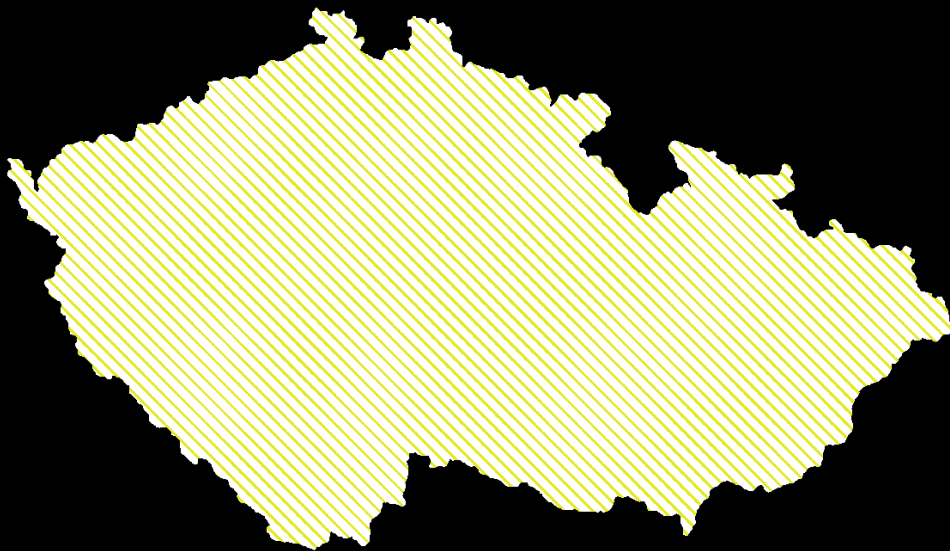
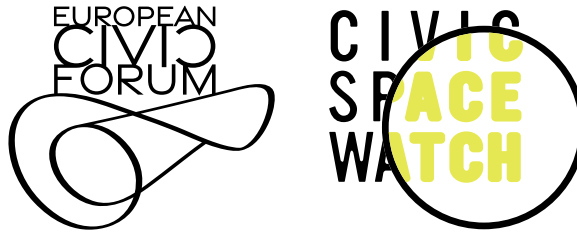


CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2025

# Czech Republic

By Glopolis,  
with the inputs from the Network for Protection of Democracy





## **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

This report was published by the European Civic Forum (ECF) in June 2025, with chapters written by its secretariat, member organisations, and partner organisations, including as part of the Net4Defenders project. Much of the content originally appeared as part of ECF's submission to the European Commission's Rule of Law consultation. 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 CONTRIBUTOR**

**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 civic space trends



Concerns over new legislation introduced under the pretext of promoting transparency and security.



Despite some positive developments in increasing public participation in decision-making, formal civil dialogue processes are weak.



Public funding remains short-term, fragmented across public funders, and subject to heavy bureaucratic requirements.

## Summary

Civic space is rated as “Open” in the Czech Republic in 2024 by the CIVICUS Monitor.<sup>1</sup> However, there were a number of concerns about the space for civil society, including inconsistencies in proposed regulation on lobbying, the inefficiency of the legislative process, and limitations in public funding for civil society organisations (CSOs), such as a lack of multi-annual funding and bureaucratic and methodological inconsistencies in grant schemes. Public participation in decision-making saw mixed results. While the government promoted participatory initiatives, mechanisms for civil dialogue across public administration remain weak. The proposed Law on Lobbying raised concerns over its weak and ineffective measures to tackle lobbying on the one hand, and its disproportionate burden and restrictions on civil society participation on the other.

There were some developments in the implementation of the recommendations of the European Commission’s Rule of Law report. A bill establishing a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and the position of a children’s ombudsman was finally approved in January 2025. The amendment to the Conflict of Interests Act introduced stricter regulations, including a clearer ban on media ownership and tighter rules for accepting subsidies and investment incentives. However, the amendment was annulled by the Constitutional Court for violating the rules of the legislative process. The responsible ministries did not carry out targeted consultations with civil society to implement the report’s recommendations. A positive step was the discussion on three topics of the rule of law organized by the Office of the Government and in cooperation with CSOs.<sup>2</sup>

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

2. <https://glopolis.org/neon/pravni-stat-v-cr-prilezitosti-pro-rok-2025/>

# Institutional, political, and socio-economic landscape

While the separation of powers in the Czech Republic is generally upheld, there are notable shortcomings in policymaking processes and the quality of legislation and reforms. The legislative process in the Chamber of Deputies is undermined by MPs practice of attaching amendments to bills that are not substantively related to them in an attempt to bypass the normal legislative process. This common practice was raised by the Constitutional Court, which issued an important ruling on an amendment to the Conflict of Interest Act, stating that it was unconstitutional, and struck it down. The amendment sought to tighten the rules on media ownership by politicians and the acceptance of subsidies by government ministers and any companies they own.<sup>3</sup> The finding was perceived as controversial, as six of the 15 constitutional judges held a different opinion. Nevertheless, with this ruling, the Constitutional Court indicated the need for the Chamber of Deputies to submit proper and reasoned legislative proposals and to streamline the legislative process.

The Chamber of Deputies has also been paralysed by obstructions from the populist ANO party and the right-wing, xenophobic Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), which sit in opposition. Instead of devoting their time to making and enforcing laws, MPs spend many hours on the plenary listening to obstructionist speeches of the opposition leaders. Notable examples include an eleven-hour speech by SPD leader Tomio Okamura, who quoted at length from his thesis, and the ANO leader Andrej Babiš blocking the discussion of an amendment to Lex Ukraine VII, which would enable extension of temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine, for two hours. Eventually, this may further weaken people's trust in the Chamber of Deputies and the functioning of democracy in general.

In 2024, the underfunding of the judicial system remained a serious challenge. Low salaries for judges, prosecutors and court staff threatened the system's stability and led to the departure of qualified staff and the largest judicial strike in Czech history.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the inadequate salaries of judicial staff meant that few people were attracted or motivated to work within the judiciary.<sup>5</sup> This shortage of personnel is becoming a systemic problem for the effective functioning of the justice system, compounded by the repeated delays to judicial digitalisation. However, some progress has been made, with increased transparency in the selection of constitutional judges through senate hearings and legal reforms preventing the arbitrary dismissal of the chief prosecutor.<sup>6</sup>

In 2024, the government proposed a major amendment to the Act on Czech Television and Czech Radio<sup>7</sup> to enhance the independent governance of public media by increasing fees, expanding the range of fee payers, and strengthening rules and mechanisms.<sup>8</sup> The opposition blocked its adoption in the Chamber of Deputies. In response, CSOs launched a petition<sup>9</sup> in support of the adoption of the Act and the independence and financial stability of public media, to which the government has committed.<sup>10</sup>

So-called “news deserts” continue to expand in the Czech Republic.<sup>11</sup> Local media outlets lack independent funding and quality journalism. They mainly serve as advertising platforms and rely on local politicians or direct payments from town halls. People outside of big cities lack access to quality, reliable local news, which is a prerequisite for solving local problems and evaluating the work of politicians.<sup>12</sup> Local media in the Czech Republic is among the most vulnerable in Europe, yet discussions on how to support it is lacking.

3. The case relates to the legislative process of adopting an amendment to the so called Lex Babiš II, i.e. Act No. 253/2023 Coll., amending Act No. 424/1991 Coll., on association in political parties and political movements. <https://www.usoud.cz/aktualne/pozmenovaci-navrh-predstavoval-neustavni-pri-lepek-ustavni-soud-proto-vyhovel-navrhu-na-zruseni-zakona-podaneho-skupinou-poslancu-z-rad-opozice>.

4. <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/zamestnanci-soudu-stavkuji-zavrene-zustaly-podatelny-cast-jednani-byla-zrusena/2579067>

5. [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/oddeleni-platy-politiku-a-soudcu-radi-expertka-zakaz-zmrazovani-si-v-ustave-neumi\\_2410170600\\_nel](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/oddeleni-platy-politiku-a-soudcu-radi-expertka-zakaz-zmrazovani-si-v-ustave-neumi_2410170600_nel) <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/12/justicni-odbory-miri-uzavrit-s-blazkem-dohodu-o-platech-stavka-zavisi-na-realnem-splneni/>

6. Previously, the president could appoint a Constitutional Court judge candidate, and the Senate would only confirm without public debate. In 2024, public Senate hearings were introduced, increasing transparency and reducing politically motivated quiet nominations. Moreover, there was a reform of the Public Prosecution Service. Previously, the Supreme Public Prosecutor could be dismissed by the government without clear rules, risking political interference. In 2024, legislation was adopted defining the conditions and grounds for dismissal, reducing arbitrary removals and strengthening the prosecution's independence within the rule of law.

7. <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=9&t=738>

8. <https://www.mk.gov.cz/novinky-a-media-cs-4/5782cs-vlada-schvalila-navrh-velke-medialni-novely-novely-zakonu-o-ceske-televizi-ceskem-rozhlasce-a-televiznich-a-rozhlasovych-poplatcich>

9. <https://www.dikyzemuzem.cz/podpor-podpisem/>

10. <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7288532245542281216>

11. <https://hlidacipes.org/cesko-medialne-vysycha-zpravodajske-pouste-se-siri-lokalnich-redakci-ubyva/>

12. <https://www.ochranademokracie.cz/>

In Europe, the Czechs are among those who most strongly feel the impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Before the invasion, about 40% of Czechs preferred their country to lean towards the West, while about 55% believed that the Czech Republic should remain geopolitically somewhere between the West and the East. This may indicate disappointment that the Czech Republic had not achieved a standard of living comparable to developed Western countries or dissatisfaction with some cultural or other trends in Western countries. Support for Ukrainian refugees remains around 55-60%. While more than half of the people (56%) say their household makes ends meet fairly well in 2024, which is the highest-ever figure, the proportion of people who find it difficult to manage has risen from 13% in 2019 to 18% in 2024. Overall, a prevailing sense of discontent persists in the public sphere, along with scepticism about the future direction of Czech society.<sup>13</sup>

In 2024, the Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organisations warned of serious human rights restrictions and discrimination related to the legislation around migration, foreigners, and Ukrainian refugees, namely the forthcoming Lex Ukraine VII and an amendment to the law on the residence of foreigners prepared by the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>14</sup> The draft of the so-called Aliens Act fundamentally changes the concept of a family member of a Czech citizen and worsens the status of foreigners living in the Czech Republic.<sup>15</sup> Lex Ukraine VII was supposed to provide for the extension of temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine but instead obliges only Russian citizens to renounce their Russian citizenship to obtain Czech citizenship, affecting around 40,000 people. This measure, which aims to “protect the security and foreign policy interests of the Czech Republic,” has drawn criticism for constituting “collective blame”, where individuals are held responsible for actions they did not commit simply because of their nationality, and for potentially harming Russian dissidents and those assisting Ukrainian refugees.<sup>16</sup> Experts warn it could lead to legal uncertainty and disproportionate administrative hurdles.<sup>17</sup>

In 2024, the Czech Constitutional Court annulled the mandatory gender-affirming surgery requirement for transgender individuals, citing dignity and bodily integrity violations. The ruling, effective from July 2025, underscores the need for further reforms. Hate crime legislation still lacks explicit protection for sexual orientation and gender identity, creating gaps in legal recourse. In 2024, the Czech Republic was close to legalising equal marriage, promoted by the *Jsme fér* initiative. Legalising same-sex marriage and joint parental rights was supported by public opinion<sup>18</sup> and statements of various civic groups, including children's rights organisations, educators, school parliaments, and producers in the audiovisual industry. In the end, due to amendments in the Chamber of Deputies, the adopted bill significantly restricted the rights of parents and children and preserved two categories: partnerships with conjugal rights and step-adoption,<sup>19</sup> while excluding joint adoption.<sup>20</sup>

There is a lack of data on the public's opinion towards civil society. The only long-term opinion polls by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM) measure trust or distrust of public institutions. These surveys have consistently shown low levels of trust: data from 2016 confirmed this trend, and in 2017, trust declined further — by a total of 8 percentage points compared to September 2016 — reaching an all-time low of 32% in October 2017. From then until 2020, despite minor fluctuations, there was a clear dominance of distrust, which ranged between 51% and 59%, over trust, which varied between 32% and 38%. In the period 2021–2023, this gap rapidly narrowed to just four percentage points in the previous survey. However, the most recent survey did not confirm the continuation of this trend, as the gap between trust and distrust widened again slightly — though the changes remained within the margin of error. In 2024, many events were organised by the government and other actors, including civil society, to mark 20 years since the Czech Republic joined the EU. However, public perception of the EU remains an issue. Initially, trust in the EU was high (60%), though civic engagement was weak. The support declined

13. <https://www.ochranademokracie.cz/>

14. <https://migracnikonsorcium.cz/cs/pripominky-konsorcia-k-lex-ukrajina-vii/> and <https://migracnikonsorcium.cz/cs/migracni-konsorcium-apeluje-na-vladu-aby-neschvalila-navrh-cizineckeho-zakona/>

15. The new concept of a family member of a Czech citizen introduces reverse discrimination: third-country nationals (non-EU citizens) who are family members of Czech citizens would have fewer rights than family members of other EU nationals. The new definition removes the right to stay during residence proceedings, allows applications to be rejected based on unrelated issues (such as past job loss), requires applicants to answer even self-incriminating questions, and permits denials based on classified intelligence without access to evidence or judicial review.

16. <https://migracnikonsorcium.cz/cs/poslanci-chteji-udelat-z-zadatelu-o-obcanstvi-z-ruska-bezpecnostni-hrozbu-i-z-tech-co-tu-dlouhodobe-ziji-a-angazuji-se-v-pomoci-ukrajine/>

17. <https://www.ferovamigracnipolitika.cz/diskriminacni-zpriseni-podminek-pro-ruske-zadatele-o-obcanstvi-vyvolava-kritiku/>

18. <https://assets.nationbuilder.com/zamanzelstvi/pages/2678/attachments/original/1707148150/manzelstvi-pro-vsechny-vyzkum.pdf?1707148150>

19. <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/operace-nebude-podminkou-uredni-zmeny-pohlavi-rozhodl-ustavni-soud-348970>; [https://www.jsmefer.cz/shrnuti\\_roku\\_2024](https://www.jsmefer.cz/shrnuti_roku_2024)

20. Same-sex couples in the Czech Republic are excluded from joint adoption; only “step-adoption” is permitted. One partner must adopt the child first, and only then can the second partner apply to adopt. If one partner is the biological parent, the other may adopt with court and (if applicable) child/guardian consent. In cases without a biological link, the second adoption follows individual adoption, again requiring court and guardian approval.



during the migration crisis but stabilised from 2018 onward, with a slight increase in 2024, due to the EU being seen as a solution to global challenges like the energy crisis. Civil society emphasises that the EU should not be merely an economic project but must also protect democracy and human rights. Criticism remains regarding the lack of transparency in decision-making, with calls for greater public participation to prevent the EU from being perceived as a distant bureaucratic entity.<sup>21</sup>

The European Parliament elections in the Czech Republic were shaped primarily by immigration topics and the European Green Deal, with populist parties framing them as a referendum on the government. The campaign focused on EU migration policies, sovereignty concerns, and opposition to the internal combustion engine ban. Higher turnout in underdeveloped regions suggests discontented voters could shape upcoming national elections, with economic conditions, energy policy, and Euroscepticism remaining key issues.<sup>22</sup>

## The regulatory environment for civic freedoms

### Freedom of association

2024 marked 10 years of the new Civil Code<sup>23</sup> which regulates associations in the Czech Republic. The code is conceived as liberal, respecting the internal autonomy of associations while protecting the rights of members and third parties, and has been well-applied in practice. However, there are new challenges related to the registers of the actual owners of associations, distinguishing between the economic activities of non-profit associations and business activities, and tax and accounting issues.<sup>24</sup>

The key issue related to the registration of associations in the public register and the registration of beneficial owners is the administrative burden associated with the obligation of associations to register in the public register, which can be challenging for smaller associations. The associations, although they do not have owners in the traditional sense of the word, must record members of statutory bodies in the register of beneficial owners, which is a consequence of legislation effective from 1 January 2021. The lack of clarity in the legislation regarding the definition and identification of beneficial owners for associations may lead to incorrect or incomplete registrations. The lack of information and methodological support for associations in this area makes it difficult for them to comply with legal requirements. These factors can lead to legal uncertainties and potential sanctions for associations that fail to comply with their obligations for registration and beneficial owner registration. The

administrative burden associated with the obligation to publish annual financial statements in the public register is also problematic, and failure to comply with this obligation can lead to fines of up to 100,000 CZK (roughly €3,990).<sup>25</sup>

The problem of defining the boundaries between association and business activities is a new issue. The current legislation provides associations with the possibility to carry out secondary activity in addition to their main activity, which may have a business character, as long as the primary purpose of the association is not business or profit-making activities. This secondary economic activity should serve primarily to support the main not-for-profit activity of the association. The ambiguities in the legislation can lead associations to exceed these limits, which could result in the loss of benefits associated with the non-profit status or even the dissolution of the association. The ambiguity lies primarily in the fact that the law does not precisely define the scope and limits of ancillary business activities, which may lead to different interpretations among associations, authorities, and courts. Another problem is the lack of differentiation between activities aimed at profit and activities that are merely an economic means to fulfil the association's objectives, which complicates the legal assessment of specific cases. Therefore, it is recommended to have a careful setting of internal rules and a transparent separation of non-profit and business activities to avoid possible legal complications.<sup>26</sup>

21. <https://nms.global/cz/20-let-v-evropske-unii-proc-zustava-eu-mez-icchy-nepochopena/>; <https://www.stem.cz/20-let-clenstvi-cr-v-eu-v-postojich-ceske-verejnosti/>

22. <https://www.amo.cz/en/strengthening-the-resilience-of-czech-slovak-and-polish-societies-prior-to-the-2024-european-parliament-elections/behind-the-ballot-unmasking-influence-narratives-in-czechia-slovakia-and-polands-ep-races/>

23. Act No. 89/2012 Coll. Civil Code Act: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2012-89>

24. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/konference-deset-let-noveho-spolkoveho-prava-213589/>

25. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/konference-deset-let-noveho-spolkoveho-prava-213589/>

26. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/konference-deset-let-noveho-spolkoveho-prava-213589/>



Regarding the Strategy for Cooperation between Public Administration and NGOs for the period 2021-2030, the Office of the Government prepared a monitoring report on the implementation of the first action plan.<sup>27</sup> Most of the measures are being implemented to varying degrees. The strategy also includes actively monitoring and commenting on legislation governing the status and activities of CSOs. A new action plan for the next four years will be submitted for the government's approval in spring 2025. There is room to incorporate new measures to address the sector's evolving needs in the strategy. However, there are no state budget funds tied to the implementation of the strategy, so it is largely dependent on funding through projects secured by the Office of the Government or the willingness of individual ministries to allocate resources within their budgets. Monitoring of the legislation also heavily relies on the expertise and engagement of the civil society members in the Government Council for NGOs and its committees. As a result, CSOs often self-fund legal analyses, and there is no strong, institutionalised mechanism for monitoring legislation or assessing its impact on the civic sector.

Civil society is concerned about new legislation introduced under the pretext of promoting transparency or security, principles that civil society generally supports. However, such laws can pose several unforeseen impacts or risks to fundamental freedoms and CSOs' operations. This applies to the new Law on the Regulation of Lobbying, the Conflict of Interest Act the Register of Beneficial Owners and potentially any new initiatives as part of the EU's Defence of Democracy Package and its directive.<sup>28</sup>

After nearly fifteen years of preparation, the proposed Law on the Regulation of Lobbying<sup>29</sup> — one of the milestones for accessing the EU Recovery and Resilience

Facility — is currently under review in the Chamber of Deputies. There are concerns about its effectiveness since several exemptions tabled by members of parliament across political parties could weaken its impact, with implications for public participation. Therefore, CSOs have called<sup>30</sup> for the final version of the law to ensure that:

1. The definition of lobbied persons will not include the members of the government's advisory bodies (except for the Legislative Council of the Government).
2. The meetings of working bodies established by government advisory bodies, where lobbyists will be present (for example, senior directors) will not be reported as lobbying meetings, and minutes of the meetings will be publicly available,
3. The protection of vulnerable non-EU individuals, such as human rights defenders and dissidents from non-democratic regimes, will be strengthened. To safeguard their security, they will be exempt from being listed in lobbying reports.
4. The bureaucracy associated with the lobbying registration and reporting process is proportionate and not burdensome.

A major concern of many CSOs is that various interest groups might negotiate exemptions in the law, leaving only CSOs engaged in public policy and advocacy to register as lobbyists. The label "lobbyist" has a negative connotation in the Czech Republic and can be politically abused or used as a pretext for smear campaigns against civil society.

This will create further legal and administrative burdens, primarily for civil society, label CSOs as lobbyists, and contribute to a negative image of the civil society sector, despite the fact that it advocates for public interests.

## Freedom of peaceful assembly

The Czech Law on the Right of Peaceful Assembly<sup>31</sup> guarantees the right but allows restrictions for security reasons. In 2024, various groups of citizens in the Czech Republic exercised this right to express their views and demands. Some demonstrations were cancelled, for example, those organised by trade unions,<sup>32</sup> or

rescheduled, while others have taken place with significant public participation, such as farmers' protests.<sup>33</sup>

In 2024 and 2025, several demonstrations in support of Ukraine took place in the Czech Republic, notably on the anniversary of the Russian invasion. On 24 February 2024, an event called "Day for Ukraine" was

<sup>27</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/monitorovaci-zprava-o-plneni-akcniho-planu-strategie-spoluprace-verejne-spravy-s-nno-na-leta-2021-az-2030-za-roky-2021-2023-217747/>

<sup>28</sup>. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/protecting-democracy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/protecting-democracy_en)

<sup>29</sup>. <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=9&t=649>

<sup>30</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/zapisy-ze-zasedani/zasedani-rady-vlady-pro-nestatni-neziskove-organizace-dne-30-zari-2024-217664/>

<sup>31</sup>. <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1990-84>

<sup>32</sup>. <https://www.os-echo.cz/demonstrace-21-kvetna-2024-od-12-hodin-na-malostranskem-namesti-v-praze/>

<sup>33</sup>. <https://www.ospvz-aso.cz/obsah/71/protesty-zemedelcu-22-kvetna-2024-se-sejdeme-u-uradu-vlady-c/335677>

held in Prague, attended by thousands of people.<sup>34</sup> Representatives of political parties and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke at the event via video message. One year later, on 23 February 2025, a rally “Together for Ukraine”, organised by organisations such as Memory of the Nation, People in Need and Million Moments for Democracy, took place at the same location. The event was attended by President Petr Pavel, who, in his speech, stressed the need to support Ukraine and defend international law.<sup>35</sup> The rally was followed by the “Voice of Ukraine” parade, which ended with a commemoration at the statue of Taras Shevchenko.<sup>36</sup>

The Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) made two important rulings on complaints concerning the slogan “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free”. The SAC examined two cases in which Prague City Council restricted the use of the slogan. In the first case, the magistrate preventively banned the holding of a gathering in support of the slogan; in the second case, the magistrate instructed the organisers

of another gathering on the spot not to chant the slogan, otherwise the gathering would be dispersed. The SAC found that the slogan does not have a single unquestionable meaning, nor could the context of its use lead to the conclusion that it could be misused to promote violence and genocide. Only in cases where the specific circumstances indicate that it is being used in an unacceptable sense, involving the denial of rights and freedoms and violence, may the right of assembly be restricted. The SAC emphasised that a preventative ban on an assembly is possible only if the administrative authorities can prove that the real purpose of the assembly is to promote the impermissible or extremist meanings of the slogan. This decision of the SAC highlights the importance of assessing the context and the real purpose of the assembly when evaluating the possibility of restricting the right of assembly.<sup>37</sup>

Overall, the right to assembly in the Czech Republic was respected. Judicial decisions reflected efforts to balance maintaining public order with safeguarding people’s constitutionally guaranteed rights.

## **Freedom of expression and the right to privacy**

In the Czech Republic, freedom of expression is enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and EU and international law.

Last year, the interior ministry submitted an amendment on adopting an exemption for the use of real-time facial recognition tools, one of the prohibited uses of artificial intelligence under the EU Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act).<sup>38</sup>

In addition, the Czech government has taken steps to implement the European Cybersecurity Act, an EU regulation that aims to regulate private communications in order to identify the most harmful content, such as child sexual abuse material or support for terrorism. Although the use of AI methods to screen such content remains voluntary for service providers, the obligation to detect child sexual abuse material applies broadly, raising concerns about the potential violation of encrypted communications. Separately, in response to the AI Act, the Czech Interior Ministry submitted a legislative proposal aimed at legalising the biometric tracking system currently in use at Václav Havel Airport

and extending it to other international airports in the country.<sup>39</sup> Under this proposal, courts must authorise the addition of specific wanted persons to the reference database. However, the interior ministry proposes to bypass court approval to allow the police to include certain people in the database, which disproportionately interferes with privacy and contradicts the AI Act.<sup>40</sup>

The amendment to Lex Ukraine VII also introduces the offence of carrying out “unauthorised activity for a foreign power”, with a basic penalty of up to five years in prison and up to 15 years in case of a state of war. It will apply to those who work for a foreign country or organisation “with the intention of threatening or harming the constitutional establishment, sovereignty, territorial integrity, defence or security of the Czech Republic”.<sup>41</sup> While intended to protect national security, critics fear its potential misuse to suppress critical voices and restrict free speech. They claim that since the proposed offence is already part of amended criminal laws, it should therefore be subject to the standard legislative process. The Czech Security Information Service (BIS) supports the move, arguing it strengthens counterintelligence

34. <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/2483490>

35. <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/v-centru-prahy-vyjadruji-lide-podporu-ukrajine-promluvi-i-pavel-358376>

36. <https://spolecnezaukrajinu.cz/>

37. <https://www.nssoud.cz/aktualne/tiskove-zpravy/detail/nejvyssi-spravni-soud-se-vyjadril-k-moznostem-omezeni-uzivani-hesla-from-the-river-to-the-sea-palestine-will-be-free-na-shromazdenich>

<https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/08/nss-k-heslu-o-svobodne-palestine-shromazdovaci-pravo-nelze-omezovat-preventivne/>

38. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj/eng>

39. <https://ekonomickydenik.cz/system-biometricke-detekce-obliceju-na-prazskem-letisti-bude-robustnejsi-ukonceni-projektu-zdrzel-covid/>

40. <https://edri.org/our-work/biometric-surveillance-in-the-czech-republic-the-ministry-of-the-interior-is-trying-to-circumvent-the-artificial-intelligence-act/>

41. [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/ministr-spravedlnosti-blazek-trestny-cin-cinnost-pro-cizi-moc.A250207\\_115914\\_domaci\\_ijan](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/ministr-spravedlnosti-blazek-trestny-cin-cinnost-pro-cizi-moc.A250207_115914_domaci_ijan)

efforts. The amendments reflect heightened geopolitical tensions, with intelligence services warning that espionage is no longer just about classified information but also broader activities undermining national stability. Balancing security needs with fundamental freedoms remains a challenge for the Czech Republic.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to concerns over surveillance and national security laws, the implementation of the Digital Services Act (DSA) in the Czech Republic faces significant delays. The DSA, which came into effect across the EU on 17 February 2024, sets uniform rules for online intermediaries to ensure a safer digital space.<sup>43</sup> The Czech Telecommunications Office (ČTÚ) has been formally designated as the national coordinator for the implementation of the DSA, so it can carry out some activities, in particular coordination, informing the public, providing methodological support, monitoring, and cooperation at the European level. However, some activities, such as addressing complaints, the formal supervision of platforms' compliance with their obligations or imposing sanctions, will only be possible once the so-called Digital Economy Act,<sup>44</sup> a bill introduced into the Czech parliament, is passed. This act will transpose the relevant provisions of the DSA into the Czech legal

system and also define the specific powers of the CTU. However, the act is still in the legislative process, which means that the full implementation of the DSA in the Czech Republic has not yet been completed. Repeated delays in parliament have stalled the completion of the legislative process, creating a legal vacuum where the DSA is legally applicable but lacks an enforcement mechanism. The law is not expected to be adopted before the end of 2025. This delay raises broader concerns about digital governance and the rule of law. The absence of enforcement mechanisms means that key provisions, such as the obligation to moderate content and alternative dispute resolution for affected entities, remain largely ineffective.<sup>45</sup>

Public institutions continue to withhold information by misinterpreting provisions of the Information Act. Some institutions attempt to restrict access through legislation under the pretext of security concerns. The Czech security services consistently push for limiting the right to information whenever the Information Act or related regulations are amended. This reflects a growing trend of securitising public debate, where certain legislative proposals prioritise security over fundamental rights and democracy.<sup>46</sup>

## Safe space

There has been no relevant progress in setting up a robust monitoring framework to protect CSOs and human rights defenders within the state administration. Nor has any further research on public opinion on civil society and human rights defenders been published. However, partial but important research studies by some CSOs support the evidence of the threats and attacks.

According to the Disinformation and Civil Society Mapping Report for the Visegrad region<sup>47</sup> by VIA Association, Czech CSOs are facing increasing disinformation attacks targeting organisations, their topics, or their partners. This creates pressure on their capacities and threatens their reputations, impacting their ability to do public fundraising. Disinformation

campaigns mainly focus on topics related to human rights and democracy work, migrants, LGBTQI+, and Roma rights, as well as environmental issues. Such campaigns often depict CSOs as “political instruments” of foreign influence or prioritising foreign interests over the needs of Czech citizens. In addition, the vulnerability of Czech CSOs is exacerbated by weak digitalisation and insufficient preparedness for crisis communication. The result is weakened trust in civil society, which threatens the sector's ability to fundraise and respond effectively to crises. It is therefore necessary to provide CSOs with sufficient and targeted support (technical and educational) to enable them to effectively face disinformation campaigns and prevent their negative consequences on funding and trust.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup>. <https://svobodaslova.online/doporuceni-ochrana-svobody-projevu-v-kontextu-navrhu-noveho-trestneho-cinu-neopravnene-cinnosti-pro-cizi-moc/#-more-264>; <https://www.aksudolska.cz/zajimavosti-z-prava/poslanci-schvalili-novy-trestny-cin-neopravnene-cinnosti-pro-cizi-moc/>

<sup>43</sup>. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj/eng>

<sup>44</sup>. <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?O=9&T=776>

<sup>45</sup>. [https://www.irozhlas.cz/veda-technologie/co-je-nelegalni-offline-ma-byt-nelegalni-i-online-zavadeni-pravidel-eu-se-ale-v\\_2502100817\\_epo](https://www.irozhlas.cz/veda-technologie/co-je-nelegalni-offline-ma-byt-nelegalni-i-online-zavadeni-pravidel-eu-se-ale-v_2502100817_epo)

<sup>46</sup>. <https://www.ochranademokracie.cz/>

<sup>47</sup>. <https://en.hive-mind.community/blog/910,navigating-disinformation-trends-and-civil-society-challenges-in-central-and-eastern-europe-regional-mapping-reports-2023-2024>

<sup>48</sup>. <https://www.ochranademokracie.cz/>

During the 2024 autumn floods in Northern Moravia, Czech civil society played a key role in helping people in the affected areas deal with the devastating consequences and served as an important coordination partner to the state administration. This cooperation was harmed by false accusations from Minister of Agriculture Marek Výborný towards the environmental organisation Hnutí DUHA (Friends of the Earth Czech Republic).<sup>49</sup> He suggested in a press statement that the organisation was responsible for the extent of flooding in Northern Moravia by blocking the construction of the Nové Heřminovy waterworks. The organisation responded that the obstacles to maintaining the dam were the state's weak management of the project. The baseless media attack against the organisation forced it to refute false claims of blocking flood protection measures. This case has not only contributed to further tensions in the debate about the effectiveness of flood protection measures, and more comprehensive flood protection proposals, but also the right to comment on strategic decisions, but also highlights the challenges of implementing a complex, long-term solution to flood risk management. The case also manifested itself in the public exposure and misuse of personal information of members of the organisation's statutory bodies. Their names, addresses, and dates of birth — accessible via the federal register — were used to spread false accusations and target individuals. This has added to many CSOs' concerns. A wave of solidarity has arisen in support of Hnutí DUHA, with many individuals and organisations opposing this unfair attack. The case threatens to undermine trust in the CSOs more broadly and affects civil society engagement, the capacity of the public administration, and the wider societal climate.<sup>50</sup>

The transposition of the EU anti-SLAPP directive<sup>51</sup> in the Czech Republic was slow and not the focus of policymakers and the public debate. CSOs called for an expert and public discussion on the directive and the

involvement of relevant stakeholders in the implementation. The transposition was included in the government's legislative plan<sup>52</sup> for 2025, under the responsibility of the justice minister, who should present the proposal to the government by the end of August 2025. Additionally, no regulatory impact assessment (RIA) is planned, which could weaken its implementation.

One example illustrating the urgency of anti-SLAPP measures is the case of *Limity jsme my*, an environmental movement supporting climate activists, which was convicted in November 2024 for participating in a peaceful blockade against coal mining in 2018. The court ruled that 83 activists must collectively pay over one million Czech crowns in damages, a decision perceived by many as an attempt to silence criticism of large corporations like ČEZ. Activists have described this lawsuit as a tool of intimidation, underscoring the need for legal reforms to prevent strategic lawsuits aimed at suppressing public participation. Cases like this highlight how corporate entities may exploit the judicial system to discourage civil society's efforts to address critical issues such as the climate crisis.<sup>53</sup>

Since the 2024 election campaigns, attacks on "political nonprofits" by populist parties have intensified, with proposals to impose stricter regulations on their funding and activities. Given current electoral trends, concerns arise that if safeguards are not enacted under the present government, a future coalition may further restrict civil society. Politicians such as K. Konečná, the leader of the communist and nationalist party Stačilo!, call for publicly accessible financial registries for CSOs, while T. Okamura, the leader of the xenophobic SPD party, distinguishes between "political" and "charitable" non-profits despite his own political think-tank, the Institute for Freedom and Direct Democracy, receiving state subsidies.<sup>54</sup>

## Funding for civil society

New research conducted by STEM for the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic<sup>55</sup> shows a dramatic increase in donations in the Czech Republic.

The analysis of data from tax returns of individuals and legal entities and donation platforms Darujme.cz and Donio.cz shows that over the last ten years,

49. <https://vyzva.hnutiduha.cz/#no-back>

50. <https://svetneziskovek.cz/lide/jsme-zvykli-vest-ve-verejnem-prostoru-konflikt-s-annou-karnikovou-z-hnuti-duha-o-krizove-komunikaci-i-naladach-ve-spolecnosti>

51. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj/eng>

52. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/lrv/dokumenty/plan-legislativnich-praci-vlady-na-rok-2025-217763/>

53. <https://limityjsmemy.cz/2024/11/za-blokadu-uhelneho-dolu-bilina-musi-protestujici-zaplatit-milion-cez-pritom-vydelava-miliardy/>

54. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/volby-do-poslanecke-snemovny-konecna-divam-se-na-rusko-jako-na-ostatni-velmoci-268555>; <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-dvoji-metr-spd-politicke-neziskovsky-odmita-sama-na-jednu-cerpa-miliony-40492186>

55. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/udaje-z-danovych-priznani-odhaluji-rekordni-rust-darcovstvi-v-cr-217661/>



the volume of donated funds claimed in tax returns has almost tripled. While in 2012 the amount was 4.4 billion CZK, in 2022 it reached 12.5 billion CZK. Only 5% of legal entities made donations in 2023, with the average donation amounting to 210,400 CZK.

An important legislative change to the Public Collections Act comes into force in January 2025, simplifying the organisation of funding campaigns and reducing the administrative burden. It introduces voluntary registration for non-cash collections, allows the substitution of an affidavit for a certificate of non-debt, and sets a minimum contribution of 40% for the sale of items or tickets. In addition, the amendment allows for the reimbursement of indirect costs as long as they are transparently disclosed.<sup>56</sup>

Public funding for civil society faces challenges such as the lack of multi-annual funding, lengthy and bureaucratic grant award processes, strict co-financing requirements, and inconsistent grant methodologies across schemes.<sup>57</sup> The Department for Cooperation with Civil Society of the Government Office is taking steps to address these challenges in meetings with subsidy departments in various ministries, but no systemic change has yet occurred.<sup>58</sup>

There has been no comprehensive overview of the funding provided through the state budget and EU funding to CSOs. The “Main Areas of State Subsidy Policy towards NGOs Supporting Public Benefit Activities”,<sup>59</sup> a publication by the government, provides only a partial picture. For 2025, the material indicates a slight increase in the total budget, amounting to 8.18 billion CZK, to be disbursed by 16 providers (ministries and other state agencies) across 86 subsidy schemes. However, these figures are based on ministry estimates, with key data missing for 2025, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs’ social services programme and the Ministry of the Interior’s programme for foreigner integration, both recorded as having a budget of 0 CZK. While social services funding has significantly increased, severe cuts persist in already underfunded

areas, including anti-corruption measures (-10.42%), gender equality (-28.57%), environmental protection (-7.14%), and education (-22.51%).<sup>60</sup>

To address the long-standing lack of multi-year funding for non-investment grant projects, the multi-stakeholder expert group of the Government Council for NGOs<sup>61</sup> has proposed feasible regulatory changes to the finance ministry. This includes proposals to enable the provision of quick grants for crises and financial transfers between partners in projects. The proposed changes would allow ministries to launch multi-year programmes for a more stable delivery of public benefit activities. Legal analysis has confirmed that ministries already have the authority to implement such programmes, with specific criteria to be determined by each programme provider. Therefore, the finance ministry could simply include the changes in the new order for the financial settlement with the state budget to allow the settlement of subsidies at the end of the grant period. The proposal has broad support and could significantly improve the financial stability and long-term planning of CSOs. However, the finance ministry has not adopted this for unclear reasons. As a result, there is a serious risk that inefficient annual subsidy programs will persist, undermining two years of work by the expert group.<sup>62</sup>

Volunteering plays an important role in the sustainability of the Czech civic sector. In 2024, the Czech Statistical Office conducted its first comprehensive survey that provided information on the involvement of the Czech population in volunteer activities.<sup>63</sup> Nearly a quarter of the adult population engages in volunteering, dedicating an average of 57.6 hours per person annually — approximately 1.5 working weeks per year. In 2023, 1.66 million Czech residents participated in volunteering, contributing over 213 million hours of work, valued at more than 47 billion CZK. The Czech government has approved the first-ever Concept for the Development of Volunteering until 2030, which promotes volunteer activities in areas such as social care, crisis assistance, sports, culture, and

<sup>56</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/novela-zakona-o-verejnych-sbirkach-prinasi-dulezite-zmeny-216094/>

<sup>57</sup>. [https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/ex\\_skup\\_fin/expertni-skupina-k-systemove-zmene-financovani-verejne-prospernych-sluzeb-a-cinnosti-ze-statniho-rozpoctu-198755/](https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/ex_skup_fin/expertni-skupina-k-systemove-zmene-financovani-verejne-prospernych-sluzeb-a-cinnosti-ze-statniho-rozpoctu-198755/)

<sup>58</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/scripts/detail.php?pgid=1398>

<sup>59</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/hlavni-oblasti-statni-dotacni-politiky-vuci-nestatnim-neziskovym-organizacim-pro-rok-2025-214054/>

<sup>60</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/hlavni-oblasti-statni-dotacni-politiky-vuci-nestatnim-neziskovym-organizacim-pro-rok-2024-206824/>; <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/hlavni-oblasti-statni-dotacni-politiky-vuci-nestatnim-neziskovym-organizacim-pro-rok-2025-214054/>

<sup>61</sup>. [https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/ex\\_skup\\_fin/expertni-skupina-k-systemove-zmene-financovani-verejne-prospernych-sluzeb-a-cinnosti-ze-statniho-rozpoctu-198755/](https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/ex_skup_fin/expertni-skupina-k-systemove-zmene-financovani-verejne-prospernych-sluzeb-a-cinnosti-ze-statniho-rozpoctu-198755/)

<sup>62</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/scripts/detail.php?pgid=1398>; [https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/ex\\_skup\\_fin/expertni-skupina-k-systemove-zmene-financovani-verejne-prospernych-sluzeb-a-cinnosti-ze-statniho-rozpoctu-198755/](https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/ex_skup_fin/expertni-skupina-k-systemove-zmene-financovani-verejne-prospernych-sluzeb-a-cinnosti-ze-statniho-rozpoctu-198755/)

<sup>63</sup>. <https://csu.gov.cz/produkty/bez-naroku-na-odmenu-pomaha-kazdy-paty>

environmental protection. Additionally, the interior ministry has allocated 7 million CZK annually to support regional volunteer centres.<sup>64</sup>

As described above, the ambiguous criteria for distinguishing between commercial and non-profit activities is a challenge that has legal and tax implications for CSOs. Organisations are striving for financial sustainability and looking for new financial models through services or active marketing to survive the decrease in income due to the reduction of state funding. Although this approach can help the organisation overcome the decreased funding, it also brings legal uncertainty in the position of an organisation that balances its mission in the public interest with economic reality. If its activities

resemble business activities, it risks being reclassified as a commercial entity, subjecting it to stricter regulations. This makes it vulnerable and difficult to access public support.<sup>65</sup>

The pending Lobbying Regulation Act carries implications for people's willingness to donate to organisations that will be registered as lobbyists. Lobbying is perceived rather negatively in the Czech Republic and is associated with non-transparent and immoral practices in political decision-making. There are concerns that the public's willingness to support the advocacy and lobbying activities of CSOs will decrease, especially those that until now have been perceived as service providers.

## Civil dialogue and the right to participation

Participation in decision-making has come to the fore in the last year, but the implementation of institutionalised mechanisms for citizen and stakeholder participation in line with OECD recommendations has been slow and fragmented.<sup>66</sup>

The Department for Cooperation with Civil Society in the Office of the Government has been promoting citizens' and stakeholder participation and has proposed several commitments in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan for 2025-2026.<sup>67</sup> These include supporting the possibility of establishing a national competence centre for participation, piloting participatory and deliberative processes, and raising public administration and civil society awareness of participation. It is also preparing a pilot citizens' assembly. However, political and financial constraints cast doubt on their implementation. The department needs to seek resources for participation projects through the Technical Support Instrument,<sup>68</sup> as it has no secured funding directly from the budget of the Office of the Government or other ministries.

The pilot testing of the methodology for the participation of CSOs in consultative and working bodies and the drafting of state administration documents

revealed significant gaps in knowledge, personnel, financial resources, and capacity of both public administration and CSOs.<sup>69</sup> The Government Council for NGOs recommended that the government approve and implement the methodology. However, since it is not legally binding, its adoption remains voluntary, leaving it up to individual ministries to decide whether to apply it in practice.

An example of good practice was seen in the environment ministry, which piloted the position of a coordinator for cooperation with civil society. The coordinator facilitates transparent and functional contacts of the ministry's departments with Green Circle (GC, the Association of Environmental CSOs),<sup>70</sup> reflection meetings with the minister twice a year. GC has had access to the interministerial commenting mechanism (so called *eKlep*) and has commented on government proposals and on the EU agenda. The ministry provides a grant scheme of 500,000 CZK per year for the coordination of environmental CSOs.

Another is the education ministry, which established a youth panel<sup>71</sup> of 20 young people to cooperate in the preparation of the youth strategy.

64. <https://mv.gov.cz/clanek/rozvoji-dobrovolnictvi-v-cesku-pomuze-nova-koncepcie.aspx>

65. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/konference-deset-let-noveho-spolkoveho-prava-213589/>

66. [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2022/09/oecd-guidelines-for-citizen-participation-processes\\_63b34541.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2022/09/oecd-guidelines-for-citizen-participation-processes_63b34541.html)

67. <https://korupce.cz/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Akcni-plan-Ceske-republiky-Partnerstvi-pro-otevrene-vladnuti-na-obdobi-let-2025-az-2026.pdf>

68. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/evropske-zalezitosti/podpora-strukturalnich-reforem/program-na-podporu-strukturalnich-reforem-174689/>

69. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/zapisy-ze-zasedani/zasedani-rady-vlady-pro-nestadni-neziskove-organizace-dne-19-prosince-2024-217720/>

70. <https://zelenykruh.cz/ministerstvo-spustilo-druhou-cast-verejne-konzultace-nove-klimaticke-energeticke-strategie-ceska/>

71. <https://msmt.gov.cz/mladez/panel-mladeze>

The EU Committee of the Government Council for NGOs has promoted transparent and effective representation of CSOs in the implementation of EU funds, including the transparent nomination processes in the EU funds monitoring committees and working platforms. In 2024, Glopolis and the Office of the Government implemented two two-year complementary projects for strengthening the partnership of the non-profit sector with ministries and other central government bodies in the implementation of EU funds, funded through the operational program *Operační program Technická pomoc*.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, formally embedded processes of public participation in decision-making in the field of protection of the environment have been weakened. Environmental CSOs expressed concerns about the limitations of public involvement in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes for large construction projects and in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) processes. Projects that are supposed to go through the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) often do not undergo the assessment of relevant alternatives as required by law.<sup>73</sup>

CSOs are also rarely invited to Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) processes. The government's 2025 legislative plan indicates that only 14 of the total 77 initiatives require an RIA. It reveals that an RIA is not planned for important regulations such as the transposition of the anti-SLAPP directive.<sup>74</sup>

The current RIA reform appears to respond to some of the issues identified by the OECD.<sup>75</sup> It claims to improve the quality and standardisation of consultations in line with the European Commission's Better Regulation Toolbox<sup>76</sup> and advance RIA before tabling the regulation proposal. Two documents describing the elements of the RIA process are currently being

prepared: The General Principles of RIA and the RIA Manual. The manual should describe in practical terms how to implement a quality RIA process. It will mainly focus on the use of professional analytical tools but shall also include descriptions of the participatory process. This is where CSOs could be consulted.

Positive progress has been made in involving CSOs in the process related to the European Commission's Rule of Law Report and in developing a national dialogue on the rule of law. The Commission's report has been regularly on the agenda of the Government Council for NGOs and its Committee on the EU, which facilitated the opinion on the Czech Republic's framework position on the report. The Government Council for NGOs later adopted a resolution recommending that the government take into account the inputs from various advisory bodies when preparing its contribution to the Commission's report. Glopolis also published guidance<sup>77</sup> for CSOs' engagement in the rule of law process and a joint policy paper with the Stefan Batory Foundation and other CSOs.<sup>78</sup> A coalition of organisations promoted the launch of the report and addressed an open letter to the prime minister<sup>79</sup> to respond to the report's findings and recommendations, which stimulated further exchange with the Office of the Government.<sup>80</sup> The Office of the Government and its European Affairs Section allowed CSOs to make suggestions on the Czech Republic's framework position on the report through the EU Committee for the first time. A participatory event "Rule of Law in the Czech Republic: Opportunities for 2025" organised by the Office of the Government in cooperation with Glopolis, Network for Protection of Democracy and Lobbio on 7 January 2025 under the auspices of the European affairs minister and the Government Plenipotentiary for Human Rights<sup>81</sup> focused on three issues: strengthening rules to prevent conflicts of interest, fair public procurement, and participation in the legislative process.

<sup>72</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/zahajovaci-setkani-partnerskych-projektu-z-optp-213900/>

<sup>73</sup>. <https://www.ochranademokracie.cz/temata/obcanska-spolecnost>

<sup>74</sup>. <https://ria.vlada.cz/vlada-schvalila-plan-legislativnich-praci-vlady-na-rok-2025/>

<sup>75</sup>. [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-public-governance-reviews-czech-republic\\_41fd9e5c-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-public-governance-reviews-czech-republic_41fd9e5c-en.html)

<sup>76</sup>. [https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/better-regulation-toolbox\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/better-regulation-toolbox_en)

<sup>77</sup>. <https://neon-cooperation.org/aktuality/zapojte-se-do-pripravy-zpravy-o-pravnim-statuu-2025>

<sup>78</sup>. <https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1442/recommendations.pdf>

<sup>79</sup>. <https://neon-cooperation.org/aktuality/neberme-pravni-stat-jako-samozrejmost-v-otevrenem-dopise-premierovi-apelujeme-na-dukladnou-diskusi-o-doporucenich-letosni-zpravy-o-pravnim-statuu-ek>

<sup>80</sup>. <https://neon-cooperation.org/aktuality/odpoved-premierovi-klicove-je-posilit-demokratike-pojistky-do-voleb-povedomi-o-jejich-potrebnosti-by-mohla-zlepsit-debata-v-parlamentu-a-aktivni-komunikace-clenu-vlady>

<sup>81</sup>. <https://glopolis.org/neon/pravni-stat-v-cr-prilezitosti-pro-rok-2025/>



# Civil Society Resilience

A conference organised in June 2024, titled “The role of civil society in strengthening democracy”,<sup>82</sup> highlighted the close connection between modern liberal democracy and a functioning civil society. While the relationship between the state and the civic sector in the Czech Republic requires improvement, there is a willingness to cooperate on both sides. However, the sector should not depend solely on state partnerships, as political shifts can easily weaken such cooperation. To remain effective, the CSOs must stand united and resist efforts to divide organisations into “beneficial” and “non-political” groups versus “political” ones that advocate for policy changes. Additionally, CSOs should focus on building relationships with their donors, supporters, partners and the broader communities in which they operate. Clearer public communication about their societal value is essential. The private sector can also play an important role, helping ensure its financial independence from the state.

Collaboration and coalition-building within the civic sector remain dynamic. While some initiatives have gradually scaled down their activities due to shifting priorities, new platforms have emerged, tackling pressing issues and expanding the scope of civic engagement. The network of civil society networks NeoN<sup>83</sup> now brings together 20 networks and over 1,000 CSOs spanning a broad range of thematic areas, including the environment, education, youth, social aid, accessible housing, anti-corruption, and volunteering.

The shared agenda of these networks aims to reinforce democratic space, strengthen civic and stakeholder participation, and foster partnerships between the state and civil society networks. The Network for Protection of Democracy<sup>84</sup> connects organisations and individuals who stand for a healthy democracy and want to protect it.

There were remarkable collective civil society actions in 2024. These include a civil society statement on the 20th anniversary of the Czech Republic’s EU membership initiated by the National Association for Volunteering,<sup>85</sup> a collective call for the adoption of the Media Act amendment lead by Díky že můžem,<sup>86</sup> years-long work on the Act on Affordable Housing by a large coalition Za bydlení / For Housing,<sup>87</sup> solidarity support for civil society in Slovakia<sup>88</sup> and environmental CSOs facing attacks (Greenpeace,<sup>89</sup> Hnutí DUHA<sup>90</sup>), and the campaigning against violence and for the adoption of the Istanbul Convention in the Parliament by the coalition Hlas proti násilí / Voice against Violence.<sup>91</sup>

2024 also saw renewed collaboration between the business and philanthropic sectors. The Alliance for Modern State<sup>92</sup> is a new entity connecting philanthropists funding projects on the effective functioning of the state, democracy, the civil service, and public finance. The progressive business platform Změna k lepšímu (Better for Change)<sup>93</sup> strives for sustainable transformation of the Czech economy.

<sup>82</sup>. <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/kulaty-stul-na-tema-role-obcanske-spolecnosti-pri-posilovani-demokracie-214018/>

<sup>83</sup>. <https://neon-cooperation.org/>

<sup>84</sup>. <https://www.ochranademokracie.cz/>

<sup>85</sup>. <https://www.jsmeevropa.cz/cz>

<sup>86</sup>. <https://www.dikyzemuzem.cz/podpor-podpisem/>

<sup>87</sup>. <https://www.zabydleni.org/>

<sup>88</sup>. <https://ekolist.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/tiskove-zpravy/podejme-pomocnou-ruku-slovensku-i-v-oblasti-prirody-a-zivotniho-prostredi>

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<sup>90</sup>. <https://vyzva.hnutiduha.cz/#no-back>

<sup>91</sup>. <https://hlasprotinasili.cz/>

<sup>92</sup>. <https://www.modernistat.org/>

<sup>93</sup>. <https://www.klepsimu.cz/>

# Recommendations

## **TARGETED RECOMMENDATION:**

- ➔ Institutionalise effective mechanisms for meaningful citizen and stakeholder participation and ensure the transparency of decision-making and nomination processes, quality and timely information for public participation, and capacity building for participation within public administration and civil society.
- ➔ Ensure that the law on the regulation of lobbying does not adversely affect the participation of experts and civil society actors in government advisory bodies and does not stigmatise or impose unjustified administrative burdens.
- ➔ Enable multiannual funding of subsidy programmes by amending the legislation on the state budget settlement and encourage public subsidy bodies to open multiannual subsidy programmes.

## CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2025



### **About European Civic Forum**

European Civic Forum (ECF) is a pan-European network of nearly 100 associations and NGOs across 29 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 level and analyses national and European trends in civic space. 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, as well as ongoing media and social media monitoring.

**civicspacewatch.eu**



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