austrian constitution and regulated through the *Versammlungsgesetz* (Assembly Act),<sup>14</sup> yet several developments indicate increasing pressure on protest environments, policing standards, and privacy safeguards.

In 2025, epicenter works — a leading CSO in defending fundamental rights and freedoms in the digital age — warned against the tightening of state surveillance measures. Its assessment raises concerns that enhanced monitoring capacities could have a chilling effect on assemblies, especially on marginalised groups or participants in politically sensitive demonstrations.<sup>15</sup> In August 2025 the interior minister announced plans to extensively widen surveillance in Austria, including a planned legal amendment enabling comprehensive surveillance in Austria's city centres ("*StVO-Novelle*").<sup>16</sup> While the government claims that these plans are aimed at increasing security in public spaces, digital rights NGOs warn that they interfere with the fundamental rights of all citizens, regardless of whether their behaviour provides any specific grounds for monitoring. Such blanket approaches risk creating a climate of constant observation, which may significantly restrict the free exercise of democratic rights, including the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.<sup>17</sup> Similar concerns have been raised by epicenter.works and Amnesty International Austria over a decision taken in favour of the use of software that enables the surveillance of digital communication, justified on the grounds of criminal prosecution and counterterrorism (*Bundestrojaner*).<sup>18</sup>

The proportionality of policing at assemblies also remained in the spotlight. On 27 July, Austrian police conducted a large-scale operation during an anti-fascist youth camp at the Peršmanhof, a memorial site for the Resistance of Slovenian partisans against the Nazi regime in Carinthia. Citing alleged administrative violations, police and special forces, supported by aerial surveillance and dog units, intervened, detaining several participants and mildly injuring one person. On 23 October, a special task force found the raid was unlawful and disproportionate, concluding that the alleged violations were unsubstantiated and that the police response had been excessive, with inadequate oversight by the responsible district authority.<sup>19</sup>

Although the case was investigated by a commission of the interior ministry and measures to prevent such incidents in the future were published,<sup>20</sup> it fuelled debates on whether current practices sufficiently safeguard the right to peacefully assemble.<sup>21</sup>

Concerns about inconsistent and potentially unlawful differential treatment remain. For a long time, Amnesty International Austria has called for the introduction of an obligation for police officers in Austria to wear identification, ensuring that officers can be clearly and unambiguously identified, as well as for a revision of the law to decriminalise spontaneous assemblies.<sup>22</sup> Despite worrying signs, Austria's legal framework remains largely enabling, and assemblies continue to take place frequently and peacefully. Nevertheless, developments outlined above emphasise the need for improved oversight mechanisms, more transparent investigative procedures, and clear safeguards to ensure that surveillance and policing practices remain fully compliant with human rights standards.

14. <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10000249>

15. [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20250811\\_OTS0053/beispiellose-ausweitung-von-videoueberwachung-durch-innenminister-karner](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20250811_OTS0053/beispiellose-ausweitung-von-videoueberwachung-durch-innenminister-karner)

16. <https://epicenter.works/content/verfueffachung-der-videoueberwachung-in-oesterreich-geplant> ;

<https://www.amnesty.at/presse/geplante-stvo-novelle-bedroht-recht-auf-meinungs-und-versammlungsfreiheit-kundgebung-am-27-november/>

17. [https://epicenter.works/fileadmin/medienspiegel/user\\_upload/epicenter.works-Forderungspapier\\_Keine\\_Ueberwachung\\_durch\\_KI.pdf](https://epicenter.works/fileadmin/medienspiegel/user_upload/epicenter.works-Forderungspapier_Keine_Ueberwachung_durch_KI.pdf)

18. <https://epicenter.works/content/bundestrojaner-beschlossen-und-jetzt>

19. <https://orf.at/stories/3409310/>

20. <https://www.diepresse.com/20237896/persmanhof-museum-und-betroffene-fordern-entschuldigung-fuer>

21. <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000293580/persmanhof-daten-von-campnern-wurden-illegal-an-verfassungsschutz-uebermittelt> ; ;

<https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000293291/kommission-legt-bericht-zum-umstrittenen-polizeieinsatz-am-persmanhof-vor>

22. [https://cdn.amnesty.at/media/2u0nbnpl/advo-briefing\\_recht-auf-friedliche-versammlung.pdf](https://cdn.amnesty.at/media/2u0nbnpl/advo-briefing_recht-auf-friedliche-versammlung.pdf)

# Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which was incorporated into Austria's constitution in 1964.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the 1981 Media Law provides the basis for media freedom in Austria.<sup>24</sup> However, several developments demonstrate that the effective enjoyment of this right depends on active protection, careful implementation of new legislation, and vigilance regarding political and structural pressures.

The Freedom of Information Act entered into force on 1 September 2025 and marked an important step toward strengthening transparency and public oversight. With the abolition of the much-criticised “confidentiality clause”, a long-standing demand of civil society was fulfilled. While the clause imposed comprehensive official secrecy at the expense of transparency, the new act allows for new general rights to freedom of information that include both an obligation for administrative authorities to provide information to all citizens and a duty to proactively publish administrative data, provided that no grounds for confidentiality apply. For citizens and media, this results in greater transparency of state action and faster access to reliable information.<sup>25</sup> However, as these provisions only entered into force recently, CSOs have emphasised that its implementation must be monitored closely to ensure it results in real improvements in access to information.

Independent journalism — an integral component of the civic space ecosystem — faces precarious conditions. Media outlets are under financial pressure, while journalists, watchdog organisations, and media

experts continue to call for comprehensive reforms. Several analyses highlight in particular structural weaknesses in the distribution of public advertising, the lack of sustainable funding mechanisms for non-profit journalism, and the need for greater transparency and independence in public service media. Reporters Without Borders Austria (Reporter ohne Grenzen) underlines the pressures on journalists and increasing threats to media freedom.<sup>26</sup>

In comparison to many other European countries, the Austrian Public Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) holds a relatively high market share.<sup>27</sup> However, its independence remains a concern. Despite amendments to the ORF law in March 2025, demanded earlier by the Constitutional Court, independence from political influence has not yet been fully achieved.<sup>28</sup> Journalist associations, including Presseclub Concordia, continue to call for reforms such as legal frameworks for non-profit journalism, stronger protections against Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs), improved media literacy, and regulation of digital platforms.<sup>29</sup>

Overall, the right to freedom of expression in Austria remains protected in law but exposed to a range of pressures that require continuous vigilance. Independence and resilience of quality media, transparency, data protection, and the enabling environment for civil society will determine whether this right can continue to be exercised fully and without undue interference in the coming years.

# Participation in Decision-making

CSOs in Austria remain meaningfully involved in political processes, yet their access to decision-making continues to depend heavily on the broader political context. Academic assessments confirm that CSOs are deeply embedded in policy dialogue and contribute to negotiations on issues such as social services, healthcare, education, and environmental

protection.<sup>30</sup> Federal structures shape these participation channels, with strong umbrella organisations operating at different levels.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this long-standing engagement, civic participation rights of civil society actors are not formally protected, as Austria lacks any legislation or binding

23. <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/NormDokument.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10000308&Artikel=10&Paragraf=&Anlage=&Uebergangsrecht=>

24. <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10000719>

25. <https://orf.at/stories/3403128/>

26. <https://www.rog.at/kritischer-dialog-mit-medienpolitik/>

27. Trappel, F. (2023). Medien und Politik – ein Geben und Nehmen, in K. Praprotnik & F. Perlot (eds.), Das Politische System Österreichs (129-153). Wien: Böhlau Verlag.

28. <https://www.diepresse.com/19715092/der-fromme-wunsch-nach-weniger-politikeinfluss-auf-den-orf>

29. <https://concordia.at/stellungnahmen-und-positionen/>

30. <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/73928>

31. <https://www.gemeinnuetzig.at/ueber-uns/>

framework governing structured civil dialogue. This results in inconsistent procedures and irregular access to consultation processes, since participation remains contingent on the discretion of individual ministries or political actors rather than being structurally guaranteed.

Cooperation between public institutions and civil society improved between 2020 and 2024, with progress in areas such as tax reforms for non-profit organisations, energy-related subsidies, and support for voluntary services. These achievements reflect growing government recognition of civil society's contributions to society. However, the political landscape shifted following the 2024 elections, which brought significant gains for the FPÖ and the formation of a three-party coalition in February 2025. The current government's stance towards enhancing civil dialogue remains unclear.

Financial dependence on public funding complicates participation. Since many organisations receive a

substantial share of their income from national, regional, or municipal budgets, changes in political priorities may affect not only their financial stability but also their ability to contribute to decision-making processes. This dynamic is intensified by the absence of structured participation rules. Without a predictable framework, CSOs — especially those representing marginalised groups or holding critical positions — may be excluded from consultation processes.

To safeguard inclusive governance, civil society actors continue to call for legal guarantees that ensure transparent, predictable, and accessible participation mechanisms across all stages of policymaking. Formalising civil dialogue would not only support democratic resilience but also reduce the extent to which civil-society participation depends on political goodwill. Given current political uncertainties, establishing such structures is increasingly critical for maintaining open and inclusive decision-making processes in the long run.

## Safe space

In Austria, people are generally able to exercise their rights. However, developments across multiple areas underline that some communities continue to face discrimination, targeted hostility, and systemic exclusion.

According to anti-racism CSO ZARA's Report 2024, 1,951 racist incidents were recorded — an increase compared to previous years — with a significant proportion occurring online and in public institutions. These incidents include hate speech, denial of services due to discrimination, and unequal treatment in everyday interactions.<sup>32</sup>

Islamophobia persists, with 1,569 cases of anti-Muslim hatred recorded in 2024, representing a notable rise compared to previous years and marking one of the highest ever annual figures. Many incidents involved insults and harassment in public spaces, the workplace, and schools, as well as hate speech online. The same report further identifies institutional discrimination.<sup>33</sup>

Alongside the rise in anti-Muslim hate incidents, antisemitism continues to pose a pressing challenge.

The Antisemitic Incidents Report January–June 2025 recorded 726 antisemitic incidents within six months.<sup>34</sup>

The situation of intersex persons, as documented in a Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) report, highlights another dimension of insecurity. Intersex respondents in Austria reported the highest rate of physical or sexual attacks in Europe (45%) in the previous five years. They also experienced disproportionate discrimination, mental health challenges, housing insecurity, and barriers in healthcare access, illustrating how marginalisation impacts their safety and wellbeing.<sup>35</sup>

Residence status and citizenship continue to shape access to rights but the hurdles to gain citizenship remain disproportionately high. For example, one third of Vienna's residents cannot vote in national elections because they do not have Austrian citizenship. This displays a gap between people living in the capital and people actually engaged in democratic participation.<sup>36</sup>

The situation of unaccompanied child refugees continues to be particularly alarming: more than 16,000 have gone missing since 2022 due to severe gaps in

<sup>32</sup>. [https://assets.zara.or.at/media/rassismusreport/ZARA\\_RassismusReport\\_2024-EN.pdf](https://assets.zara.or.at/media/rassismusreport/ZARA_RassismusReport_2024-EN.pdf)

<sup>33</sup>. [https://dokustelle.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/Reports/Report\\_2024/Dokustelle\\_ARR\\_2024\\_9.juni.2025.pdf](https://dokustelle.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/Reports/Report_2024/Dokustelle_ARR_2024_9.juni.2025.pdf)

<sup>34</sup>. [https://www.antisemitismus-meldestelle.at/\\_files/ugd/0a9e18\\_03230340db6b423bbf9d515c036b3b5e.pdf](https://www.antisemitismus-meldestelle.at/_files/ugd/0a9e18_03230340db6b423bbf9d515c036b3b5e.pdf)

<sup>35</sup>. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/being-intersex-eu>

<sup>36</sup>. <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000280625/die-unbequeme-wahrheit-ueber-oesterreichs-staatsbuergerschaft>

Austria's child protection and guardianship systems. The lack of immediate legal guardianship, insufficient funding for federal care facilities, and exclusion from compulsory education structures create heightened vulnerabilities to exploitation and abuse.<sup>37</sup>

Civil society actors also operated in a more strained environment. The Democracy Index 2025 notes a deterioration in civil society conditions, including politically driven anti-NGO narratives and administrative pressures, particularly in areas linked to migration and anti-racism. Parliamentary inquiries into NGO funding and public campaigns that delegitimise CSOs have contributed to increased insecurity for activists and organisations.<sup>38</sup>

Structural discrimination against women continues to undermine the existence of a safe and enabling environment. Amnesty International Austria reports that women in Austria still experience restrictions and violations of their rights, particularly due to insufficient

systemic measures to prevent gender-based violence. The scale of the problem is reflected in the 27 femicides recorded in the past year. While the government has announced an action plan to combat violence against women, CSOs stress that its implementation remains overdue.<sup>39</sup> This goes in line with a remaining high gender pay gap (ranked second when compared with all other EU countries).<sup>40</sup>

People with disabilities continue to face structural discrimination in Austria. They not only experience physical violence, but face discrimination in education, the workplace, access to healthcare and justice and many other areas of daily life. CSOs emphasise the importance of consequently implementing the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>41</sup>

Taken together, these developments demonstrate that while Austria's civic space remains formally open, some groups continue to face structural discrimination and interpersonal threats to their safety.

<sup>37</sup>. [https://www.amnesty.at/themen/unbegleitete-gefluechtete-kinder-in-oesterreich/warum-unbegleitete-gefluechtete-kinder-in-oesterreich-dringend-besseren-schutz-brauchen/?mtm\\_campaign=gefluechtete\\_kinder\\_linkedin\\_social\\_organic&mtm\\_source=linkedin&mtm\\_medium=social](https://www.amnesty.at/themen/unbegleitete-gefluechtete-kinder-in-oesterreich/warum-unbegleitete-gefluechtete-kinder-in-oesterreich-dringend-besseren-schutz-brauchen/?mtm_campaign=gefluechtete_kinder_linkedin_social_organic&mtm_source=linkedin&mtm_medium=social)

<sup>38</sup>. [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20251022\\_OTS0071/demokratie-index-2025-die-demokratische-infrastruktur-muss-aktiv-gestaerkt-werden-sonst-verfaellt-sie-weiter](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20251022_OTS0071/demokratie-index-2025-die-demokratische-infrastruktur-muss-aktiv-gestaerkt-werden-sonst-verfaellt-sie-weiter)

<sup>39</sup>. <https://www.amnesty.at/presse/un-bericht-zu-menschenrechten-in-oesterreich-zivilgesellschaft-zieht-bilanz-es-braucht-mehr-als-nur-worte/>

<sup>40</sup>. <https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/announcement/2025/03/20250305GenderStatistik2025.pdf>

<sup>41</sup>. <https://www.behindertenrat.at/aktuelles/presseaussendungen/>

# Recommendations

## **TARGETED RECOMMENDATION:**

- **Urgently secure core funding for civil society organisations' activities and services to strengthen their long-term stability and independence.**
- **Urgently implement measures to promote and fund a diverse and sustainable media landscape and protect independent journalism.**
- Establish structured civil dialogue to ensure open, inclusive, ongoing, and transparent participation of civil society at all stages of the policy and decision-making processes in line with the EU Civil Society Strategy.
- Promote understanding of the importance of CSOs and civil society in Austria for a functioning rule of law and a vibrant democracy, in order to counter anti-NGO narratives.
- Take urgent steps to reduce bureaucratic burdens and harmonise funding processes to enhance NGOs' efficiency and impact, for example by unifying application procedures and reporting requirements across all ministries and/or by creating a unified body that handles all public funding and related procedures.

# CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2025



## **About European Civic Forum**

The European Civic Forum (ECF) is a pan-European network of more than 100 associations and NGOs across 30 European countries. Founded in 2005 by our member organisations, we have spent nearly two decades working to protect civic space, enable civic participation and build civil dialogue for more equality, solidarity, and democracy in Europe.

**[civic-forum.eu](https://civic-forum.eu)**



## **About Civic Space Watch**

CivicSpace Watch is an online platform that gathers data and reports on developments in civic space at the national and EU levels, and analyses trends. Powered by the European Civic Forum, it collects findings through regular contact and interviews with a strong network of members and partners on the ground and alerts European and international institutions when rights are at risk.

**[civicspacewatch.eu](https://civicspacewatch.eu)**



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