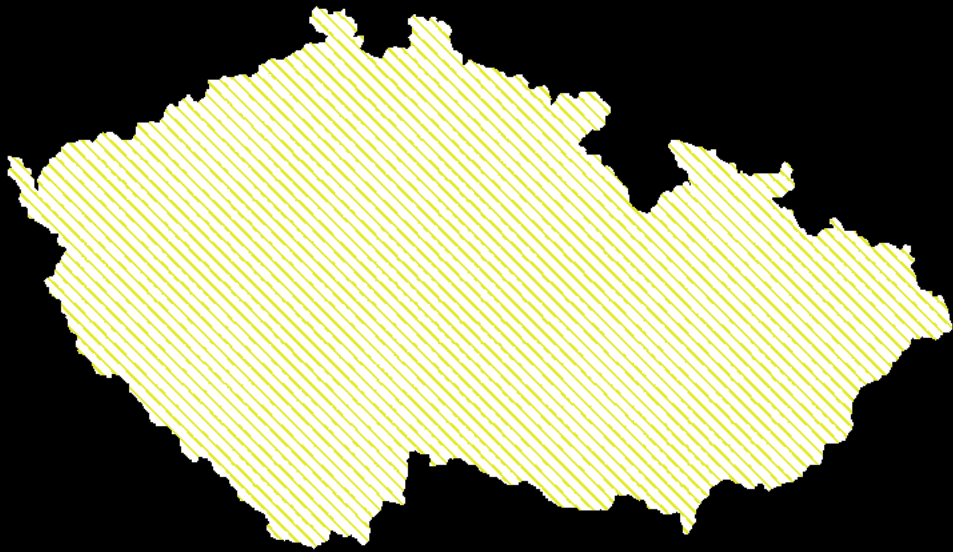


CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2026

Czech Republic

by Glopolis



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR




Glopolis is a Czech civil society organisation, established in 2004, striving to strengthen collaboration among CSOs with each other and with government and business, promoting enabling conditions for CSOs and civic space. In the Stronger Roots programme, we support networks to better cooperate with diverse partners at national and EU levels. We provide backbone coordination to NeoN - a network of 20 networks from different fields, associating 1000+ CSOs to engage effectively with the state, fulfilling democratic principles and sustainability.

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Key Developments

-  Babiš's coalition government plans to impose special obligations for so-called "political NGOs", including the disclosure of all expenses and foreign funding, as well as limiting subsidies and access to policy dialogue.
-  Methodologies for public participation were adopted in 2025, but the system lacks political backing, binding standardisation across public administration, and a central competence centre for participation.
-  Public funding system remains unstable, multi-year funding is lacking, and unnecessary administrative burdens prevail.

Summary

Civic space is rated as "Open" in the Czech Republic by the CIVICUS Monitor.¹ The European Commission made no recommendations related to civic space in its 2025 Rule of Law report. However, it noted that some civil society organisations (CSOs) expressed concerns that specific areas continue to be at risk of underfinancing. Additionally, it highlighted that some CSOs reported incidents of negative labelling by some politicians.²

In January 2026, after the 2025 parliamentary elections, Andrej Babiš's new government coalition came to power, consisting of his ANO party, the conservative Motorists for Themselves party, and the xenophobic populist Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party. Through the SPD, small radical and anti-rights parties entered into the Chamber of Deputies and gained decision-making positions in the state administration, despite their weak electoral results. The first months of the new government have shown a weakening of the rule of law: the prime minister has downplayed his conflict of interest, his immunity has been politically prioritised over legitimate criminal prosecution, legislative proposals to liquidate public media have been proposed and journalists have been verbally

attacked, and standard legislative processes have been bypassed by parliamentary proposals.³

The coalition government's programme contains several worrying proposals regarding CSOs. These include measures to monitor foreign funding, place restrictions on CSOs engaging in political activity, and increase administrative burdens on the sector. A draft law on the "registration of entities with foreign ties", prepared by members of the governing coalition and an advisor to Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, attracted significant public attention.⁴ The proposal was not formally submitted to parliament and was shelved in its original form, following tensions within the governing coalition and strong public criticism. In 2025, some positive measures have been introduced to enhance participation, such as the methodology for CSOs participation guidelines. However, these lack binding standards, and thus are dependent on the willingness and capacities of each ministry and authority to implement it. The public funding system remains unstable, administratively demanding, and largely based on short-term, annual project grants. With few exceptions, multiannual funding is not available.

Freedom of Association

Fundamental rights, including freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, are protected in the Czech Republic both *de jure* (in the Constitution,⁵ the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms,

the Civil Code,⁶ and elsewhere) and *de facto*. The legal framework provides for several legal forms of CSOs (registered associations, foundations, endowment funds, registered institutes), each with clearly defined

1. <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/czech-republic/>

2. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/be724460-59e5-4be3-b882-b329d1613d9a_en?filename=7_1_63938_coun_chap_czechia_en.pdf

3. <https://www.transparency.cz/premier-babis-mel-byt-snemovnou-vydan-prednost-dostala-nizka-politicka-kultura/>

4. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-kauzu-po-vzoru-ruska-babisova-poradkyne-sepsala-s-rajchlem-zakon-proti-neziskovkam-301146>

5. <https://www.psp.cz/docs/laws/constitution.html#>

6. https://www.usoud.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/ustavni_soud_www/Pravni_uprava/AJ/Listina_English_version.pdf

and administratively manageable requirements corresponding to the specific legal form.

Smaller associations in particular struggle with a lack of legal capacity and experience, which can result in committing unintentional procedural errors. Pro-bono legal services for CSOs would be helpful, but there are very few of these services. The quality of mandatory data disclosure by associations has improved significantly over the past three years. Any removal of entries from the register is based on the law and the systematic approach of the Ministry of Justice to consistently identify inactive associations.⁷

However, the escalating rhetoric against CSOs in the public sphere, the stigmatisation of specific CSOs based on their work in certain areas (e.g. the protection of environment, the integration of migrants, and inclusion in education), or new obligations (e.g. related to the new act on lobbying regulation, effective from 1 July 2025) may discourage citizens from certain types of activities or from deciding to establish a new organisation.⁸

The state's approach to organisations has been relatively transparent and, in most cases, consistently applied. Differences may arise as a result of different application of the law by specific officials in service. The information available does not indicate that organisations critical of the government faced discriminatory measures or stricter targeted controls within 2025.

However, this is likely to change with the new government coalition of Andrej Babiš composed of his ANO party, the conservative Motorists for Themselves party, and the xenophobic populist Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party coming into power in January 2026. Its programme statement contains a number of worrying proposals that specifically target CSOs, including:

- ▶ “Non-profit organisations receiving public funds will be required to publish their specific expenditures in a transparent manner.”
- ▶ “We will introduce a requirement for organisations that engage in political activities and are financed from abroad to disclose this fact transparently.”
- ▶ “We will make the financing of non-profit organisations that draw funds from public budgets or foreign sources transparent — all financial flows will be publicly accessible”⁹

Some media outlets pointed out that this statement gives the impression that civil society is a source of opacity and even an internal enemy.¹⁰

CSOs are already subject to several legal and reporting duties and controls: from mandatory registration and publication of financial statements to supervision of public collections. In addition, the flow of public funds can be tracked in the Register of Contracts,¹¹ the Subsidy Register,¹² and the State Treasury Monitor.¹³ There is no evidence that there is a systemic problem with the transparency of CSOs. Additional administrative measures targeting only this sector would very likely be seen as unjustified and discriminatory.

At its last meeting on 9 December 2025, the Government Council for NGOs, as the permanent advisory body, approved its opinion on the government's draft policy statement of 31 October 2025. The council emphasised that the government should not use non-existent or vaguely-defined terms such as “political non-profit organisation” or “organisation engaged in political activity”. It also argued that any new measures for transparency of public funding must apply to all grant recipients not only to CSOs and rejected the mandatory labelling of foreign funding of CSOs as contrary to the EU law.¹⁴

Access to funding

The legal framework in the Czech Republic allows CSOs to seek, receive, and use diverse funding sources for their activities, including foreign funding. The state primarily commissions CSOs to deliver services and activities supporting the implementation of public

policies. CSOs have the opportunity to apply for public funds in grant programs and public tenders at the state and local government levels. In June, the government approves main areas of state subsidy policy to support public benefit activities through CSOs for the following

7. https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1506/posilovani_obcanskeho_prostoru_glopolis.pdf

8. https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1506/posilovani_obcanskeho_prostoru_glopolis.pdf

9. <https://vlada.gov.cz/vlada/programove-prohlaseni/programove-prohlaseni-vlady-224629/>

10. <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/238187-politicke-neziskovsky-jako-slameny-panak-vlada-sivyrbrala-nepritele>

11. <https://smlouvy.gov.cz/>

12. <https://red.fs.gov.cz/registr-dotaci>

13. <https://monitor.statnipokladna.gov.cz/>

14. <https://vlada.gov.cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/zasedani-rady-vlady-pro-nestatni-neziskove-organizace-dne-9-prosince-2025-223777/>

year. For 2026, the plan included 89 subsidy programs administered by a total of 16 public granting authorities, including 13 ministries, the Office of the Government, and two agencies (the National Sports Agency and the Czech Development Agency) in 22 thematic areas.¹⁵ The largest subsidy envelopes have long been dedicated to support various sports associations through the National Sports Agency, while the smallest subsidies have gone to areas such as environmental protection, human rights, integration of migrants, the fight against corruption, and reducing inequalities.

However, the approval of the main areas of state subsidy policy for 2026 was halted due to the rejection of the state budget by the new Babiš government. The Babiš new state budget proposed in February 2026, sends very worrying signals: up to 70% cuts in subsidy programs for areas covered by CSOs including environmental protection and education, humanitarian aid, and international development cooperation (including aid to Ukraine), support for dissidents and democratic processes in non-democratic regimes, and youth and non-formal education.¹⁶

The public funding system remains unstable, administratively demanding, and largely based on short-term, annual project grants. With few exceptions, multiannual funding is not available due to the uncertainty of the granting authorities, although multi-annual financing is not explicitly prohibited under current legislation. The finance ministry agreed in 2025 to clarify the conditions for the granting authorities and to allow the settlement of subsidies to the state budget only after the period for which the subsidy was provided, rather than the end of each year.¹⁷ However, the proposal was not adopted.¹⁸ Public funding is often disbursed with significant delays, creating operational uncertainty, particularly for providers of social services. CSOs are therefore highly dependent on short-term and project funding. The administrative burden, annual financial reporting, and complex reporting requirements for public funds are a particular obstacle for smaller or voluntary organisations and for certain areas of activity, such as the complexity of compensation payments for social services. In both public subsidy and grant schemes, support for investments is largely absent, with the exception of some European

programmes, despite being essential for the sustainability and stable provision of certain services. Due to this subsidy environment, CSOs cannot practically plan for the provision of services and the development of human resources in the long term.¹⁹

Disruptions in foreign funding, including the cuts to USAID funding by the Trump administration, led to an immediate reduction of activities for several organisations, which state and domestic donors were unable to replace in the short term.

However, private philanthropy has been increasing. The volume of donations in Czechia exceeded 20 billion CZK (around €823 million), which corresponded to approximately 0.3% of GDP.²⁰ The driving force behind this were individuals, who donated nearly 15 billion CZK (€617.5 million) annually. Companies donated a further 6 billion CZK (€247 million). The environment for private donations is generally relatively well established. Since the 2020 tax period, private donors have been able to reduce their tax base for income tax calculations by up to 30% of the value of their donations, and this adjustment has been extended until the 2026 tax period. After ten years of negotiations, the amendment to the Public Collections Act,²¹ effective from 1 January 2025, removed certain administrative barriers, particularly in relation to cashless fundraising, thereby simplifying the organisation of public fundraising campaigns.

The Czech Republic so far has not had any law aimed at monitoring foreign funding, although such attempts were made as early as 2019 with a proposal by SPD members of parliament (MPs). The then Babiš government rejected them, arguing that they were discriminatory, violated European law, interfered with fundamental rights protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, and were unnecessary.²² However, in 2026, Andrej Babiš's new government appears to be going against its previous position, as its programme statement directly allows for the implementation of proposals put forward by the SPD, its current coalition partner, stating: "We will introduce a requirement for organisations that engage in political activities and are financed from abroad to disclose this fact transparently." This and

15. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/hlavni-oblasti-statni-dotacni-politiky-vuci-nejstatnim-nejiskovym-organizacim-pro-rok-2026-220232/>

16. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-zivot-v-cesku-mene-penez-od-statu-bude-znamenat-zdravani-varuji-skauti-ci-pioniri-298806> ; https://www.irozhlaz.cz/zpravy-domov/humanitarni-organizace-zadaji-babise-o-schuzku-duvodem-je-planovane-snizeni_2602171922_kv

17. https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/ex_skup_fin/Zapis_Expertni_skupina_08_04_2024.pdf

18. The change would come through amending Decree No. 433/2024 Coll. on the financial settlement with the state budget. The negotiations continued until June 2025 with no result. See: <https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/aktuality/Zapis-ze-zasedani-RVNN0-dne-19-6-2025.pdf>

19. https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1506/posilovani_obcanskeho_prostoru_glopolis.pdf

20. https://indexsolidarity.cz/index_solidarity_podrobna_zprava.pdf

21. <https://www.e-sbirka.cz/sb/2024/239?zalozka=text>

22. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/usneseni-vlady/usneseni-vlady-cr-ze-dne-25-listopadu-2019-c--853-181055/>

other proposals in the statement broadly mobilised civil society to issue a joint press release appealing to the public and MPs to reverse these trends of unjustified

and selective increase in administrative burden, risks of stigmatisation and discrimination of CSOs.²³

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The freedom of peaceful assembly is protected by the constitution and the conditions for its exercise are stable and transparent. State interventions, including police supervision of assemblies, are carried out in accordance with the law and are considered to be appropriate. Public gatherings must simply be announced; they do not require authorisation.²⁴ In the event of a conflict between two announced gatherings at the same place and time, the authorities must attempt to find a compromise with the aim of allowing both gatherings to take place and preventing so-called blocking gatherings. This may involve, for example, limiting the size of an assembly, defining the exact area in which it can take place, and determining the route of a march. It is also possible to file a request for judicial review of decisions restricting or prohibiting public assemblies, which happens only in exceptional cases. Regional courts then decide within the statutory

three-day period and in sufficient time before the planned date of the event.²⁵

There were few court cases in 2025 (that are accessible from public sources) that directly addressed punishment for protests or assemblies and significantly influenced the interpretation of freedom of peaceful assembly or association. However, in August 2025 the district court in Prague ruled that painting a Ukrainian flag near the Russian embassy was not a criminal offense. In 2025, activists from the Kaputin association were charged for damage to public property in the context of protests against Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, which the court found as lawful action.²⁶ This case is relevant in terms of the boundary between peaceful assembly, expression, and criminal liability for actions during political speech.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed through Article 17 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. The legal framework is further shaped by case law, which defines the boundaries between legitimate expression and unlawful speech such as hate speech or defamation. Overall, the framework is aligned with democratic and human rights standards, and state interventions are generally perceived as lawful and proportionate.

In its decision *No. I. ÚS 1927/24* of 11 March 2025,²⁷ the Constitutional Court stated that:

- ▶ Freedom of expression of a political nature is constitutionally protected under Article 17 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.
- ▶ The expression of a political opinion cannot automatically be considered “alarmist” simply because it contains disinformation or absurd claims.

- ▶ When assessing such matters, courts must respect the higher level of protection afforded to political speech and evaluate the context, purpose, and nature of the speech.

The Constitutional Court confirmed that the right to freedom of expression also includes statements that may be incorrect, shocking, or worrying if they fall in the scope of opinion or political commentary, and that criminal prosecution must meet strict conditions of proportionality. The Constitutional Court did not question the legitimate interest of the state in defending itself against disinformation, as it can cause serious harm to human lives and society. It emphasised that the fight against its spread must also be guided by the aforementioned principles. This is particularly true for expressions of a political nature, as even permissible restrictions on such expressions may lead to the erosion of precisely the values that the restrictions were intended to protect. Given the

²³ <https://glopolis.org/pro-civic/vladni-prohlaseni-ohrozuje-fungovani-verejne-prospesnych-sluzeb-upozornuje-pres-140-nevladnich-organizaci/>

²⁴ <https://mv.gov.cz/clanek/shromazdovaci-pravo.aspx>

²⁵ https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1506/posilovani_obcanskeho_prostoru_glopolis.pdf

²⁶ https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/namalovani-ukrajinske-vlajky-pred-byty-ruske-ambasady-nebylo-trestnym-cinem_2512231052_mst

²⁷ <https://www.usoud.cz/en/decisions/judgment-case-no-i-us-1927-24-du-11-mars-2025-protection-de-la-liberte-d-expression-evaluation-de-la-presence-des-elementes-constitutifs-du-delit-de-diffusion-de-faussees-alertes-et-d'alarmisme-resume-juridique>

risk of abuse, the instruments of criminal repression in the area of information dissemination must therefore be used with caution.²⁸

Initially, the freedom of expression in Czech society in the post-communist period was perceived mainly as the right to criticise the authorities without fear of repression and did not represent a major political challenge. However, with the advent of social networks, the spread of disinformation and heated opinions, the debate has shifted: measures against harmful content are described by some actors as censorship. The topic of freedom of expression has thus become a significantly polarised social and political issue. Some parts of society consider hate speech and disinformation as a serious threat to democracy and security. Others point out that the line between disinformation and legitimate opinion is difficult to define and that interventions against “fake news” can lead to the suppression of critical voices. After the October 2025 parliamentary elections, the latter approach gained a stronger position in the government.

In its program statement, the new government states that “freedom of speech is inviolable” and pledges to “prevent the abuse of state power and repressive forces against citizens for their opinions or public positions.” However, the government’s actions to date indicate that its rhetoric about freedom of expression is in direct contradiction to how it is undermining the stability of institutions that are supposed to ensure pluralism of opinions or combat disinformation, and to remain resistant to political interference.

Prime Minister Babiš and his coalition partners have long been critical to the Czech public service media²⁹ and have been preparing major steps to transform them since taking office. The government wants to transfer the funding of public service media from an independent fee-based system to direct allocation from the state budget. This would effectively reverse the recently adopted amendment to the Broadcasting Fees Act. The amendment increased concession fees for the first time in nearly two decades and was widely seen as a groundbreaking step toward stable and predictable funding for public service media.³⁰ The government is also considering merging the Czech Television and Czech Radio — institutions that have so

far served as statutory guarantors of media pluralism, accessibility, and editorial independence. The Czech culture minister has requested consultation with his Slovak counterpart, the minister whose government oversaw the effective suppression of public service media in Slovakia, allegedly with the aim of drawing lessons for a similar process in the Czech context.³¹

The government dissolved STRATKOM, a government body established to coordinate the state’s response to disinformation and hybrid information threats.³² Instead, a new advisor on “freedom of speech” was appointed — a person who has a documented record of opposing public criticism of the Russian regime.³³

A whistleblower protection law has been in force since 2024, but protection is weak in practice. In general, there is distrust of this system, given that all protection costs are borne by the whistleblower. This puts the whistleblower at a disadvantage if the subject of the report has significantly greater resources, for example for legal services and media coverage. Another challenge is related to political culture, where public officials repeatedly make offensive or aggressive statements against investigative journalists who report on political scandals. While these statements do not come from state institutions and do not represent systemic restrictions, they can undermine impartiality of the state administration.³⁴

While there is no comprehensive data on attacks against the digital infrastructure of civic actors, specific incidents have been reported in the media. For example, in October 2025, Czech CSO Tady a teď, which supports children and adults from socially disadvantaged families, lost approximately 5.3 million CZK (€218,000) after its accountant was deceived into transferring funds to a fraudulent account by attackers posing as police officers.³⁵

The situation for civic actors in relation to online content moderation is insufficiently monitored. There is no systematic assessment of account suspensions, shadow banning, or the disproportionate removal or retention of content affecting civil society actors on digital platforms. These gaps have become more visible in the context of recent platform-level policy changes that directly shape the operating environment for civil

28. <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/Judikat/uscr/i-us-1927-24-1>

29. <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-babis-okamura-a-stacilo-se-predhaneji-v-utocich-na-novinare-40513077>

30. https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/medialni-novelu-odsouhlasil-senat-zyseni-poplatku-za-verejnopravni-media-musi_2504091859_job

31. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-klampir-prijal-v-praze-slovenskou-ministryni-kultury-pooobedvala-i-s-okamurou-297753>

32. <https://www.info.cz/zpravodajstvi-a-komentare/svoboda-slova-po-konci-stratkomu-autocenzura>

33. <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/238513-babis-ucinil-svou-poradkyni-pro-svobodu-slova-kriticku-boje-proti-dezinformacim>

34. https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1506/posilovani_obcanskeho_prostoru_glopolis.pdf

35. <https://denikn.cz/minuta/1910711/>

society online. On 10 October 2025, Meta introduced a ban on social and political advertising across the European Union, including the Czech Republic. The ban affects CSOs' ability to conduct fundraising activities, particularly lead generation, and advocacy campaigns, petitions, and awareness-raising related to social, environmental, and civic space issues. In its communication on the ban, Meta defines social

content as including civil and social rights, crime, the economy, environmental policy, health, immigration, political values and governance, security, and foreign policy. For CSOs operating in the Czech Republic, this policy change substantially limits their ability to reach donors and the broader public through paid online communication.³⁶

Participation in Decision-Making

In the Czech Republic, the emphasis on supporting participation in public decision-making is enshrined in a number of strategic documents, including the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030,³⁷ the Concept of Client-Oriented Public Administration³⁸, the Czech Republic's commitments under the Open Government Partnership (OGP),³⁹ Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) procedures,⁴⁰ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.⁴¹ However, participation is not considered normal practice unless it is explicitly required by law. Regulations and legislative proposals do not normally undergo *ex ante* and *ex post* impact assessments, which would involve those affected by the regulations or who have expertise on them. In the past four years, the bypassing of the legislative process by amendments and additions to laws has intensified and eliminated consultation entirely. In practice, participation is unfortunately often formal or selective and has no real impact on decision-making.

The quality of participation has not been consistent and fundamentally depends on the political will, capacities, and competencies of those who set up and manage the processes, as well as those who are supposed to be involved and are affected by the issues.⁴² There is also a difference between participation in the legislative process with the central government and participation at the local level. Formally, there are various instruments for participation of public and non-state actors in the development and implementation of public policies, such as advisory bodies, consultation processes, panels, and focus groups. The advisory bodies in which CSOs are represented, such as the

Government Council for Persons with Disabilities, only produce resolutions or recommendations that are non-binding on ministries. The degree of inclusiveness of participatory processes varies considerably. Although the criteria for participation are often formally defined, their application and communication are not uniform, and public authorities are not always able to explain why and how specific actors were invited to participate. As a result, participation in practice often relies on established organisations with existing networks and capacities, while smaller actors and those representing excluded groups may face practical barriers related to resources, time, and access.⁴³

The Methodology for Participation approved by the government in September 2025 represents a positive step forward, as it sets out principles and recommended practices for involving CSOs in advisory bodies and policy drafting.⁴⁴ By the end of 2025, the Office of the Government also prepared a "10 Point methodology" for coordinating partnership, cooperation, and involving partners from CSOs in the implementation of EU funds and other similar activities.⁴⁵ This is another important document to support the partnership principle. However, these methodologies, whether adopted by the government or issued only at the level of individual ministries, remain only a recommended framework without binding standards. Their application therefore depends on the willingness and capacities of individual ministries and office and are therefore not sufficient to ensure that existing challenges will be reduced.

36. <https://fundraising.cz/2025/10/zakaz-reklamy-s-politickym-a-socialnim-obsahem-spolecnosti-meta/>

37. <https://www.cr2030.cz/udrzitelny-rozvoj-v-ceske-republice/strategicky-ramec-ceska-republika-2030>

38. <https://kvalitavs.gov.cz/kvalitni-verejna-sprava/klientsky-orientovana-verejna-sprava-2030/>

39. <https://korupce.cz/partnerstvi-pro-otevrene-vladnuti-ogp/>

40. <https://ria.vlada.cz/>

41. <https://www.ochrance.cz/umluva/>

42. <https://glopolis.org/publikace/posilovani-obcanskeho-prostoru-v-cesku-2025/> ; ;

https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1506/posilovani_obcanskeho_prostoru_glopolis.pdf

43. https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1506/posilovani_obcanskeho_prostoru_glopolis.pdf ;

<https://glopolis.org/publikace/posilovani-obcanskeho-prostoru-v-cesku-2025/>

44. https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/aktuality/usneseni_2025_708.pdf

45. https://vlada.gov.cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/zaverecná-konference-projektu-_metodicka-podpora-zapojeni-partneru-nno_-224698/

While the Office of the Government has been promoting participation over the past four years, political support remains insufficient. There is still a lack of methodological support at the central level of state administration, and systematic steps to train civil servants in participation practices have not begun. The state also lacks the tools and resources to adequately support the capacities needed to engage CSOs in policy-making processes. CSOs provide their expertise without financial compensation for the preparation of background materials, which as a result comes from their own resources (for example, a legal analysis to enable multi-annual financing which was commissioned by CSOs at a legal firm).⁴⁶

The act on regulating lobbying, effective as of 1 July 2025, introduced new concepts and regulatory obligations,⁴⁷ including a new Lobbying Register.⁴⁸ The act was adopted with the aim of increasing transparency in legislative and regulatory processes, in particular by identifying actors seeking to influence public decision-making, the interests they represent, and the stages at which such influence is exercised. The law applies to anyone who consistently communicates with a lobbied person with the aim of directly influencing his or her actions in the preparation, discussion, or approval of legislation, policy documents, or international treaties and other areas related to policy making. Initial feedback from civil society points to specific problems related to the application of the law to civic engagement and participation. The law introduces new administrative obligations without fully taking into account the specific nature of civic engagement and participation. The effects of the law on civil society participation are already becoming apparent. The registration requirement also applies to informal citizens' initiatives and collective, open, and issue-based forms of advocacy (such as joint letters and statements). These activities differ from professional lobbying carried out by economic entities and may require more complex internal coordination and reporting, especially for organisations with limited administrative capacities. The duty of registration and reporting also applies to individuals acting within CSOs or within informal initiatives and may discourage

them from actively engaging in political dialogue. The Office of the Government, the Department of Civil Society Cooperation together with Transparency International Czech Republic has prepared two seminars with the justice ministry to explain the new obligations and address the application of the law in practice.⁴⁹ There are already signs of revision of the law, without sufficient space for evaluating its application in practice.⁵⁰ There is a risk of its politicisation and emptying of its original purpose, i.e. the transparency of the legislative process.

CSOs do not have a formal status for submitting comments to *eKlep* — an electronic library that contains all documents in the legislative process, within the framework of interdepartmental comment procedures. There was some hope that *eKlep* would be replaced by the new e-Legislation system,⁵¹ but its implementation was postponed. Compared to the current practice, the new system should ensure that the public has a broader and continuous overview of the development of legislative proposals throughout the political process, and not only at the stage when they are submitted for comments. However, this does not mean that all government documents will be automatically published. Transparency will increase mainly for legislative proposals and their amendments, but not in all working or non-legislative materials of the state, meaning that CSOs' access to information will remain limited.

In previous years, the Czech government was interested in the relevant expertise of CSOs in a number of areas and adopted a strategy for the cooperation of public administration with CSOs, which is in place until 2030. Under previous governments, ministries such as the environment ministry and the foreign affairs ministry had established functional cooperation with civil society. However, this began to change with the new Babiš government. Since the end of 2025, there has been a thorough reorganisation of agendas, dismissals of officials, and the cancellation of previous consultation processes, especially in ministries led by the coalition partner Motorists for Themselves, which strongly opposes cooperation with CSOs.⁵²

46. https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/ex_skup_fin/Zapis_Expertni_skupina_12_07_2023_final.pdf

47. <https://msp.gov.cz/en/web/msp/regulace-lobbovani>

48. <https://relob.gov.cz/>

49. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/probehl-webinar-k-zakonu-o-regulaci-lobbovani-222955>

<https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/webinar-k-aplikaci-zakona-o-regulaci-lobbovani-potvrdil-velky-zajem-neziskoveho-sektoru-224956/>

50. <https://zpravy.ckait.cz/vydani/2025-06/profesni-komory-nejsou-lobbiste-je-nutne-zvysit-odbornost-legislativni-procesu/>

51. <https://www.e-legislativa.cz/portal/domu>

52. <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/reorganizace-na-ministerstvu-zahranici-vyvolala-kritiku-z-opozice-368502> ;

<https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/reorganizace-mzv-bude-podle-macinky-komplexni-zatim-nikoho-nepropustil/2762706>

Safe space

The Czech legal framework formally protects against threats and violence and offers tools such as the possibility to file a criminal complaint, propose dismissal of charges, or contact the police. In practice, this protection is insufficient and not adapted to the specific nature of attacks against human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society representatives. Threats, harassment, and bullying (especially online) are often not investigated thoroughly or are downplayed. Experience shows that an attack must always be of a certain intensity for the police to take action, and generally the police and prosecutors assess threats relatively mildly. Attacks on the internet often go unresolved or are classified by the police as misdemeanours, which does not provide real protection for the victim.⁵³

A positive development in 2025 was the establishment of the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and the Children's Ombudsman. It is expected that this will lead to the creation of an institutional framework for the comprehensive protection of human rights, a measure that the EU, international institutions, and CSOs have long called for.⁵⁴

On the part of civil society, the lack of capacity to report incidents is often a problem. This lack of effective protection is further highlighted by new data from independent research conducted by IPI and Ipsos (published in April 2025).⁵⁵ The study confirmed that 33% of Czech journalists face attacks at least once a month, with 6% facing them on a daily basis. These attacks are highly personalised in nature, with women journalists experiencing personal verbal attacks twice as often as men. Despite the severity, 60% of victims did not report the latest attack, citing a lack of trust in the authorities' ability to provide a resolution.

Measures to protect journalists and activists remain insufficient. Authorities do not collect or analyse data on attacks against these groups, and most incidents are treated under general criminal or administrative law without considering the victims' public-interest

role. The lack of targeted monitoring limits the understanding of the scope and nature of threats, making it difficult to implement coordinated protective measures. During protests or public events, safety largely depends on individual police officers or the experience of editorial teams, with no uniform rules or rapid-response mechanisms in place. Although the European Media Freedom Act emphasises the state's responsibility to protect journalists, no comprehensive system currently guarantees their safety in practice.⁵⁶

Like other EU member states, the Czech Republic is required to transpose the European Directive 2024/1069 on protection against Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) by 7 May 2026. The state has made some preparatory steps on this, however there are no clear milestones and the transposition has not been tabled in the government legislative work plan for 2026.⁵⁷ In its resolution of 18 March 2025, the Government Council for Human Rights called for an effective transposition that ensures broad protection of civil society actors acting in the public interest, extends safeguards beyond to domestic cases, provides a wide range of remedies (including costs, damages and sanctions), addresses the risk of abusive use of criminal law, and ensures regular collection of data on lawsuits against public participation.⁵⁸ Similarly, the Government Council for NGOs adopted a resolution in the same spirit at its meeting on 19 June 2025.⁵⁹ A draft amendment to the Civil Procedure Code, partly addressing protection against SLAPPs, was prepared by the justice ministry,⁶⁰ and was open for public comment. However, it has not been submitted in parliament, and the entire process has been suspended.

In January 2026, the new Babiš government incorporated proposals targeting non-governmental organisations into its programme statement.⁶¹ In several points, it outlines a fundamental shift in the state's approach to civil society and non-profit organisations by viewing them as potentially risky entities that should be subject to selective and stringent obligations. The

53. <https://glopolis.org/publikace/posilovani-obcanskeho-prostoru-v-cesku-2025/> ; ;

https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1506/posilovani_obcanskeho_prostoru_glopolis.pdf

54. <https://msp.gov.cz/en/web/msp/-/snemovna-schvalila-zrizeni-funkce-detskeho-ombudsmana-dochazi-tak-k-vyznamnemu-posileni-ochrany-prav-deti>

55. https://czipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Ipsos-pro-CZ-IPI-prezentace_23042025_FIN.pdf

56. <https://www.ecpmf.eu/ten-demands-for-maintaining-media-freedom-in-czechia/> ; ;

<https://policie.gov.cz/clanek/zverejnene-informace-2024-utoky-na-novinare.aspx>

57. <https://www.komora.cz/pravni-predpis/6-26-navrh-planu-legislativnich-praci-vlady-na-zbyvajici-cast-roku-2026-a-navrh-vyhledu-leg-praci-vl-na-leta-2027-az-2029t19-1-2026/>

58. <https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rfp/cinnost-rady/zasedani-rady/Usneseni---sikanozni-zaloby.pdf>

59. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/zasedani-rady-vlady-pro-nestatni-neziskove-organizace-dne-19--cervna-2025-220329/>

60. <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/monitor/8160783.htm>

61. <https://vlada.gov.cz/vlada/programove-prohlaseni/programove-prohlaseni-vlady-224629/>

proposed measures include mandatory disclosure of foreign funding, “preventing the use of public money for political activism” and the threat of extensive restrictions on public support—create an environment of uncertainty, stigmatisation, and unequal treatment.

The programme states that:

“a public register of all subsidies for non-governmental organisations from public budgets will be established, covering not only the state but also municipalities, regions, and associations of municipalities, and that organisations receiving public funds will be required to publish their specific expenditures in a transparent manner”.

“organisations involved in political activities and financed from abroad will be required to disclose this fact transparently, and the use of public funds for political activities will be prevented. NGOs can promote their political views, but not with taxpayers’ money”.

“education must remain free from ideological influences and the involvement of political non-governmental organizations, as the role of schools is to educate and develop knowledge and critical thinking, not to spread political or activist attitudes.”

“funding for non-governmental organisations that hinder development and investment will be stopped [and] funding for environmental initiatives from public funds will undergo a fundamental review.”

The programme statement also introduces the term “political non-profit organisations.” Such labelling calls

into question the legitimate professional and public activities of CSOs and unnecessarily creates uncertainty about their role in a democratic system. The activities of associations, foundations, public benefit corporations, and others are a direct exercise of the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of association, and their involvement in public affairs is a sign of a healthy democracy.

While the requirement for transparency in public financing may be legitimate, it must not become a tool for discriminating and stigmatising CSOs, which are already subject to strict controls, from mandatory registration and publication of financial statements to supervision of public collections. In addition, the flow of public funds can be traced in the Register of Contracts and the State Treasury Monitor. Instead of introducing further selective burdens on the non-profit sector, the state should focus on its own digital debt. The fragmentation of state data, duplicate reporting, and the lack of interconnection between registers is more of a problem on the state level. To ensure efficiency administration on the part of the state should be more coherent, rather than creating unequal conditions and new barriers for active citizens.

Furthermore, mandatory disclosure of foreign funding is potentially stigmatising and contrary to EU law.⁶² Although reducing the influence of undemocratic regimes on events in the Czech Republic is a legitimate goal, the mandatory labelling of CSOs who are foreign funded does not lead to this goal. On the contrary, it stigmatises legal income, including European funds, from which organisations co-finance services for Czech citizens. Similar measures have been introduced in Russia, Belarus, and Georgia, leading to restrictions on freedom of association and expression and even the criminalisation of civic engagement. In the Czech environment, it would be contrary to European law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.⁶³

⁶². CJEU, C-78/18 *Commission v Hungary*, where the court ruled that mandatory disclosure and labelling of CSOs receiving foreign funding is stigmatising, disproportionate, and contrary to EU law: <https://infocuria.curia.europa.eu/tabs/document?source=document&docid=227569&doclang=EN>

⁶³. See more in the joint press statement of more than 140 CSOs at <https://gljopolis.org/pro-civic/vladni-prohlaseni-ohrozuje-fungovani-verejne-prospesnych-sluzeb-upozornuje-pres-140-nevladnich-organizaci/>

Recommendations

TARGETED RECOMMENDATION:

- **Recognise civil society organisations as important partners and institutionalise effective mechanisms for meaningful citizen and stakeholder participation by building on the CSOs Participation methodology, in line with Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2836, OECD and the European Civil Society Strategy.**
- Transpose the anti-SLAPP directive preventing abusive lawsuits against public participation and extend protection to domestic disputes ; introduce rapid procedural filters, the possibility of awarding compensation to those unjustly prosecuted, and systematic data collection.
- Clarify the rules for multi-annual funding provided by the public granting authorities, expand multi-year programmes (especially for social and health services), and align the timelines for grant calls and grant allocation with the cash flow of grant recipients.
- Integrate clear participatory standards into law- and policy-making by ensuring timely access to information and consultations, transparent stakeholder selection, consistent feedback on input received, and stronger impact assessment (RIA).
- Upgrade the central *e-Legislativa* portal to support public awareness and consultation functions and establish a central competence centre for participation.
- Ensure that the act on lobbying regulation is implemented and interpreted in line with EU law and international standards and its original objective of enhancing transparency is not used to restrict legitimate civic engagement and advocacy.

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



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.

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