

# Civil Society

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2024



Indicator

## Free Civil Society

Question

To what extent are citizens able to freely form or join independent political and civic groups, openly raise and discuss political issues, and assemble without restrictions?

30 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = There are no barriers, by law or in practice to creating an engaged society and civil society organizations that are free to operate.
- 8-6 = Existing barriers, by law and in practice, pose very few or no significant obstacles to creating an engaged society and civil society organizations that are free to operate.
- 5-3 = Existing barriers, by law and in practice, pose some significant obstacles to the creation of an engaged society and civil society organizations that are free to operate.
- 2-1 = Existing barriers, by law and in practice, pose various significant obstacles to the creation of an engaged society and civil society organizations that are free to operate.

### Estonia

Score 10

The freedom of association and freedom of assembly are constitutional rights in Estonia. The Act on Public Meetings (1997) specifies the rights and duties of meeting organizers. Every person legally residing in Estonia has the right to initiate a public meeting; the meeting must be registered with the relevant municipal government seven days in advance. Police can use force only on occasions specified in the law.

Political liberties are an important part of Estonia's constitution, and they are widely respected in society. There are 11 political parties registered, collectively covering the entire spectrum of mainstream political ideologies. Only citizens of Estonia have the right to be members of a political party. Civil society groups organize open forums to discuss important social and political issues. One such forum, the Arvamusfestival (Opinion Festival), has been held annually since 2013.

Public meetings are typically peaceful. Harassment, arbitrary arrests, and the detention or imprisonment of peaceful demonstrators are not common practices in Estonia.

### New Zealand

Score 10

Political rights such as the freedom of association and freedom of assembly are effectively safeguarded. While New Zealand does not have a single written constitution, these rights are protected through various laws, statutes and legal norms – most importantly, through the Bill of Rights Act 1990, which outlines fundamental

rights and freedoms like the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, the freedom of association, and specific human rights legislation, such as the Human Rights Act 1993.

The WJP Rule of Law Index 2023 awards New Zealand a score of 0.84 (out of 1.00) on its “freedom of assembly and association” measure, ranking the country 15th in global comparison (World Justice Project 2023).

The government generally applies transparent and nondiscriminatory criteria when evaluating requests for permits to associate and assemble. If a permit request is denied or disputed, individuals or groups have the right to seek judicial review. This legal recourse allows for an independent assessment of whether the decision-making process was fair and aligned with legal standards.

In recent months and years, numerous individuals have been arrested and convicted for participating in violent demonstrations against the government’s COVID-19 measures (Nichols and Harris 2023) and climate change protests (Dunseath 2023). However, these arrests have generally been in accordance with the law, and do not reveal any evidence of the systematic use of intimidation or harassment aimed at hindering citizens from exercising their political rights.

Citation:

Dunseath, F. 2023. “Climate protesters charged after blocking traffic in central Wellington, road open.” Stuff, April 20. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/wellington/131818715/climate-protesters-charged-after-blocking-traffic-in-central-wellington-road-open>

Nichols, L., and Harris, K. 2023. “Wellington Parliament protests: Hundreds charged but just 31 convicted so far, IPCA report released.” New Zealand Herald, April 20. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/wellington-parliament-protests-hundreds-charged-but-just-31-convicted-so-far-ipca-report-released/T7HIIWSRAVCJJG6NKJC5MIUARY>

World Justice Project. 2023. “Rule of Law Index: New Zealand.” <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/New%20Zealand/Fundamental%20Rights>

## Norway

### Score 10

The right of citizens to form organizations and express opinions through collective action has been secured in the constitution since 1814. There is a long historical tradition of organizing cultural and economic interests in civil society. This tradition began with the first religious, linguistic, and rural interests, and the temperance movement from the 1840s, followed by political parties from the 1880s. Subsequently, trade unions and other economic interest organizations emerged. Additionally, there is a comprehensive array of organizations promoting sports, cultural, and leisure activities. Though not political by nature, these voluntary organizations are regarded as “schools in democracy” and receive state economic support.

In Norway, gambling is a state monopoly (Norsk Tipping), and all profits from gambling are redistributed to civil society organizations. The voluntary organizations

have their own interest organization, Voluntary Norway. Seventy-eight percent of the adult population are members of at least one organization, and half the population are members of two or more organizations. Forty-four percent of the income of voluntary organizations comes from state or local government sources.

Citation:

<https://www.frivillighetnorge.no/english-summary>

<https://www.norsk-tipping.no/selskapet/om-selskapet>

## Sweden

### Score 10

The freedom of association and the freedom of assembly are constitutionally protected. Civil society organizations in Sweden have a formal seat at the policymaking table through the referral system (remiss system): the findings of any commission of inquiry ahead of proposed legislative changes are sent out to relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations, for comments, which form the final piece of legislation.

Rules and conditions under which demonstrations may take place are posted by the Swedish police on their website (see <https://polisen.se/om-polisen/polisens-arbete/demonstrationer/>). Recent events, embroiled in larger geopolitical challenges and domestic politics, have challenged the freedom of assembly and highlighted the tensions between free speech and hate crimes. This has engendered a heated debate. Amnesty International reports that the UN International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice in the Context of Law Enforcement expressed concerns that responses aimed at addressing security challenges are handled through over-policing, surveillance, and arbitrary stops and searches (Amnesty International, 2023).

Public burnings of the Quran culminated in June 2023, sparking heated public debate. These incidents became fodder for power games played by Erdoğan, who used them to extract as many concessions as possible from Sweden toward Turkey in the bargaining of Sweden's NATO membership. Several voices within the country urged the police to ban the burning of the Quran; however, the courts ruled that this act does not constitute a hate crime and that the only permissible action within the existing legal framework would be to move these burnings to a less sensitive area (SVT, 2023). The Swedish Institute reports that such incidents have the potential to damage the country's image abroad (Svenska Institutet, 2023).

Citation:

Amnesty International. 2023. "Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The State of the World's Human Rights." <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/5670/2023/en/>

Svenska Institutet. 2023. "Omvärldens reaktioner på koranbränningar i Sverige sommaren 2023." <https://si.se/omvarldens-reaktioner-pa-koranbranningar-i-sverige-sommaren-2023/>

SVT. 2023. "Guide: Det här säger lagen om koranbränning i Sverige." <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/guide-det-har-sager-lagen-om-koranbranning>

## Austria

### Score 9

Citizens in Austria can freely form or join independent political and civic groups, openly discuss political issues, and assemble without restrictions. The freedom of association and assembly is guaranteed by the constitution. This constitutional guarantee includes any religious, philosophical, or ideological position, with few exceptions, such as attempts to generate support for Nazi ideology.

The right to gather in public and hold a meeting or demonstration does not require a specific application. Authorities simply need to be informed about scheduled events no less than 48 hours in advance. Failing to do so can result in a fine, though this does not mean that an unregistered gathering will be automatically dissolved by the police. However, if the police have doubts about a particular gathering and suspect it might endanger public security, the event can be called off.

Recent events, especially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, have seen an increase in such incidents. Planned demonstrations against Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip have been among these occurrences. The climate change protests, where young people adhered themselves to the floor, have also attracted significant public attention. Notably, key representatives of the Austrian state, including Federal President Van der Bellen, have sided with the demonstrators.

On some occasions, the courts declared government actions against groups that wanted to assemble as unlawful. The FPÖ, one of the harshest and most powerful critics of liberal democracy, benefited from these judgments, as seen in early 2021. This situation demonstrates that Austria is willing to face the challenging task of allowing public criticism against some of its most fundamental values, rather than simply keeping those groups at bay through legal means.

Different societal groups have played varying roles in the recent chapters of civil society development. Women have been particularly active in pandemic-related protests in Austria, while some observers believe that Muslims, or "political Islam," have been gradually pushed to the sidelines of civil society by recent governments.

Citation:

<https://www.wienerzeitung.at/h/demoverbot-wegen-corona-nicht-rechtens>

<https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000143726711/klimaproteste-und-versammlungsrechts>

Simsa, Ruth. 2023. "Civic Spaces between Turbulent Politics and the Pandemic-The Civil Society in Austria." *Contested Civic Spaces: A European Perspective* 22: 133.

Hafez, F. 2023. "Criminalizing Muslim Agency in Europe: The Case of 'Political Islam' in Austria, Germany, and France." *French Cultural Studies* 34 (3): 313-328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09571558221133253>

Daniel, Antje, Markus Brunner, and Florian Knasmüller. 2023. "Does Gender Play a Role?: A Gendered Frame Analysis of the Pandemic Skeptic Protests in Austria." *German Politics and Society* 41 (2): 61-79.

## Belgium

Score 9

Belgium is known for its extensive civil liberties, as confirmed by the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, which ranks Belgium 8th out of 140 countries for fundamental rights. Notably, Belgium performs exceptionally well in the sub-factors of “Freedom of opinion and expression” and “Freedom of assembly and association.”

However, these civil liberties can sometimes appear endangered, primarily due to political responses to external shocks or events. During the COVID-19 crisis, civil liberties were under pressure, with restrictions on the right to assemble and, consequently, to demonstrate. High tension within the police forces, bordering on exhaustion, resulted in acts of violence both from and against the police. While these were not part of a deliberate policy to restrict civil liberties, they contributed to a gradual erosion of norms.

This trend likely began with the 2001 terror attacks in the United States and accelerated following the 2015 and 2016 attacks across Europe. As early as 2016, Human Rights Watch expressed “grounds for concern” about counterterror measures.

With the end of the COVID-19 crisis, these restrictions were loosened. However, the debate around the effective freedom of assembly has been reignited by the government’s plan to introduce a bill proposed by Justice Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne. The bill would allow judges to ban individuals who commit protest-related offenses, such as assault or property damage, from participating in future demonstrations. Unions and the president of the Human Rights League (LDH) have deemed this bill too stringent, fearing it would “pose great risks to the right to collective action in general.”

Citation:

<https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2022/Belgium/Fundamental%20Rights/>

<https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/workers-strike-against-bill-banning-rioters-from-protests-fourteen-arrested-as-activists-occupy-gas-terminal/>

## Canada

Score 9

Canada has a legal framework that generally supports freedom of assembly as a fundamental right. This freedom is protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the Constitution Act of 1982. This includes the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

Freedom of assembly, like all other rights enumerated in the Charter, is not absolute. It is subject to reasonable limitations that can be justified “in a free and democratic

society.” This allows governments to impose certain restrictions on the time, place, and manner of assemblies to balance individual rights with the broader public interest.

There are, however, very few barriers to assembly and protest in Canada with the exception of hate groups and banned organizations, which are very few (Hate Speech and Freedom of Expression). In many cases, local authorities may require organizers to obtain permits for certain types of assemblies, especially large gatherings or events that may impact public safety or traffic. These permit requirements are typically meant to balance the right to assembly with the need for public order.

Law enforcement agencies are responsible for managing public events and ensuring public safety. However, interventions by law enforcement must comply with the law and should not unduly restrict the right to peaceful assembly.

Citation:

Hate Speech and Freedom of Expression: Legal Boundaries in Canada

Background Paper – Julian Walker, Legal and Social Affairs Division, Parliament of Canada

Publication No. 2018-25-E

[https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en\\_CA/ResearchPublications/201825E](https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/201825E)

## Czechia

### Score 9

Freedoms of association and assembly are fully guaranteed in the Czech Republic. The law on political parties and movements regulates the formation and registration of all political entities. As of April – October 2020, over 147,257 autonomous, self-organized groups, associations, foundations, and organizations are registered in the country, although not all are active.

The influx of refugees from Ukraine mobilized civil society; volunteers worked around the clock at the main arrival points, such as the Prague train station and key border crossings, to help refugees. In addition, small groups and individuals offered free transit from the Slovak-Ukraine borders. In the first half of 2022, Czechs donated CZK 4 billion (€168 million) to humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine.

The Ukrainian community also mobilized to provide translation services. In response to the refugee, energy, and financial crises, several anti-government protests took place, especially in Prague. Some of these protests, organized by parties and organizations with no representation in parliament, threatened to turn violent.

The extent of the right to peaceful protest was tested during a demonstration related to the conflict in Gaza, highlighting both the authorities’ power to declare protests illegal and the legal limits on their actions. Theologian and author Filip Outrata sought permission for a demonstration with the slogan “From the river to the sea Palestine will be free.” The Ministry of the Interior warned that propagating the slogan could be a criminal offense, and the Prague city administration banned the demonstration. However, on December 17, 2023, the municipal court ruled that the



ban itself was not legal. After hearing from academic experts on political extremism, the court accepted that the slogan was not inherently anti-Semitic or a call to genocide. It was not solely used by Hamas and had different possible interpretations depending on the context.

Citation:

<https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/cost-of-living-protesters-clash-with-police-austerity-measures-cause-discontent/>  
<https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/35939-rec-zalobce-proti-zakazu-hesla-svobodu-palestine-od-reky-az-k-mori>

## Denmark

Score 9

Civil society organizations have a strong presence in Denmark. The country has a long tradition of voluntary groups, including social organizations, that pursue specific interests and objectives. Most Danes are members of one or several such organizations, including unions and various other associations. Contributions and donations to charitable associations are tax-deductible up to a total cap of DKK 17,700 in 2023. Municipalities are required to support associations financially by providing meeting rooms and other resources.

One explanation for Denmark's comparatively rich associational life is the historical fact that the country's major political parties have long been connected to civil society organizations (Pedersen 1989). Although the strong formal ties between these organizations and political parties have weakened substantially, civil organizations remain influential. Many still have a clear voice in the political process.

There are two major sources of bias in associational life in Denmark. First, citizens with low socioeconomic status are considerably less likely to be part of civil society organizations, probably due to costs. Second, immigrants participate in associations less frequently than do native Danes (Medborgerskabsundersøgelsen 2023).

Citation:

Medborgerskabsundersøgelsen 2023. <https://integrationsbarometer.dk/tal-og-analyser/medborgerskabs-ligebehandling-og-selvbestemmelse>

Pedersen, M.N. 1989. "En kortfattet oversigt over det danske partisystems udvikling." *Politica*.

## Finland

Score 9

In Finland, citizens can freely form or join independent political and civic groups, openly raise and discuss political issues, and assemble without restrictions. The constitution safeguards basic political rights such as freedom of association and freedom of assembly. Article 13 in the constitution reads: "Everyone has the right to arrange meetings and demonstrations without a permit, as well as the right to participate in them."



Everyone has the freedom of association. This freedom includes the right to form an association without a permit, to be a member or not to be a member, and to participate in an association's activities. The freedom to form trade unions and to organize in order to protect various interests is also guaranteed.

Various laws and guidelines, such as the Act on the Openness of Government Activities, contain provisions on consultation and participation. By and large, the system functions reasonably well. Admittedly, consultation tends to favor organized groups and neglect outside participation. Additionally, consultation is carried out mainly to build consensus rather than to gather support or assess impact. However, in the long run, this helps generate public support for government policies.

Political and civic groups in Finland are able to operate freely without any unwarranted state intrusion or interference in their activities. The government applies transparent and nondiscriminatory criteria when evaluating requests for permits to associate and assemble. There are very few restrictions on assembly and association, which mainly pertain to public safety. These restrictions affect, for example, demonstrations without prior notice or those intended to counter an opposing group (e.g., right-wing activists vs. antiracist movements) or environmental groups trying to block traffic. The government does not employ intimidation, harassment or threats of retaliation to hinder citizens from exercising their rights to legally assemble and associate (e.g., through arbitrary arrests, detentions, imprisonment of peaceful demonstrators or the excessive use of force).

Citation:

The Constitution of Finland. <https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990731.pdf>

## France

### Score 9

Freedom of association has been granted since the passage of the 1901 law on associations. Since a famous ruling of the Constitutional Court in 1971, this freedom constitutes one aspect of the constitutional freedoms. Associations may be created by citizens without any previous authorization; a simple declaration to the prefecture – the local authority representing the state – is sufficient to gain the status of a moral person. The only restrictions concern illegal behaviors, for instance those that may undermine national security, the integrity of the national territory or the republican character of the government.

Some restrictions have been added by the law on republican principles (24 August 2021), which was enacted in response to the increasing frequency of terrorist actions and the rise of movements backing such actions. The law allows for the dissolution of associations that provoke violence against persons or properties. However, any dissolution is subject to legal control by the courts. In a ruling made on 9 November 2023, the Council of State stated precisely the criteria that would be used to judge such a dissolution. Another restriction may be seen in the obligation for any

association that applies for state subsidies to sign a moral contract in favor of the country's republican principles.

During the Macron era (2018 – 2024), 26 associations have been dissolved, an increase compared to seven during the era of President François Hollande (2012 – 2017).

While Amnesty International (2023: 168) has identified instances of religious or racist discrimination or restriction against associations, these rare cases concern associations engaged in illegal actions. All such measures are overseen and if necessary modified or canceled by the courts or the Council of State, and do not alter the general assessment of a large and real guarantee of the freedom of association (Vie publique 2024).

Contemporary France is characterized by a thriving civil society and a significant number of civil society organizations (CSOs). According to official data, there are currently 1.3 million different CSOs with 23 million members aged 14 or above. An average of 70,000 new CSOs are created every year. On the whole, the CSO sector employs about 1.8 million people.

While CSOs are massively subsidized by the state, the share of public funding is going down, forcing CSOs to look for alternative funding sources.

Citation:

Edith Archambault, Lionel Prouteau. 2020. "France: A Large and Diverse Civil Society Faced with Significant Concerns." European Union-Russia Civil Society Forum Report, halshs-02884061.

<https://www.associations.gouv.fr/les-associations-en-france.html>

Prouteau, Lionel, and Valérie Tchernonog. 2022. *Le paysage associatif français*. Paris: Dalloz.

Vie publique. 2024. "La liberté d'association en France: un état des lieux." Vie publique.fr, April 23. Retrieved March 7, 2024, from <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/292065-la-liberte-dassociation-en-france-un-etat-des-lieux>

## Germany

Score 9

The Basic Law grants every German citizen the right to assemble peacefully and unarmed (Article 8). The Federal Act concerning Assemblies and Processions (Versammlungsgesetz des Bundes) specifies relevant regulations regarding the right to freedom of assembly. As the states are responsible for assemblies, some states, such as Bavaria, have enacted their own state laws concerning assemblies. Generally, no prior notification or permission is necessary. However, the regulations differ for assemblies taking place outdoors. These assemblies need to be registered with a public authority at least 48 hours before being announced and may be restricted. This ensures that the authorities can provide protection for the assembly and manage consequences for third parties. Further, in the case of a direct threat to public safety, an assembly may be forbidden or dissolved. The prohibition, however, is considered a last resort to be used when restrictions to avert a threat are not sufficient (BMI, 2023).

In June 2023 the Federal Administrative Court ruled that the overall prohibition of assemblies during the Covid pandemic by the state of Saxony was disproportionate and that exceptions should have been clearly regulated. Simultaneously, it declared that restrictions during a pandemic are justified as a pandemic poses a threat to people's lives and health (Bundesverwaltungsgericht, 2023).

Overall, the allocated score of 3.88 for the year 2022 (V-Dem, 2023) suggests that state authorities almost always allow and actively protect peaceful assemblies, where a ban or restriction of an assembly concerns only lawful, necessary, and proportionate limitations. Likewise, the World Justice Project's score for Germany is 0.9, with 1.0 being the highest possible score (World Justice Project, 2022).

While government intimidation is not a systematic issue in Germany, the research project "Police use of excessive force" found that in 2021 there were 2,790 investigations against police officers due to the unlawful use of force, 55% of which were related to protests or other political assemblies. It is important to note that the study's sample is not representative (Grasnack, 2023).

Additionally, freedom of association is granted to every citizen based on Article 9 of the Basic Law. However, associations violating the constitution or criminal laws are prohibited. Once an association is banned, it becomes illegal and must be dissolved. In practice, the relatively high score of 0.88 implies that political and civic groups are able to form and operate with a significant amount of freedom (V-Dem, 2023).

#### Citation:

Bundesverwaltungsgericht. 2023. "Untersagung von Versammlungen durch die Sächsische Corona-Schutz-Verordnung vom 17. April 2020 war unverhältnismäßig." Pressemitteilung Nr. 49/2023, 21.06.2023.

BMI. 2023. "Versammlungsrecht." <https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/verfassung/staatliche-ordnung/versammlungsrecht/versammlungsrecht-node.html>

Grasnack, B. 2023. "Die Definitionsmacht der Polizei." <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/gesellschaft/polizeigewalt-studie-100.html>

World Justice Project. 2022. "Germany, Fundamental Rights." <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2022/Germany/Fundamental%20Rights/>

## Greece

### Score 9

The Greek constitution guarantees freedom of assembly (Article 11) and association, including the establishment of labor unions, athletic clubs, and other organizations (Articles 12, 23, and 16, para. 9). Political rallies are common, and numerous associations operate freely without unwarranted state intrusion or interference. The courts, rather than the government, evaluate requests for permits to associate or assemble, applying transparent and nondiscriminatory criteria. However, legal restrictions prohibit fascist or racist organizations from participating in parliamentary elections.

In 2022, Greece ranked 42nd out of 140 countries according to the World Justice Project, placing it above average (World Justice Project, 2022). Amnesty

International reported in 2022 that, in some instances, police used excessive force against protesters, and security forces engaged in pushbacks against incoming migrants and refugees (Amnesty International, 2022).

In some cases, associations are restricted when foreign policy issues arise. For example, Greek courts, based on the Lausanne Treaty signed between Greece and Turkey in 1923, prohibit associations established by members of the Muslim minority near the Greek-Turkish border in Northern Greece from using the term “Turkish” in their names. The courts argue that this term indicates a collective ethnic identity, while the treaty only recognizes a collective religious identity.

Few restrictions on assembly exist, except when high-ranking foreign dignitaries visit Greece’s capital. There is no intimidation, harassment, or threat of retaliation against citizens exercising their rights to legally assemble and associate.

Citation:

Amnesty International. 2022. “Greece.” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/greece/report-greece/>

US Department of State. 2022. “2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Greece.” <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/greece/>

World Justice Project. 2022. “Greece- Factor 4, Fundamental Rights.” <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2022/Greece/Fundamental%20Rights>

## Latvia

### Score 9

Fundamental rights are effectively protected. Latvia ranks 22nd among 142 countries in the World Justice Project Assessment. There are no legal, political, or de facto restrictions for citizens to enjoy freedom of association and assembly. According to Freedom in the World, Latvia scored 88 out of 100, categorizing it as free.

The law protects the freedom of assembly, and the practice is well-established and respected. Some restrictions were applied during COVID-19, but since 2022, all rules have been lifted. However, there was a case when authorities attempted to ban protests. Ogre municipality tried to deny a protest supporting the Ogre Museum in the conflict between the mayor and the museum in 2023. The protest was allowed after a second application to the city and a recommendation from the ombudsman.

Political and civic groups can operate freely. All permit requests to assemble are evaluated according to the criteria set in the law, with an opportunity to appeal to the administrative court afterward.

Citation:

World Justice Project. 2023. “Latvia.” <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Latvia/Fundamental%20Rights/>

Freedom House. 2023. “Latvia.” <https://freedomhouse.org/country/latvia/freedom-world/2023>

## Lithuania

### Score 9

Lithuania's constitution and other legal norms generally safeguard freedom of association and assembly. Article 35 of the constitution states that "citizens shall be guaranteed the right to freely form societies, parties, and associations, provided that the aims and activities thereof are not contrary to the constitution and laws." Article 36 says that "citizens may not be prohibited or hindered from assembling unarmed in peaceful meetings." It also states that "this right may not be limited otherwise than by law and only when this is necessary to protect the security of the State or society, public order, the health or morals of people, or the rights or freedoms of other persons." The main restrictions, in force since 2022, apply to assemblies that support the military aggression of Russia and Belarus.

In general, political and civic groups can operate freely without state interference in their activities. According to the Freedom House report of 2023, "freedom of assembly is generally respected," with a ranking of four out of four points assigned in this category. The World Justice Project Report of 2023 also indicates that the freedoms of assembly and association are effectively guaranteed in Lithuania, giving the country a score of 0.78 out of 1.0, and ranking the country 27th out of 142 states worldwide. Additionally, Civicus Monitor in 2023 assigned Lithuania the status of an open country, with a score of 91 out of 100.

#### Citation:

The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. 1992. Art. 78. <https://lrkt.lt/en/about-the-court/legal-information/the-constitution/192>

Freedom House. 2023. "Freedom in the World Report 2023: Lithuania." <https://freedomhouse.org/country/lithuania/freedom-world/2023>

World Justice Project Report 2023. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Lithuania/Fundamental%20Rights/>

Civicus Monitor findings 2023. "Lithuania." <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/lithuania/>

## Portugal

### Score 9

Portugal provides a wide range of civil and political rights and freedoms for its citizens, as outlined in the Portuguese constitution of 1976. This is exemplified by Article 45, which specifically addresses freedom of assembly, and Article 46, which centers on freedom of association.

Every citizen or legal entity can establish and operate an association without any government intervention or discrimination, both de jure and in practice. According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index in 2023, Portugal maintained a score above the global and regional averages (0.85/1) in effectively guaranteeing freedom of assembly and association (WJP, 2023).

The Portuguese legal framework strictly prohibits any form of intimidation, harassment, or threats against individuals exercising their right to assemble or

associate. The process for establishing an association is transparent and accessible, with clear, non-discriminatory criteria for obtaining permits. This process merely requires citizens to present identification or a residence permit. However, the constitution imposes certain restrictions, notably forbidding the formation of armed, military, or paramilitary groups, as well as racist or fascist organizations.

To further facilitate the formation of associations, Portugal has introduced “Associação na Hora” branches in all district capitals and other regions. Established under Law No. 40/2007, these branches expedite the creation of associations. Additionally, in recent years, incentives have been introduced specifically to foster youth associations.

Freedom of association is respected, and national and international NGOs, including human rights groups, operate freely without unwarranted state intrusion or interference.

Citation:  
Constituição da República Portuguesa. 1976.  
[https://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei\\_mostra\\_articulado.php?nid=4&tabela=leis](https://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid=4&tabela=leis)

Freedom House. 2023. “2023 Freedom of the World Data: Portugal.”  
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/portugal/freedom-world/2023>

WJP. 2023. “World Justice Project Rule of Law Index: Portugal.” <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/Portugal>

Criar uma associação na hora. n.d. “Criar uma associação na hora.” <https://eportugal.gov.pt/servicos/criar-uma-associacao-na-hora>

## Slovakia

### Score 9

Slovakia’s constitution and other legal institutions fully safeguard political rights, including freedom of association and assembly. Political and civic groups can operate freely without unwarranted state intrusion or interference, provided they respect the law. These freedoms can only be restricted under the law and to the extent necessary in a democratic society for a legitimate aim. The right to associate is executed through registration, which can only be rejected for specific reasons, such as incomplete documentation or if the public space is already booked for another event.

The government does not use intimidation, harassment, or threats of retaliation to prevent citizens from exercising their rights to assemble and associate legally (see Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria 2021).

An example of civic groups operating freely is the Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations. In 2023, they organized a series of roundtables with representatives from public administration, local government, and organizations promoting

volunteerism. They drafted the National Plan for the Development of Volunteerism for 2024–2030, which is now open for public comment.

The situation may, however, change. The new government, led by Prime Minister Robert Fico, has expressed intentions to adopt new legislation related to NGOs and cancel the existing tax assignment system. Currently, all taxpayers can assign 2 or 3% of their income tax to civil society organizations (CSOs), including associations, foundations, nonprofit funds, and nonprofit organizations delivering public services. Eligible CSOs must be registered annually with a notary, and their activities must be connected with health, sports, social care, culture, education, protection of human rights, environmental protection, research and development, or voluntary work (paragraph 50, the law on income taxation 595/2003). The legislation also permits direct allocations of public funds to CSOs, commonly at the self-government level (laws on budgetary rules 523/2004 and 583/2004).

Robert Fico has referred to some NGOs as foreign agents (see Správy RTVS, 4 November 2023, or Robert Fico’s post on social media). He explicitly called Transparency International Slovakia a foreign agent because it is financed from abroad. Fico announced plans to “copy and paste” the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), a U.S. law requiring political and lobbying groups or individuals linked to foreign entities to register.

The Law on Obligatory Registration of NGOs, which came into effect in 2019 during a Smer-led government, created a register of NGOs launched in 2021. There are more than 82,000 registered NGOs in Slovakia. Concerns over the new government’s actions and rhetoric have increased (ECNL 2023).

Citation:

The Right of Peaceful Assembly: A Global Analysis of Domestic Regimes – Slovakia. 2021. Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria. <https://www.rightofassembly.info/country/slovakia>

Správy RTVS. 2023. “Robert Fico avizuje nový zákon: Mimovládne organizácie by boli označené ako zahraniční agenti. Môže to pomôcť proti dezinformáciám.” <https://spravy.rtvsk.sk/2023/11/robert-fico-avizoval-novy-zakon-mimovladne-organizacie-by-boli-oznacovane-ako-zahranicny-agent/>

FinState.sk. 2024. “Databáza nadácií, neziskových organizácií a združení (Database of foundations, nonprofit organizations and associations).” <https://finstat.sk/databaza-nadacii-neziskovych-organizacii-zdruzeni>

Ministry of Interior. 2023. Národný program rozvoja dobrovoľníctva na roky 2024 – 2030. Návrh. [https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/images/stories/files/2023/Narodny\\_plan\\_rozvoja\\_dobrovolnictva.pdf](https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/images/stories/files/2023/Narodny_plan_rozvoja_dobrovolnictva.pdf)

The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law Stichting (ECNL). 2023. “Slovak Civil Society Is Concerned That the New Government’s Actions and Rhetoric Are Shrinking Space for Their Work. How Can They Respond?” <https://ecnl.org/news/slovakia-civil-society-under-threat>

## Spain

Score 9

Article 21 of the constitution affirms the right to peaceful assembly without prior authorization, although authorities must be notified in advance when assemblies are planned in public areas. Article 22 recognizes the right of association, requiring



notifications 10 days before an event, with a 24-hour notice acceptable in exceptional cases. Law no. 4/2015 for the Protection of Public Security prohibits spontaneous demonstrations and introduces penalties for failing to declare gatherings at essential community service facilities.

In 2022 and 2023, the government attempted to repeal controversial articles of this law but was unsuccessful due to early elections. Several rule of law reports and the Venice Commission noted the law's negative impact on the right of assembly and freedom of expression. Political and civic groups operated freely during the review period.

In October and November 2023, protesters demonstrated against the agreement and the investiture of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Most demonstrations were peaceful, but some groups used violence against public security forces. The government did not apply arbitrary restrictions or employ intimidation or harassment.

## Switzerland

Score 9

The constitution safeguards political rights such as freedom of association and freedom of assembly.

Art. 22 states: "Freedom of assembly is guaranteed. Every person has the right to organize meetings and to participate or not to participate in meetings."

Art. 23 states: "Freedom of association is guaranteed. Every person has the right to form, join or belong to an association and to participate in the activities of an association."

Art. 28 states: "Employees, employers and their organizations have the right to join together to protect their interests, to form associations, and to join or not to join such associations. Disputes must wherever possible be resolved through negotiation or mediation. Strikes and lockouts are permitted if they relate to employment relations and if they do not contravene any requirements to preserve peaceful employment relations or to conduct conciliation proceedings."

These constitutional rules are implemented by public authorities without any major deviations in practice. While freedom of association as a fundamental right is strong in international comparison, human rights associations have raised concerns about the extended powers granted to surveillance authorities through the Federal Act on the Intelligence Service (put in place in 2017) for preventive surveillance purposes (Amnesty International 2023; Human Rights.ch). The 2022 Federal Act on Police Measures to Combat Terrorism has raised similar concerns among human rights organizations regarding the prerogatives granted to the Federal Office of Police and

the criteria used to justify restraining measures taken against individuals (Amnesty.ch).

Citation:

<https://www.amnesty.ch/fr/pays/europe-asie-centrale/suisse/mesures-policieres-de-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-mpt>

Amnesty International. 2023. "Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The state of the world's human rights."  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/5670/2023/en/>

<https://www.humanrights.ch/fr/pfi/droits-humains/securite-interieure/suisse-loi-rendement>

## United States

Score 9

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the freedom of assembly. Americans have robust rights to form political groups without unwarranted state intrusion or interference in their activities. Similarly, citizen groups usually possess strong rights to use public and private spaces to assemble and promote their ideas (Abrams 2017).

The Supreme Court has permitted a certain degree of government regulation regarding the time, place, and manner of assemblies, adhering to reasonably strict criteria. The court insists that any administrative regulation of the right to assemble must remain strictly neutral concerning the content of the assembly. Alternative means of communication must also be allowed (Nossell 2020).

Citation:

Floyd Abrams. 2017. *The Soul of the First Amendment*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Suzanne Nossell. 2020. *Dare to Speak*. New York: Dey Street Books.

## Ireland

Score 8

The 1937 Irish constitution and other legal norms safeguard political rights such as freedom of association and freedom of assembly. In practice, political and civic groups can operate freely without unwarranted state intrusion or interference. Transparent and non-discriminatory criteria are used to evaluate requests for permits to associate and assemble (Papada et al., 2023; WJP 2022). While Ireland experiences some of the global trend of declining civic space, it remained, in 2023, among the world's 2.1% considered "open" by Civicus, with freedom to associate, demonstrate and express dissent. Nonetheless, government needs to do more to leverage this civil society strength particularly in the local implementation of often controversial policies that lack full consensus. However, there are concerns that powers are not effectively used to police far-right intimidation, with a strategy of soft policing being exercised. Generally, the government does not employ intimidation, harassment or threats of retaliation to hinder citizens from exercising their rights to legally assemble and associate. Nevertheless, there have been incidents of

imprisonment of peaceful demonstrators and excessive use of force during some protests, such as the 2023 house evictions and recent environmental protests.

Papada et al. (2023) rate Ireland 8th in its global database, scoring 0.65 on participation, 0.92 on deliberative democracy and 0.89 on egalitarian democracy. The World Justice Project (WJP) 2023 returns an overall score of 84 for Ireland, with a score of 90 (highest) for freedom from arbitrary interference and 0.78 (lowest) for freedom of religion, all indicators being above regional averages (regional average is 0.74 overall).

Citation:

WJP (World Justice Project). 2023. "WJP 2023 Rule of Law Index | Ireland Insights." <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/downloads/WJPInsights2023.pdf>

Papada, E., Altman, D., Angiolillo, F., Gastaldi, L., Köhler, T., Lundstedt, M., Natsika, N., Nord, M., Sato, Y., Wiebrecht, F., Lindberg, S. I. 2023. "Defiance in the Face of Autocratization. Democracy Report 2023." V-Dem Working Paper - Democracy Report 2023 (March 2). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4560857> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4560857>

## Italy

### Score 8

The right to assembly is enshrined in the Italian constitution (Article 17), guaranteeing citizens the ability to gather and express their collective views. However, this right is not absolute and is subject to certain limitations imposed by the constitution and the law. All assemblies must be conducted peacefully and without weapons. For public assemblies, organizers must provide prior notice to the local police chief (questore) at least three days before the event. This notice allows the police to assess potential risks and determine whether preventive or supervisory measures are necessary to ensure public safety. If participant safety is deemed at risk, the police may prohibit the assembly. This approach balances the right to assembly with the need to protect public order and safety.

In December 2022, the Italian parliament introduced a new offense penalizing trespassing to organize a musical or entertainment gathering considered detrimental to public health and safety standards. This legislation aimed to address public health and safety concerns but has been criticized for potentially infringing on the fundamental rights of assembly and expression.

According to Amnesty International's 2023 report, police used excessive force against demonstrators on several occasions during the period under observation. These incidents are isolated cases widely condemned by the media and political leaders. The Meloni government has shown a tendency to be more severe with protest actions from ecologist or leftist groups.

Freedom of association is also enshrined in the Italian constitution (Article 18), guaranteeing citizens the right to freely associate without prior authorization for purposes not prohibited by criminal law. Secret associations and those pursuing

political ends through military organizations are prohibited. The constitution explicitly upholds this right in politics (Article 49), labor unions (Article 39), and religion (Article 19). However, ongoing challenges related to freedom of worship persist, including issues such as accessing tax exemptions for religious groups and constructing places of worship. These challenges have been more prevalent for Islamic groups, particularly regarding the construction of mosques in Italy.

According to the World Justice Project (2023), Italy ranks high in the freedom of association, religion, and expression indices.

Citation:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/5670/2023/en/>

<https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/downloads/WJPIndex2023.pdf>

## Japan

Score 8

Article 21 of the Japanese constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and association, which is respected by the authorities. Marches and street demonstrations require local police permission, but are rarely refused. Peaceful demonstrations are frequently organized by civil society groups representing different ideological stances. These often include protests in front of the Japanese Diet or embassies of different countries. The police rarely interfere, usually arresting only violent protesters.

In principle, those involved in diverse bottom-up initiatives and lobbying for various goals can operate freely in Japan and are not subject to undue restrictions. The activity of civil society groups is regulated by the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities of 1998, and the Association and Foundation Law of 2008. Nonprofit organizations specialize in a wide array of activities, such as promoting health outcomes, environmental conservation, disaster relief, international cooperation, consumer protections, and science and technology. Citizens are permitted to establish foundations and associations regardless of whether they operate in the public interest or not.

Japan's civil society is comparatively fragmented. Most officially recognized NGOs (referred to as nonprofit organizations or NPOs in Japan) are small and have little or no professional staff. Since a 1998 reform, there are now more stringent regulations for obtaining official recognition, whereas previously there had been significant bureaucratic discretion. Nonetheless, many NPOs closely cooperate with authorities or even take on semi-public roles, which sometimes blurs the line between civil society and the state (Ogawa 2021).

NPOs in Japan are generally exempt from corporation tax, though they have to pay taxes on income related to their profit-making activities. Moreover, there are limitations to tax exemptions and deductions on donations from individuals to certified NPOs, as very few NPOs have the related status (NPO Center).

On the other hand, unjustifiable restrictions on protests became more frequent during the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2022, the U.N. Human Rights Committee pointed to the problem of arrests of protesters and journalists, as well as excessive use of force by the police and recording of protesters, especially during demonstrations in front of the Diet and in Okinawa.

Citation:

Freedom House. 2022. "Freedom in the World 2022, Japan." <https://freedomhouse.org/country/japan/freedom-world/2022>

Ogawa, Akihiro. 2021. "Civil Society in Japan." In *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, eds. R.J. Pekkanen and S.M. Pekkanen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 299-316.

Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. 1946. "The Constitution of Japan." [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html)

The Global Development Research Center. 1998. "Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities." [https://www.gdrc.org/ngo/jp-npo\\_law.pdf](https://www.gdrc.org/ngo/jp-npo_law.pdf)

U.N. Human Rights Committee. 2022. "Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Japan." <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsuBJT%2Fi29ui%2Fb4lh9%2FUJJO87S0HPMR1PhCPt3LQO6EolLe709268JsfEokJ6QyNqFgswSBY1rovzRJaQqYHcITtywUvvrBUCl%2F6iBnTGHkY>

## Slovenia

### Score 8

Slovenian civil society organizations are vibrant, active, and reasonably well-organized. The Slovenian constitution guarantees citizens the right to peaceful and public assembly, and everyone has the right to freely associate with others. The "Friday protesters," who regularly gathered in city centers during the SDS government, especially in Ljubljana but also online during the lockdown, continued their protest activities into early 2022. They focused on mobilizing voters for the parliamentary elections in April 2022 and aimed to remove the government that violated civil liberties. The movement successfully mobilized voters for the center-left option, presenting it as an alternative. The last Friday protest occurred on April 22, shortly before the national elections. Following the change of government and a Constitutional Court decision, the Ministry of the Interior lifted the fines imposed on civil society during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The government of Prime Minister Golob from the Freedom Movement party appeared more open to proposals from civil society. For example, the coalition parties supported legislative proposals from the 8 March Institute and the NGO Legal Network for the Protection of Democracy. The opposition labeled such cooperation as "Slovenia is governed by civil society." At the same time, civil society was criticized for being too tolerant of the new government, as most of its promises to civil society remained unfulfilled. In the first year of the Golob government, the Voice of the People initiative highlighted that the government had not fulfilled 113 of the 122 promises made to civil society. The NGO CNVOS,

which has been monitoring and analyzing how governments comply with the National Assembly's Resolution on Normative Activity since 2009 – obliging them to hold a public debate of at least 30 days on each new regulation – found that all governments violate this resolution to a similar extent, namely between 60% and 80%.

There were also some other problematic events. During the traditional Pride parade on June 17 in Ljubljana, several homophobic and transphobic acts – such as insults, thefts, the burning of rainbow flags, physical attacks, and threats – were reported on social media. Additionally, President Pirc Musar was criticized for excluding one member of her Youth Advisory Council, Sara Štiglic, because of her civic activism against pro-life activists and their installation. Women's rights groups particularly criticized the president's decision.

Citation:

Rakar, Tatjana, and Tomaž Deželan. 2023. "The Strength of Civil Society in Slovenia After Three Decades of Post-Communist Experience." In *Handbook of Civil Society and Social Movements in Small States*, eds. Lino Briguglio. Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 248-261. DOI: 10.4324/9781003341536-21.

CNVOS. 2022. "Števec kršitev, Arhiv prejšnjih vlad." <https://www.cnvos.si/nvo-vseved/stevec-krsitev/arhiv-prejsnjih-vlad/>

L.a. Da. 2023. "Kolesarji ob prvi obletnici vlade nazdovoljni s številom izpolnjenih obljub." <https://www.rtvlo.si/slovenija/kolesarji-ob-prvi-obletnici-vlade-nezadovoljni-s-stevilom-izpolnjenih-obljub/670330>

24ur.com. 2023. "Še en odstop v podporo Sari Štiglic, na njeni strani tudi Golob." <https://www.24ur.com/novice/slovenija/pirc-musarjeva-po-izkljucitvi-stigliceve-plaz-kritik-na-mojo-odlocitev-je-prekomeren.html>

## Australia

Score 7

Australia has a long history of civic activism, recently highlighted by the debate on The Voice referendum. Organized social movements have emerged on both sides of this debate, actively presenting their views, especially in urban areas.

The constitution and Australia's political norms protect the rights of civil society organizations (CSOs) to form and express their views publicly, provided these do not constitute hate speech. Recently, governments throughout the federation have strengthened laws against hate speech and minority vilification, aiming to secure the public space for legitimate debate within acceptable conduct bounds.

While there is tolerance for peaceful protests that do not incite hatred or violence, there has been increasing intolerance in some jurisdictions for protests that are merely "disruptive." For example, the South Australian government recently passed legislation significantly increasing the penalties for protests that cause traffic chaos (Prosser and Richards 2023). This law responded to pro-environment activism in Adelaide, increasing the maximum penalty for such protests from AUD 750 to AUD 50,000 or three-months' imprisonment.

Civicus, the civic space monitor, rated conditions in Australia as “narrowed” in its most recent report (Civicus 2023). In 2018, conditions were rated as “open.” Concerns raised by Civicus include harsh treatment of whistleblowers, anti-protest laws clashing with international standards, and the willingness to arrest climate protesters (Civicus 2023).

Citation:

Civicus. 2023. “Australia: Protesters Face Arrest While Security Laws Are Putting Press Freedom at Risk.” Monitor. <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/australia-protesters-face-arrest-while-security-laws-are-putting-press-freedom-at-risk/>

Prosser, C., and S. Richards. 2023. “South Australia’s Protest Laws Are Changing. Here’s How.” ABC News June 2. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-02/south-australia-public-obstruction-laws-explainer-/102418400>

## United Kingdom

### Score 7

In most respects, UK civil society enjoys similar freedoms to its continental European neighbors, with few restrictions on membership in civil society organizations or their ability to function. The main exceptions are groups deemed to foster political extremism or terrorist-related activities. While the UK has an unwritten constitution, the 1998 Human Rights Act conferred rights equivalent to those set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. However, the government and some sections of the Conservative Party periodically criticize the Convention and the Strasbourg Court, with ongoing demands for the UK to withdraw from the court. These demands have resurfaced in connection with the government’s efforts to curb irregular migration by sending migrants to Rwanda, a policy that has yet to result in any migrants being sent.

The government has also been inclined to limit certain rights of assembly, usually citing security or public order concerns. Successive versions of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, since 2015, impose various restrictions, such as on the right of entry into the UK and powers of investigation. The right to demonstrate was tested after the October 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas on Israel. Despite calls from some leading politicians to ban demonstrations, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, citing the Public Order Act, rejected these calls but worked with organizers to agree on conditions provided in the Act.

The UK has an exceptionally high number of CCTV cameras, estimated to be the third highest density after China and the United States, and is more receptive to facial recognition technology than the EU. There appear to be no plans for legislation equivalent to the EU’s 2023 Artificial Intelligence Act. However, the adoption of facial recognition by a property developer elicited a backlash, and the Information Commissioner’s Office provides regulatory protections.

For the most part, citizens are unaffected by these provisions and are not inhibited from demonstrations or other forms of assembly. In fact, there has been criticism of



lax policing of protests against climate change by groups like Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion. Authorities are sometimes accused of harsher treatment of certain groups, such as the tough policing by the London Metropolitan Police Service of a vigil for Sarah Everard, a woman murdered by a serving police officer. This incident prompted the Met to commission a review into its “culture and standards of behavior” (Casey 2023). Regarding CCTV, public concerns are mitigated by evidence that cameras help in the fight against crime.

Citation:

<https://www.calipsa.io/blog/cctv-statistics-in-the-uk-your-questions-answered>

<https://news.met.police.uk/news/statement-ahead-of-palestinian-solidarity-campaign-march-in-central-london-474457>

Casey, L. 2023. “Baroness Casey Review Final Report: March 2023.” <https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/bcr/baroness-casey-review>

## Israel

Score 6

Freedom of association is not a constitutionally protected right. Instead, it is protected via a Supreme Court ruling. In Israel, there are relatively few legal barriers to forming associations. A group of people can register as an association with the Association Registrar. Similarly, freedom of assembly is not legally institutionalized but rather guaranteed through a Supreme Court ruling. In practice, there are also relatively few limitations on protests.

During the recent protests against overhauling the judiciary, the minister of national security (formerly minister of police and internal security) and the prime minister made several attempts to limit the demonstrations. However, these attempts were thwarted by the attorney general. During the ongoing war with Hamas, there have also been attempts to limit demonstrations calling for a cease-fire, but these restrictions were overruled by the Supreme Court.

In general, as the extensive protest against overhauling the judicial overhaul demonstrates, freedom of assembly in Israel is a protected right and is maintained even under the current populist government.

In recent years, there have been constant attempts to limit the operation of various civil society organizations by restricting their fundraising capabilities or attempting to make some associations illegal. These efforts primarily target left-wing and human rights organizations that rely on external funding, for example, from the European Union. These attempts remain ongoing, with little success. Although some left-wing organizations have been banned from entering schools, this remains an exception.

Nonetheless, during Israel’s war with Hamas and the protests against overhauling the judiciary, the police have used excessive force to stop demonstrations, including

violent and in some cases seemingly political arrests. This was also part of the minister's policy, which encouraged the police to use force and threatened to dismiss the police officer in charge of the Tel Aviv District, who said he would not authorize violence during the protests. The use of excessive force by the police can more frequently be seen in cases involving Arab or Palestinian protesters, as well as when protesters belong to Jewish minority groups such as those of Ethiopian descent or ultraorthodox groups.

## Netherlands

### Score 6

All the usual political liberties are guaranteed by the constitution. The Netherlands is a signatory to all pertinent major international treaties (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, European Convention on Human Rights). All relevant ranking institutions, such as The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index and the Freedom House ranking of political liberties, consistently list the Netherlands as one of the top five most free countries in the world.

However, the freedoms of assembly and demonstration have been subject to considerable pressure. The number and size of demonstrations is changing due to the fast organizing power of social media. Meanwhile, in addition to the "classic" forms of demonstration, there are new forms of protest such as the defacement of art, gluing oneself to the street or blocking a highway. Especially when protests turn into unannounced visits to the homes of politicians, police officers or journalists, demonstrators are seen as going over the bounds of normal rules of conduct.

In summer 2022, farmers organized a series of protests against government policies relating to the reduction of nitrogen emissions by agricultural enterprises near protected Natura 2000 areas. Demonstrators used huge parades of tractors to block the nation's highways and access to supermarkets' distribution centers and government buildings in provincial capitals. Police forces were accused of failing to intervene and manage the protests. The Sinterklaas parade in Staphorst in 2022 featured tensions between anti-Blackface activists who were on their way to the site of an approved demonstration and a crowd of intimidating and even violent pro-Blackface individuals. Despite a large-scale police presence, security forces proved unable or unwilling to deal with this. The mayor subsequently issued a ban on the anti-Blackface demonstration. Thus, a legal demonstration was banned only because of the behavior of a hostile public that could no longer be adequately dealt with by the public authorities.

Amnesty International has argued that both national and local governments are failing to guarantee the right to demonstrate. In practice, police frequently ask peaceful protesters for their identification. Demonstrators are sometimes monitored via social media or even receive unannounced visits from the police. Especially with

large demonstrations and blockades, the police quite often engage in (mass) detentions or enclose groups of protesters (kettling), or administratively relocate protesters.

In brief, demonstrations are seen primarily as a risk to public order, not as the exercise of a human right. Adequate, independent evaluation of government action is lacking. However, consultations sometimes take place in which organized demonstrators and local government negotiate on conditions for safe demonstrations.

In addition, there is a process of democratic backsliding underway, visible in public opinion and behavior of political elites. There is an increasing proportion of Dutch citizens that are tolerant of violence for political means. Even some legislators, particularly those belonging to the extreme-right FvD party, have threatened colleagues belonging to other parties.

Citation:

Parlementaire Monitor. 2023. "mw. Bruins Slot, Minister van BZK." July 7.

Amnesty International. n.d. DEMONSTRATIERECHT ONDER DRUK. Regels en praktijk in Nederland moeten beter.

Groene Amsterdammer/Investico Onderzoeksjournalisten. 2023. "Klein tegen de grote politie. Onderzoek Demonstratierecht in de knel." Groene Amsterdammer March 23.

Erasmus School of Law. 2023. "Hoe de drang naar veiligheid het demonstratierecht in gevaar brengt." 30 mrt.

NOS Nieuws. 2022. "Politici voelen zich onveilig door protest bij voordeur, 'aanval op democratie'." June 29.

<https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/nederland/artikel/5426691/onderzoek-scp-omverwerpen-overheidssysteem-hardere-acties-regering>

## Hungary

Score 5

The Hungarian Basic Law guarantees freedom of assembly and association. However, in recent years, both rights have been challenged from multiple sides. During the migration crisis, the right to assembly was constrained, and these limitations expanded during the pandemic. The transition from justifying the state of emergency (as of the time of writing prolonged until May 2024) with reference to COVID-19 to a reference to the war in Ukraine indicates that these limitations serve as means of support for government policies. For instance, demonstrations by teachers against the government's education policies have been harshly restricted, leading teachers to challenge the government legally. The government is currently able to govern by decree. Organizations such as Transparency International Hungary (Mikola 2021) and the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union have heavily criticized the situation. Since the 2016 – 2017 period, when the Orbán government implemented several measures targeting civil society organizations, NGOs have faced an increasingly hostile environment. CSO sustainability has been impeded (United States Agency for International Development 2022: 2). CSOs face threats with respect to the legal environment, their organizational capacity and finances, and the public

image of CSOs overall. The “lex NGO” treats foreign-financed organizations in a way similar to Russia’s foreign-agent law, putting them under a registration obligation, especially if they are publicly funded or registered as nonprofit organizations. Noncompliance can result in fines or dissolution, although these penalties are used more as intimidation and are rarely enforced in practice. Other discriminatory measures, such as the “Stop Soros Law,” impose punitive fines on organizations that support migration.

The European Court of Justice deemed the “lex NGO” incompatible with EU norms. It took significant pressure from the EU to prompt the government to change the law (Law XLIX/2021). However, the changes that have been made are largely cosmetic, such as varying thresholds and granting exemptions for religious communities, sports associations and ethnic minority bodies. The amended law bypasses the government’s responsibility to the Audit Office, turning the agency into a political body beyond its constitutionally given scope, whose reports cannot be legally challenged. Not surprisingly, the State Audit Office has imposed some highly dubious fines on the issue. Eight affected NGOs have complained about the amended law to the Constitutional Court. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee considers the law to be a violation of freedom of association and expression (Hungarian Helsinki Committee 2022).

Not deterred by these challenges, the government opened a new front in November 2023 by adopting a Sovereignty Protection Act. The act aims to establish an Office for the Defense of National Sovereignty. The law reads like a frontal offense to international organizations, and even mentions the combination of international organizations and the left-liberal political camp as a “threat to Hungarian sovereignty.” The office could be used to supervise the political and financial activities of people and organizations not sharing Orbán’s illiberal, nationalistic and populist view of the world. This constitutes yet another step in Hungary’s deviation from basic standards of Western democracies, even though it formally has a mandate only to investigate foreign-funded activities aimed at influencing election outcomes. Intimidating communication campaigns targeting organized LGBTQ+ communities add to insecurities. Civil society organizations have reacted to the threat by forming the *Civilizáció* (Civilisation) platform, uniting several prominent CSOs with international networks to combat democratic backsliding in Hungary. Compared to the money the government uses to further its narratives, this attempt is small but noteworthy.

Citation:

Hungarian Helsinki Committee. 2022. [https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/HHC\\_LexNGO2021\\_info\\_note.pdf](https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/HHC_LexNGO2021_info_note.pdf)

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Mikola, Bálint. 2021. “Hungary’s Rule of Law Backsliding Continues Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis.” Transparency International February 18. <https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/hungarys-rule-of-law-backsliding-continues-amidst-the-covid-19-crisis>

## Poland

### Score 5

Poles can freely join independent groups, both political and civic, as guaranteed by the national constitution and national and international legislation. Article 31 of the Polish constitution stipulates that any limitations on rights and liberties can only be imposed by law and only if necessary to ensure security, public order, environmental protection, health, public morality, or the freedom and rights of others. Additionally, the “Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism” law outlines criteria and principles for supporting civil society organizations (CSOs). Polish law also provides an additional benefit for members of associations or trade unions – the ability to deduct and offset membership fees from income. Taxpayers can voluntarily donate 1.5% of their personal income tax to a chosen public benefit organization. Since October 15, 2017, the National Freedom Institute – Center for Civil Society Development has been the main governmental platform for non-governmental organizations (National Freedom Institute, 2023).

Throughout 2022 – 2023, no public assemblies were prohibited, except in the region near the Belarusian border, where the government imposed a state of emergency due to the migration crisis. This state of emergency, which concluded on June 1, 2022, restricted access for humanitarian NGOs, activists, and journalists.

During this period, civil dialogue in Poland deteriorated, and financial treatment favored conservative, pro-government organizations. Arbitrary arrests, detentions, and imprisonments of peaceful demonstrators were less frequent compared to 2020 – 2021, a time when massive protests against tightening abortion laws and changes in the judiciary system brought many Poles to the streets. In June and October 2023, two major demonstrations in support of opposition parties were organized in Warsaw, gathering hundreds of thousands of Poles from across the country. No incidents of violations of citizens’ rights were reported during these demonstrations.

Despite the absence of prohibitions on public assemblies, the government’s state of emergency near the Belarusian border, which ended on June 1, 2022, hindered access for humanitarian NGOs, activists and journalists. Incidents of unlawful behavior by the police, such as the use of excessive force, were not investigated, leading to accusations of politicization within the top police leadership.

#### Citation:

Le Monde. 2023. “Polish opposition rally draws ‘a million’ protesters to Warsaw.” 1.10.2023. [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/europe/article/2023/10/01/polish-opposition-rally-draws-a-million-protesters-to-warsaw\\_6142279\\_143.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/europe/article/2023/10/01/polish-opposition-rally-draws-a-million-protesters-to-warsaw_6142279_143.html)

National Freedom Institute (2023): <https://niw.gov.pl/en/about-nfi/history/>

Indicator **Effective Civil Society Organizations  
(Capital and Labor)**

Question **To what extent do civil society organizations (CSOs) have the capacity to actively participate in the co-creation of relevant policies?**

30 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = All the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 8-6 = Most of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 5-3 = Few of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 2-1 = None of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.

## Sweden

Score 10 In early 20th-century Sweden, the relationship between labor and industry underwent significant evolution, marked by a series of compromises aimed at addressing the pressing social and economic challenges of the time. One pivotal agreement was reached in 1938 with the establishment of the Saltsjöbaden Agreement, a landmark accord that laid the groundwork for collective bargaining and labor rights. Spearheaded by the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the Swedish Employers Association (SAF), this agreement aimed to strike a balance between the interests of workers and employers, fostering a cooperative framework for resolving labor disputes and negotiating fair wages and working conditions. The Saltsjöbaden Agreement emphasized the importance of mutual respect, dialogue, and compromise, setting a precedent for collaborative labor relations that would come to define Sweden's social model.

Central to the compromise between labor and industry in early 20th-century Sweden was the concept of “wage solidarity” (lönesolidaritet), which sought to ensure equitable pay scales across various industries and professions. This principle, enshrined in subsequent agreements following the Saltsjöbaden pact, aimed to mitigate income disparities and foster a sense of social cohesion. Additionally, the compromise facilitated the establishment of comprehensive social welfare programs, including universal healthcare and unemployment benefits, which provided a safety net for workers and their families. Through these compromises, Sweden achieved a delicate equilibrium between the demands of labor and the imperatives of industry, laying the foundation for its renowned welfare state and cementing its reputation as a model for progressive social policy (Elvander 1988).

A legacy of this agreement is that the government is not involved in salary negotiations between labor unions and employers. As a consequence, there is no governmentally mandated minimum wage. The right to unionization is legislated (SFS 1976:580). Three major unions cover the gamut of professions: LO (public and private blue-collar professions), TCO (public and private white-collar professions), and Saco (academics and professions such as civil engineers and lawyers) (Nordiskt Samarbete, n.d.). These organizations are major players in shaping public policy. They have the resources, both monetary and expertise, to influence the policy process.

Nordiskt Samarbete. n.d. "Fackförbund i Sverige." <https://www.norden.org/sv/info-norden/fackforbund-i-sverige>

## Belgium

### Score 9

Belgium's socioeconomic model is characterized by consensual (neo-corporatist) policymaking, whereby the government consults established stakeholders to facilitate policy acceptance (Pauly et al. 2021). When strategic decisions involve key socioeconomic issues, representatives of social partners – powerful and well-structured employers' organizations and trade unions – systematically negotiate bilateral agreements, which are then presented to the executive for approval. Unionization rates in Belgium remain very high, with membership rates close to 50% in 2019, one of the highest in Europe.

Technological changes related to service platforms (such as Uber), the internationalization of the economy, trade agreements like CETA, and efforts by the previous right-wing government to reduce the power of workers' unions have eroded unions' influence. Despite these challenges, unions remain quite powerful.

Belgium has three national union confederations: the General Labor Federation of Belgium (ACOD/FGTB), the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (ACV/CSC), and the General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium (CGSLB/ACLVB), with the first two being the most significant. It is common for these three unions to form a "common front." The main employers' organization in Belgium is the VBO/FEB (Verbond van Belgische Ondernemingen/Fédération des Entreprises de Belgique), which operates nationwide and includes members from various employers' organizations, each specializing in a particular industry or sector.

Both trade unions and employers' organizations possess well-developed study services with technical expertise, often extending beyond their traditional focus areas.

Pauly, R., Verschuere, B., De Rynck, F., and Voets, J. 2021. "Changing Neo-Corporatist Institutions? Examining the Relationship Between Government and Civil Society Organizations in Belgium." *Public Management Review* 23 (8): 1117-1138.

Unionization rates: <https://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=TUD&lang=fr>



## Denmark

### Score 9

In a comparative perspective, with a trade union density of nearly 65% in 2021, the degree of unionization in Denmark is very high (Statistics Denmark, 2021). There is a long tradition of involving economic and social actors at all stages of the policy cycle, sometimes even in the implementation phase. Both formally and informally, there are valuable contacts between the government and main interest organizations (e.g., trade unions, employers, various business organizations and NGOs) as well as heads of major companies. Interest organizations provide important information for politicians and civil servants. Corporatism still plays a role, although its nature has changed over the years. Danish governments gain information and create legitimacy for adopted policies through the tripartite negotiations.

Tripartite negotiations between social partners (employee and employer organizations) are frequently used to settle labor market issues. This was most recently evident during the COVID-19 crisis, where a large number of tripartite agreements demonstrated the system's flexibility and adaptability. Other examples of recent tripartite cooperation include initiatives to improve immigrant integration into the labor market and expand lifelong learning programs.

The cooperative approach is also formalized through the Economic Council, established in 1962, which includes representatives from large organizations, the administration, the central bank and independent experts. The Council operates independently, continuously analyzing and commenting on economic developments, economic policies and structural issues in specific policy areas.

Union membership is voluntary (fees are tax-deductible up to a cap, which in 2023 was DKK 6.000) and is not required for unemployment insurance. While membership has been on a declining trend over the long term, there has recently been a small rise. Collective agreements cover most of the labor market and thus also include workers who are not union members.

Citation:

Statistics Denmark. 2021. "Stigende antal fagforeningsmedlemmer i 2022." <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/nyheder-analyser-publ/nyt/NytHtml?cid=46006>

## Latvia

### Score 9

Within the framework of the tripartite social dialogue in Latvia, social partners – the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS), the Latvian Chambers of Commerce (LTRK), the Employers Confederation of Latvia (LDDK), and the Latvian Association of Local Government (LPS) – are recognized as the social partners for the government and engage in dialogue regularly. Thus, employers and business associations possess the organizational resources to be present at all stages

of policymaking. Their influence on policymaking issues varies, although they can unite smaller CSOs under their umbrella. However, the trade union density is 11.6% (data of 2018 in OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database).

The government has ensured that all opportunities for social partners to participate in policymaking, via online tools, access to governmental information, and participation in government meetings, are available.

The Foreign Investors' Council in Latvia (FICIL) is an NGO established by foreign investors in Latvia. It can identify policy problems and advocate for policy proposals. FICIL's priorities for the coming years include combating the shadow economy and addressing labor force availability and skills.

Citation:

OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database. <https://www.oecd.org/employment/ictwss-database.htm>

Nacionālā trīspusējās sadarbības padome. <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/nacionala-trispusejas-sadarbibas-padome>

Foreign Investors' Council in Latvia. <https://www.ficil.lv>

## Slovenia

### Score 9

The Slovenian political system is neo-corporatist, providing representation for employers and employees in the Economic and Social Council (ESS), a tripartite body of social partners and the government of the Republic of Slovenia. The ESS addresses issues and measures related to economic and social policy and other matters specific to agreements between the partners. Representatives of employers and employees are also included in the National Council, the second house of Slovenia's bicameral parliament, which represents social, economic, professional, and local interests. The institution consists of 40 members: four employers, four representatives of employees, and four representatives of farmers, artisans, and independent professionals. Consequently, the organizations of employers and employees are the most institutionalized, professionalized, and supported by expert staff.

Although the trade unions and employer representatives are among the strongest non-state actors, there has been a clear trend toward declining trade union membership in recent years. Trade union membership fell sharply in the first half of the 1990s, even as the number of trade unions in Slovenia increased. Additionally, associations of successful businesspeople outside the institutionalized employer framework, such as the Slovenian Business Club, are gaining public attention and expressing concerns on various issues, including those outside the business sector.

In 2023, trade unions representing various professional groups in the public sector were notably active. These groups included education professionals, police officers, customs officers, nurses, judicial officials, local government employees, professional firefighters, the army, bus drivers, and more. Many of these unions have threatened or carried out strikes and other protests throughout the year.

The government is currently advocating for joint negotiations with all trade unions as part of the wage system reform. On January 15, 2024, the doctors' union began a general strike, which will continue until a strike agreement is reached or lifted. However, a resolution is not yet in sight. Consequently, work in the public healthcare system is restricted, increasing pressure on the government, even though the majority of the public and civil society do not support the doctors' strike.

Citation:

E-uprava: Državni svet- sestava, področje delovanja in pristojnosti. <https://e-uprava.gov.si/drzava-in-druzba/e-demokracija/o-democraticnih-procesih/drzavna-ureditev/drzavni-svet-sestava-podrocje-delovanja-in-pristojnosti.html>

Živa Broder. 2016. *Sindikalno gibanje v Sloveniji od osamosvojitve do danes*. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede. [http://dk.fdv.uni-lj.si/magistrska/pdfs/mag\\_broder-ziva.pdf](http://dk.fdv.uni-lj.si/magistrska/pdfs/mag_broder-ziva.pdf)

Rakar, Tatjana, and Tomaž Deželan. 2023. "The Strength of Civil Society in Slovenia after Three Decades of Post-Communist Experience." In *Handbook of Civil Society and Social Movements in Small States*, eds. Lino Briguglio. Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 248-261. DOI: 10.4324/9781003341536-21.

SBC. 2024. "Imamo državo ugrabljeno s strani drugorazrednih uradnikov." Available at <https://www.sbc.si/novice/2024/01/imamo-drzavo-ugrabljeno-s-strani-drugorazrednih-uradnikov>

## Switzerland

Score 9

The right to form professional associations is enshrined in Art. 28 of the constitution. Trade union representation is split across several organizations. The Swiss Trade Union Federation is the leading union organization, and is historically close to the Social Democratic Party. It is strongest in membership figures (48% of all trade union members, 2021). Travail.Suisse was formed by a fusion of Catholic trade unions and unions for salaried employees. It is politically independent but close to the Social Democrats and the Center Party, and represents about 20% of all trade unionists (2021). The remaining smaller organizations account for about another third of all trade unionists (FSO 2024).

There are three types of associations representing capital. Economiesuisse (<https://economiesuisse.ch/en>) represents employers on the political level, the Swiss Employers' Association is the main negotiation partner with the trade unions, and the Swiss Union of Arts and Crafts represents small and medium-sized enterprises.

Swiss interest organizations are pragmatic and avoid rigidly ideological stances. Of course, the major interest organizations do have their ideologies, but this does not prevent them from entering rational discussions with other organizations and political parties. Furthermore, interest organizations in general have access to more substantial professional resources and often have a better-informed view of problems than do political parties. Switzerland is well-known for its liberal corporatist integration of interest organizations into the state. Trade unions are the junior

partners, with the main axis of influence constituted by employers' interest organizations and the state. Interest organizations have an important role in developing and implementing policies. Since about the 1990s, this corporatist arrangement has been weakened but not eliminated by two developments. First, policymaking influence has shifted somewhat to the interaction between government and parliament. One of the major reasons for this change is the increasing Europeanization of Swiss policymaking. In addition, the power of the Swiss Employers' Association has been weakened by the increasing internationalization of industries, with many foreign-managed or foreign-owned companies now active in the country (Armingeon 1997; 2011; Mach et al. 2020; 2021; 2023).

Hence, the major civil society organizations (CSOs) have the organizational strength to independently formulate policies and to participate in an integrated policy formulation process with the government. They pursue a policy of social partnership. While trade unions directly represent only about 20% of all employees, their collective agreements cover about half of all employees, and they are respected as representatives of the working class. In addition to these strong corporatist features – with traditional key players having established access to the decision-making process – additional citizen groups have gained access to the administrative and parliamentary venues in the last decades. The threat of referendums and a weakly professionalized parliament explain the system's relative openness to demands from civil society groups. Corporatist groups remain, however, by far the most dominant interest groups in the decision-making process (Christiansen et al. 2017).

Citation:

Armingeon, Klaus. 1997. "Swiss Corporatism in Comparative Perspective." *West European Politics* 20: 164-179.

Armingeon, Klaus. 2011. "A Prematurely Announced Death? Swiss Corporatism in Comparative Perspective." In *Switzerland in Europe: Continuity and Change in the Swiss Political Economy*, eds. Christine Trampusch and André Mach. London/New York: Routledge, 165-185.

Christiansen, Peter Munk, André Mach, and Frédéric Varone. 2018. "How Corporatist Institutions Shape the Access of Citizen Groups to Policy-Makers: Evidence from Denmark and Switzerland." *Journal of European Public Policy* 25 (4): 526-545. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2016.1268194.

FSO (Federal Statistical Office, Bundesamt für Statistik). 2024. "Gewerkschaften und andere Arbeitnehmerorganisationen: Zahl der Mitglieder." <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/arbeitsverwerb/gesamtarbeitsvertraege-sozialpartnerschaft/gewerkschaften.assetdetail.25085550.html>

Mach, André, Frédéric Varone, and Steven Eichenberger. 2020. "Transformations of Swiss Neo-Corporatism: From Pre-Parliamentary Negotiations toward Privileged Pluralism in the Parliamentary Venue." In *The European Social Model under Pressure*, eds. Romana Careja, Patrick Emmenegger, and Nathalie Giger. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 51-68. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27043-8\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27043-8_4)

Mach, André, Thomas David, and Stéphanie Ginalska. 2021. "From Quiet to Noisy Politics: Transformations of Swiss Business Elites' Power." *Politics & Society* 49 (1): 17-41.

Mach, André, and Steven Eichenberger. 2023. "Interest Groups." In *The Oxford Handbook of Swiss Politics*, eds. Patrick Emmenegger, Flavia Fossati, Silja Häusermann, Yannis Papadopoulos, Pascal Sciarini, and Adrian Vatter. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 337-354. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192871787.013.17>

## Austria

Score 8

The role of capital and labor interest groups remains notably strong in Austria (Karlhofer 2020). In many cases, these groups continue to formulate nearly complete laws independently, which parliament subsequently only needs to approve. Significant associations include the Austrian Economic Chambers (Wirtschaftskammern) and the Federation of Austrian Industry (Die Industriellenvereinigung) for businesses and employers; the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund) and the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labor (Arbeiterkammern) for employees; and the Chamber of Agriculture (Landwirtschaftskammern) for farmers. Membership in the various chambers is mandatory; the fees, amounting to 0.5% of the gross salary, are automatically deducted from it. Other membership fees to professional associations or donations to civil society organizations are tax-deductible.

The power of the major associations from the economic and labor sectors to shape politics and public policies may have been reduced as a result of Austria's integration into the European Union, but in domestic politics their influence remains strong. Though formally independent of political parties, the groups have various individual links to the parties, especially to the Social Democratic Party and the Austrian People's Party. Moreover, their influence is enhanced by their acting in a coordinated, neo-corporatist way through the social-partnership network.

These established patterns have begun to change in recent decades, particularly in the past few years (Paster 2022). The SPÖ's closest allies have lost ground since the party's fall from power in 2017. The formation of a new coalition government between the ÖVP and the Greens in early 2020 continued the post-2017 policies. The ÖVP-Green government was, in fact, the first national government that did not include any ministers representing the social partners (Sozialpartner).

The social partners have not only suffered from changing government complexions; compared to the peak of the Social Partnership, public trust and support have been shrinking. In 2022, just 35% of respondents declared they had much or very much trust in the social partners (i.e., employers' and employees' associations). By contrast, 24% of respondents had little or no trust at all (Statista 2024). Some of this distrust stems from the influence of the FPÖ, a party that is not represented in these organizations and is therefore fairly skeptical. On the other hand, employers' and workers' organizations have gained more access to public opinion through newly founded economic research and lobbying institutions like Agenda Austria and Momentum Institute.

Citation:

Statista. 2024. "<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1097082/umfrage/vertrauen-in-die-sozialpartner-in-oesterreich>"

Paster, Thomas. 2022. "Sozialpartnerschaft und Arbeitgeber\* innenverbände in Österreich." In

Sozialpartnerschaftliche Handlungsfelder: Kontinuitäten, Brüche und Perspektiven: Aktuelle Befunde, eds., 29-43. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Karlhofer, Ferdinand. 2020. "The Present and Future State of Social Partnership." *Austro-Corporatism*. Routledge, 119-146.

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## Czechia

Score 8

In the Council for Economic and Social Accord, trade unions and employer associations actively comment on bills pertaining to social and economic issues during tripartite meetings with the government. The consultation process has become more transparent due to the electronic publication of legislative norms and regulations. Notably, major employers and trade unions possess substantial resources and expertise, enabling them to formulate coherent policies.

Trade unions and employers' organizations often have differing aims and opinions on various issues. However, they are united in their support for this means of communication and issue joint statements when they feel ignored by the government, as seen in the early preparations for the government's so-called consolidation package (discussed under Sustainable Budgeting Policies).

The main employers' organization, the Union of Industry and Transport of the Czech Republic (Svaz průmyslu a dopravy České republiky, SPČR), has emphasized its opposition to higher business taxes and increased taxes on energy, claiming these harm the metallurgy and mineralogy industries. This organization consistently expresses opinions on current economic policy issues and lobbies the government and politicians both through and independently of the tripartite structures. It has persistently argued for government help in relaxing rules to allow the recruitment of more workers from abroad. This, along with many of its other demands, has not been a priority for trade unions.

For trade unions, the central issues have been the protection of living standards and public sector pay levels. To press these issues, the main trade union center, the Czech and Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů, ČMKOS), organized a day of protest on November 27, 2023, including a one-hour token work stoppage at some workplaces. This protest was linked with demonstrations by employees in education against the perceived threat of pay cuts. While this action has not led to immediate changes in government policy, there may be a long-term impact on a government with internal divisions and a stated commitment to improving the education system.

Citation:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-10-08/czech-unions-demand-up-to-10-wage-growth-as-inflation-slows>

## Finland

Score 8 In Finland's consensus-oriented political system, interest organizations and associations – especially employers' and employees' organizations – are regularly consulted in the course of policymaking. The major civil society organizations (CSOs) are cooperative and capable of forming alliances.

According to Greve et al. (2020), the role of trade unions and work councils as social partners has been more limited in Finland than in other Nordic countries. They were consulted during the preparation of the government support packages, but not as extensively as in Denmark, for example. One reason for this could be that many unemployment-related issues (e.g., short-term work and wage supplement systems) were already covered by national regulation.

Although the corporatist system adopted in the 1960s has now declined, the exchange of views and information with a variety of social interests remains integral to the everyday activities of the Finnish government. Through mechanisms such as committee hearings, joint-council memberships and expert testimony, bills and drafts are circulated to interested parties who are then invited to critique the draft legislation. Reforms of the earnings-related pension system, for example, are still negotiated in a tripartite manner. However, recent developments have indicated a weakening in the role played by tripartite negotiation of labor market agreements between the government, employers' associations and employee organizations.

Labor union membership fees are tax deductible. Employers' and employees' associations possess significant financial strength, which enables them to hire policy experts. Although labor union membership is declining, rates remain relatively high compared with other European countries.

Citation:

Greve, B., Blomquist, P., Hvinden, B., and van Gerven, M. 2020. "Nordic Welfare States – Still Standing or Changed by the COVID-19 Crisis?" *Social Policy & Administration* 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12675>

## Germany

Score 8 The Basic Law, the German constitution, allows all German citizens to form associations and organizations (Article 9, Passage 1) and specifically to form trade unions and employers' organizations for all professions (Article 9, Passage 3) to preserve and improve labor and economic conditions (Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1949).

As a result, Germany has many trade unions and business organizations. These organizations are economically and politically independent and are funded by



membership fees, which are tax-deductible for both employees and employers (Rütters/Mielke, n.d.; Hans Böckler Stiftung, 2013; Vereinigte Lohnsteuerhilfe e.V., 2023).

Wage bargaining in Germany operates autonomously. Trade unions and employer organizations negotiate wages and working conditions independently without political intervention. The government does not typically intervene in collective bargaining rounds and is not entitled to settle disputes between unions and business organizations (Strünck, n.d.). Government pleas and other political institutions usually do not affect these negotiations and are quickly rejected by the negotiating parties. There are no serious debates about limiting the autonomy of wage bargaining (Lesch et al., 2023: 26).

Major civil society organizations (CSOs) have the organizational strength to independently formulate policy proposals. For example, the Initiative New Social Market Economy (Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft, INSM), funded by the employers' organizations of the metal and electro industries, aims to rethink and improve the German social market economy. It was initially kickstarted with €100 million in funding (Hans Böckler Stiftung, 2013). On the trade union side, in 2022, a reform of the works constitution law (Betriebsverfassungsgesetz) was proposed by experts from the German Trade Union Federation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) and several law professors (Verdi, 2022).

Labor and capital CSOs generally play an advisory role in the policymaking process. They can make proposals, although the federal government is not obliged to react to them. It is unclear to what extent the government feels compelled to respond to these proposals, but governments often actively seek CSO advice. For instance, in July 2022, Chancellor Scholz invited trade unions and employer organizations to participate in a "Concerted Action" to discuss dealing with inflation and the energy crisis.

Many trade unions and business organizations come together in umbrella organizations. The German Trade Union Federation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) is an umbrella organization for eight major German trade unions, representing approximately six million members. Membership has declined since German reunification (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, n.d.). The Confederation of German Employers (Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände) is the main umbrella organization for employers' organizations. It consists of 14 state associations and 46 federal professional associations from nearly every economic sector, representing about one million enterprises with more than 30 million employees (Die Arbeitgeber, n.d.).

Compared to many other European countries, the number and intensity of strikes in Germany are low. In the 2010s, an average of 18 working days per 1,000 employees were lost each year due to strikes. This is largely due to German strike law, which disallows strikes for political reasons (Deutschlandfunk, 2023).

Most Germans hold favorable views of unions. Specifically, 69% of Germans support strong unions, and 51% associate positive views with trade unions, while only 15% have a negative perception. (Nienhüser et al. 2022: 29).

Citation:

Bundesrepublik Deutschland. 1949. Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland. <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/BJNR000010949.html>

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. n.d. “Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB).” <https://www.bpb.de/kurzknapp/lexika/politiklexikon/17341/deutscher-gewerkschaftsbund-dgb/>

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INSM. n.d. “Alles über die INSM.” <https://www.insm.de/insm/ueber-die-insm/faq>

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Nienhüser, W., Peetz, D., Murray, G., Troup, C. 2022. “Social Media, the Internet and the Crisis of Unionism.” Hans Böckler Stiftung Working Paper <https://www.boeckler.de/de/faust-detail.htm?produkt=HBS-008499>.

Rütters, P., and Mielke, S. n.d. “Gewerkschaften.” Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. <https://www.bpb.de/kurzknapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202034/gewerkschaften>

Stiftung Warentest. 2024. “Geschichte: Sechs Jahrzehnte Verbraucherschutz.” <https://www.test.de/unternehmen/stiftung-5017075-5843545/>

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## Lithuania

Score 8

Most major civil society organizations (CSOs) have the capacity to shape public policies, although in practice this depends on the particular CSO. Major societal actors, such as trade unions and business organizations, are consulted through institutionalized arrangements – such as the Tripartite Council – as well as through various ad hoc means.

According to the OECD/AIAS ICTWSS Database, trade union density was 10% in 2021, a rise from 7.4% in 2019, while employer organization density was 33% in 2016 (later data is not available). Lithuanian legislation allows taxpayers to donate up to 0.6% of their personal income tax to trade unions and their associations of choice when declaring their annual income. Business organizations are funded by membership fees.

Traditionally, business organizations have been more adept at raising funds and developing expertise to voice their opinions on policy initiatives. The Investors’ Forum, the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists and the Lithuanian Business Confederation are among the most well-resourced business associations. These

organizations possess substantial analytical capacities, enabling them to formulate their own policy proposals and contribute to debates on economic and social policy initiatives presented by the government. Recently, major business associations have collaborated to provide common assessments of government initiatives, such as the tax reform debated from 2021 to 2023.

The visibility and capacities of major economic and social CSOs are enhanced through their participation in EU-wide networks of similar organizations. For instance, the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists is a member of Business Europe. Meanwhile, although the visibility and capacities of trade unions have also increased recently, and the Confederation of Trade Unions now plays a more prominent political role than previously, this role remains somewhat weaker than that of employers.

The government frequently consults with social partners on various issues, but it is more inclined to engage with employer organizations than trade unions. Given the government's limited capacity to shape and coordinate broad political compromises, these consultations tend to be formal rather than substantive contributions to policymaking, particularly on issues that directly impact specific interests. For instance, in 2022 – 2023, the involvement of major societal actors in the review of tax exemptions initiated by the Ministry of Finance did not result in any workable agreement. However, a similar involvement in the preparation of the long-term Lithuania 2050 strategy, led by the State Progress Council, was more productive. Notably, both initiatives included employers but not unions.

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## Netherlands

### Score 8

The Netherlands reaches agreement on socioeconomic policy through consultation. This happens at different levels. In companies, the works council consults with management. At the branch level, trade unions negotiate collective bargaining agreements with employers' organizations. At national level, there are the Social and Economic Council (SER) and the Labor Foundation. All these forms of consultation constitute long-standing parts of the Dutch consultation economy.

At the national level, the SER) is an advisory body in which entrepreneurs, employees and independent experts ("crown members") work together to reach agreement on important socioeconomic issues. The SER is tasked with promoting entrepreneurship, decent work, sustainable growth and an inclusive society with a

balanced income distribution. The SER advises the government and parliament on major issues of socioeconomic policy. The SER also facilitates agreements and covenants. Examples are the establishment of the Energy Agreement (2013) and its successor, the Climate Agreement (2019); the (unsuccessful) Agriculture Agreement (2023); and various covenants for international corporate social responsibility.

At the sectoral level, trade unions in the Netherlands have a major role in negotiating with employers over working conditions and wages. In collective bargaining agreements (CAOs) – of which there are over 600 – unions agree on behalf of workers how much their salaries will rise. Apart from these, CAOs also pay attention to labor scarcity, workers' distance to the labor market, hybrid working conditions, climate and sustainability issues, welfare functions, and specific types of leave. Union members can then vote on whether they approve of a negotiated settlement. If approved, a collective bargaining agreement applies both to members and nonmembers of a union. By 1 January 2023, 667 CAOs had been negotiated, covering 5.9 million workers.

Fifteen years ago, 1.9 million Dutch people were members of a trade union. That figure has now fallen to only 1.4 million. Moreover, a considerable portion of today's union members are already retired. Although membership fees are partly paid for by employers (the “vakbondstientje,” as a small percentage of wages) and are partly tax deductible, younger people frequently do not even consider membership. This trend raises the issue of how representative trade unions can be now that their membership ranks are eroding significantly. The size of a union's strike fund determines the scope of its power. Apart from membership fees, trade unions have paradoxically become dependent on obligatory and voluntary employers' contributions through so-called social funds. Unions are not very transparent about where their resources come from. It is estimated that in 2019, the largest trade unions depended on employers' contributions for only about 22% of their revenues. The small Alternative for Trade Union (AVV), with some 1,400 members, was found to lean almost entirely (96%) on employer contributions.

Experts believe it is time to fundamentally rethink the system of collective labor relations, unions and their financing. Declines in membership figures not only make unions less representative, but also limits their effectiveness. De Unie is already experimenting with a different collective bargaining agreement model; in collaboration with a research institute specialized in surveys and consultative procedures, major themes and needs of a representative sample of all workers in a particular industrial sector are mapped, and the results inform the negotiation strategy. In this way, there appears to be a solution for sectors and companies in which there are few union members but both parties would like to enter into a collective bargaining agreement. Employers may come to prefer dealing with smaller unions. And smaller unions may enter into collective bargaining agreements to bring in money for their members rather than because they think it's a good agreement for all workers.

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## Norway

Score 8

Half of all employees are members of trade unions, with 80% in the public sector and 38% in the private sector. The largest organization is the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), which includes roughly half of the unionized workers. On the capital side, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (NHO) is the dominant organization for companies across all business sectors. State policies promote organization, and membership fees for individuals and companies are tax-deductible.

Although the LO and the NHO do not have a monopoly on organizing workers and companies respectively, they enjoy a privileged position in policymaking. The tripartite system of collaboration among the state, labor, and capital, with its historical roots in the 1930s, remains a cornerstone in public policymaking across all policy fields, not just economic matters. These organizations are resourceful and can mobilize significant expertise to serve their interests.

Influence on public policies occurs through participation in problem analysis, expert committees, and policy preparations, as well as in the consultation process before legislation is proposed, rather than through direct interaction with legislators. There is a long-standing culture of balancing cooperation and conflict between labor and capital. All governments, irrespective of ideology, listen carefully to the social partners. Government policy proposals opposed by both labor and capital will likely suffer weak support among the general public and will most likely be shelved or significantly changed.

The dominant roles of the LO and the NHO are frequently criticized by other less resourceful organizations. In particular, public sector employees are critical of the roles of these dominant organizations in the system of wage setting.

Citation:

<https://www.nho.no/en/>

<https://www.lo.no/language/english/>

## Slovakia

### Score 8

The existing legislation in Slovakia provides numerous opportunities to cultivate civil society organizations (CSOs). The primary public funding source for CSOs is tax assignment, which amounts to approximately €80 million annually, supplemented by state budget allocations through competitive schemes and programs.

Major CSOs can cooperate and form alliances, although there are limitations due to their policy fields and normative orientations (Konceptia rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti na Slovensku na roky 2021–2030, 2021). The rules for membership in the Government Council for CSOs encourage organizations to unite with similar entities to gain membership.

Public involvement in major CSOs' activities is generally limited, with more significant support typically arising during specific crises (Analýza socioekonomického prínosu neziskového sektora a stavu a trendov rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti, 2020).

Each government in Slovakia formally supports the development of civil society organizations (CSOs) and is legally required to consult major CSOs on draft legislation. The Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society, an advisory body within the Ministry of Interior, regularly prepares development concepts. Since March 10, 2022, this position has been held by Filip Vagač, a well-known CSO expert and activist. The Government Council for CSOs, established in 2012, includes state secretaries (junior ministers) from various ministries, giving the government more influence. CSOs are represented according to the Chamber of CSOs' representative rules, but only the chair (Minister of Interior) can propose new members.

The main CSOs representing labor and capital primarily access policymaking through the tripartite mechanism – the Economic and Social Council – as well as social dialogue platforms and various advisory bodies at government and ministerial levels. This dialogue includes trade unions, business and professional organizations, CSOs, territorial and professional self-government bodies, trade and professional chambers, consumer groups, NGOs, and churches.

Trade unions and employer associations are the main non-state actors in capital and labor. The Confederation of Trade Unions (KOZ) represents 25 sectoral unions and an umbrella organization, collectively representing up to 25% of employees. The main employer association, AZZZ, represents 35 employers' unions and associations, covering about 50% of employer organizations. Two umbrella associations represent almost all self-governments. These negotiations focus on various economic and social policy issues, primarily minimum wage rules and other

labor-related matters. Many business representatives not in the Economic and Social Council are united in umbrella and coordination associations, positioning them well to provide policy proposals. Many cooperate with different think tanks. Due to leadership changes, trade unions have suffered from fragmentation but have recently improved their negotiation capacity.

Several CSOs in Slovakia possess sufficient organizational strength to formulate policies independently or engage in integrated policy formulation processes with the government. Notable players include INEKO, IVO, INESS, and Aliancia Fair Play (Analýza socioekonomického prínosu neziskového sektora a stavu a trendov rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti, 2020; Vladovič, 2008).

The practices of the Slovak governments from 2020 to 2023 (except for the short-lived Ódor government) have been problematic. Igor Matovič's capacity to cooperate with other actors was limited (Malý and Nemeč, 2023). The new government under Prime Minister Robert Fico holds a negative view of politically oriented CSOs, sometimes referring to them as foreign agents. The system of tax assignment is currently under discussion. (Správy RTVS, 4 November 2023).

Citation:

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## Estonia

### Score 7

According to the constitution, everyone is free to belong to unions and federations of employees and employers. The conditions and procedures for resolving labor disputes and exercising the right to strike are provided by law. Legislation facilitates union membership through tax deductions from membership fees; otherwise, trade unions and employers' organizations must be self-financing.

The Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EALK) comprises 15 branch unions and represents employees' interests in collective-bargaining agreements, protecting their rights in labor relations. Due to the country's communist past and current liberal market economy, the popularity of trade unions is low. Union density is 6%, and about the same share of employees is covered by collective bargaining agreements. These agreements are predominantly made at the company level; in some areas – as is the case for teachers and healthcare workers – they are made at the branch level. Compared to many Western European countries, the policy-formulation capacity of trade unions is relatively weak. The EALK head office includes a secretariat that prepares various documents, including draft law proposals, and organizes cooperation between members. However, it lacks a dedicated research or analysis unit responsible for preparing specific policy proposals.

Limited financial resources restrict the ability to commission external policy analyses from universities or private think tanks. Typically, trade unions are invited to contribute to policymaking processes initiated by the government. In recent years, EU initiatives on regulating statutory minimum wage, platform work, working from home, and work and leisure time have significantly shaped the domestic social dialogue agenda.

The Estonian Employers' Confederation (ETKL) is more influential. It includes more than 2,000 companies and 50% of employers, and is more active in shaping policies. ETKL has working groups that prepare the organization's platform for each public policy area. For every parliamentary election, ETKL publishes an "Employers' Manifesto" with strategic proposals for policymakers.

Despite some progress, social dialogue in Estonia remains rather fragile. There is no permanent tripartite council, and the representatives of social partners on the tripartite Unemployment Insurance Board and Health Insurance Board are often overruled by the government (Toots 2022). The most stable achievement of tripartism has been the enactment of the statutory minimum wage as part of the State Budget Act.

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## Ireland

### Score 7

Most Irish CSOs exert pressure on the legislature and government through pressure politics or pluralism. Some, however, are better integrated into the policy formulation process via quasi or neo-corporatism or social partnership, which is the Irish term for social dialogue (O'Donnell 2021). While few CSOs leverage their own academic staff or think tanks, or engage in collaborative efforts with academic institutions, many employ a research or policy officer (McInerney 2021). In the 1990s and 2000s, processes involving capital and labor in Ireland also opened up, to a lesser extent, to agricultural, community and voluntary and environmental pillars.

The Irish 1937 constitution has a corporatist orientation, but collective bargaining is not facilitated through legislation. The OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database records no recent social pacts in Ireland. Some policies have facilitated the cultivation of CSOs, such as public funding and making union membership dues tax-deductible. Major CSOs, representing capital and labor, have the organizational strength of peak organizations (ICTU and IBEC). They utilize financial resources, policy experts and connections to other think tanks to independently formulate policies and participate in integrated policy formulation processes with the government, such as pre-budget and policy consultations and national economic dialogue. These major CSOs are cooperative and capable of forming alliances, acting both as confederations and in siloed ways. The general population typically participates in and supports major CSO activity through volunteering, social, sporting and charitable activities, with less involvement in sectoral influencing or political activity (Murphy and O'Connor 2021).

The concept of a “social partnership” was a feature of Irish politics and policymaking from 1986 to 2010, during which successive governments prioritized sectors such as unions, business, farming and community, voluntary and environmental organizations (O'Donnell 2021). This was associated with the developmental characteristics of the Irish state and an “innovative form of networked governance.” In 2010, it was replaced by a relatively weak process of social dialogue. Despite this, a consensus-oriented culture remains among many societal actors. Although attempts to renew social partnership in 2022 have not progressed, some CSOs remain close to and have access to policy-influencing processes and institutions. There is considerable ambiguity regarding whether the government feels obliged to respond to the policy proposals put forward.

McGinnity et al. (2021) have shown that trade union and staff association membership in Ireland is lower than in comparable countries and has issues with effectiveness. While the right to join a trade union is recognized under international treaties and protected under the Irish constitution, it appears this right may not be fully realized for all workers. OECD data indicates that unemployment benefits in

Ireland are comparably poor, being the third lowest in the OECD when measured by the share of previous income (OECD 2024), increasing the risk of poverty and deprivation when out of work.

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## Japan

Score 7

Japanese law protects citizens' rights to form a union and engage in collective bargaining. The Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengô), which has about seven million members, is an umbrella organization that represents trade unions in the public and private sectors. It is the most important organization on the labor side and traditionally an integral part of labor policymaking, sending members to ministerial advisory councils (shingikai) and being invited by the government to join policy debates on the cabinet level. Traditionally, Rengô has supported opposition parties and was increasingly sidelined under LDP-led governments until 2012. Since then, ties to the ruling LDP have somewhat intensified. In 2017, Rengô initially agreed to negotiate a reform of overtime regulations with employers and the government, but eventually withdrew its support following protests from its members. Trade unions failed to raise real wages for almost three decades. However, labor shortages and inflation helped trade unions push through unusually high raises in collective bargaining in 2023.

The Japanese political system has been known for granting large corporations organized in the Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren), the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as the Japan Association of Corporate Executives privileged access to and influence on policymaking. Many large corporations maintain their own think tanks, such as the Mitsubishi Research Institute, and issue their own regulatory and policy reform proposals. While the aims of different industry sectors are not always coherent, they are often reflected in the policies of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Keidanren and member firms also enjoy a strong presence in advisory councils – especially on economic policy – while trade unions are not necessarily represented.

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## New Zealand

### Score 7

When mapping the landscape of civil society organizations involved in capital and labor issues, one cannot help but note that political power is tilted in favor of business interests at the expense of organized labor (Nicholls 2021).

Historically, New Zealand had a strong trade union sector, because a union voice in politics was institutionally mandated under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. However, the neoliberal market-oriented reforms of the 1980s and 1990s severely undercut the role of trade unions. Most importantly, the Employment Contracts Act 1991 deregulated labor markets and turned all collective contracts into individual contracts between an individual employee and their employer. As a result of these institutional reforms, trade union density dropped below 18% according to 2018 figures (OECD 2021). Today, the three largest trade unions all represent public sector workers: the Public Service Association, the NZ Nurses Organization and the New Zealand Educational Institute (New Zealand Companies Office 2022). The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions acts as the umbrella organization for around 40 affiliated unions. Only a few unions continue to be formally affiliated with the Labour Party, the largest being the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU) (Aimer 2015). In 2022, the Labour government under Ardern passed the Fair Pay Act, which would have strengthened trade unions by allowing sector-wide collective employment negotiations, but this was repealed after the 2023 election by the new National Party government.

The rise in business influence relative to organized labor can also be attributed to new patterns of business lobbying (Nicholls 2021). In 1986, a new lobby group known as the Business Roundtable was established. The group distinguished itself from previous business member-based organizations in that its primary goal was not to represent business owners in wage negotiations or other matters of employment relations but to advocate policy interests. In 2012, the Business Roundtable merged with the New Zealand Institute to form the New Zealand Initiative (NZI), which today operates more as a think tank than an interest group, mobilizing support for pro-market economic and social policies.

In short, the application of free-market imperatives meant that trade unions lost their political influence during the 1980s and 1990s, although their connection with the

Labour Party means they have some influence when Labour is in government. Meanwhile, the retention and extension of the neoliberal policy regime – both under Labour and National governments – suggests that “it has been big business and financial lobbies that have gained insider status and influence in the political realm” (Grey 2015: 464). That said, there are a number of CSOs and the Human Rights Commission that champion issues of equal pay, pay transparency and the need to close the ethnic gender pay gap (Beehive 2023; HRC, 2021).

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## Spain

### Score 7

The Spanish constitution mandates trade unions and employers’ associations to advocate for and safeguard the economic interests of workers and employers. It establishes a model of neo-corporatism, authorizing these organizations to represent workers in collective bargaining and participate in mandatory preliminary conciliation procedures before presenting disputes to government conciliation agencies. Although trade union density is low (18%), Spain’s biggest trade unions (UGT and CCOO) and employers’ associations have the organizational strength to independently formulate policies to which the government responds. Both main trade unions tend to collaborate and defend common platforms. According to the OECD, employer organization density is higher (88%). However, governments may proceed with policies even without CSO support in the absence of agreement.

During the review period, the government actively engaged in dialogue with UGT, CCOO, and employers’ associations, signing several agreements, including one on raising the minimum wage. Numerous meetings were convened to discuss policy proposals. The 2023 labor market reform strengthened trade unions by amplifying the significance of indefinite contracts.

Post-COVID-19, the government, trade unions, and employers’ associations met within the Social Dialogue Board for Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience (2021–2026), serving as a channel for dialogue on the RRP’s design and

implementation. Membership dues for professional associations, business associations, official chambers, and trade unions are tax-deductible.

Due to the prevalence of self-employed workers and small businesses, trade unions play a lesser role than in countries with significant industrial sectors. From January to September 2023, 588 strikes occurred, involving 210,410 workers, marking an increase compared to 2022. However, the number of days lost to strikes has been below the EU average in recent years. Trade unions have been successful in mobilizing and collective bargaining.

## Australia

### Score 6

The formal rules of the Australian political economy permit CSOs to build strength through membership and fundraising, using those resources to shape public policies. Individuals' registration and membership fees, and contributions to political parties and other CSOs, can be tax-deductible, incentivizing individuals to join and be active. Membership and activity levels fluctuate depending on the political agenda.

The political and policy influence of particular CSOs is highly dependent on the government's identity and who it chooses to listen to. Parliamentary processes, such as inquiries during the lawmaking process, have become important forums for CSO access and influence. The most influential CSOs can receive attention from decision-makers through contacts in the executive branch and party structures.

The record of CSO influence across major policy areas is mixed. For example, there is evidence of government consultation with CSOs in the integrity domain in crafting recent laws to create a federal anti-corruption commission. Government officials exchanged ideas with academic researchers, anti-corruption policy experts, journalists, and industry professionals at the 2023 National Integrity Summit hosted by Transparency International (Attorney-General's Department 2023).

However, the influence of CSOs in the contentious domains of asylum and immigration has been more muted, with both major political parties taking a hard line on these matters. Recently, the High Court struck down the law that allowed Australian governments to indefinitely detain immigrants who remained in Australia without a visa and could not be deported (Ghezelbash and Talbot 2023). Following this, the government swiftly introduced new legislation allowing for the detention of individuals deemed to be at "high risk" of committing serious offenses, imposing a test on non-citizens not applied to Australian citizens.

Regarding labor relations, trade unions have a long history of activism in Australian politics, policy, and society. However, their influence has waned as their membership base has continued to shrink over several decades (McAlpine and Roberts 2017). Factors contributing to this trend include changes in the economy's

structure, such as the decline of the manufacturing sector, and changes to industrial relations laws reducing unions' capacity to recruit members and take workplace action. Notably, collective agreements reached by employers and unions apply to both union members and non-members, creating a free-rider problem where non-members benefit from union bargaining without incurring costs.

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## Canada

Score 6

Canada has a free associational system with very limited direct funding for interest groups and civil society organizations. This applies to both business and labor.

Overall, larger, well-resourced CSOs that prioritize policy work tend to have the most capacity. This is true of business associations and, to a lesser extent, trade union centrals. The unionization rate in Canada is currently slightly below 30%, a figure that should not obscure variations over time, between men and women, and among employment sectors. For example, "Over the last four decades, unionization rates fell by 16 percentage points among men but remained stable among women" (Statistics Canada, 2022). Moreover, the unionization rate is much higher in the public sector than in the private sector, where the labor movement is less represented now than it was 30 or 40 years ago.

The party in power can also be more or less open to CSO input in policymaking. Shutting groups out is always possible. At the federal level, pro-business governments are the norm, which has enhanced the influence of business associations while undermining the influence of trade unions. This has been true throughout Canadian history and continues to the present day.

Citation:

Brooks, S., and A. Stritch. 1991. *Business and Government in Canada*. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall.

Stritch, Andrew. 2007. "Business Associations and Policy Analysis in Canada." In *Policy Analysis in Canada: The State of the Art*, eds. L. Dobuzinskis, M. Howlett, and D. Laycock, 242–59. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Stritch, Andrew. 2018. "Policy Analytical Capacity and Canadian Business Associations." In *Policy Analysis in Canada*, 297–317. Policy Press. <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781447334910.003.0014>

Jackson, Andrew, and Bob Baldwin. 2007. "Policy Analysis by the Labour Movement in a Hostile Environment." In *Policy Analysis in Canada: The State of the Art*, eds. L. Dobuzinskis, M. Howlett, and D. Laycock, 260–72. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Statistics Canada. 2022. "Unionization in Canada, 1981 to 2022." <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2022011/article/00001-eng.htm>

## Greece

### Score 6

Civil society organization (CSO) participation in Greek policymaking follows global trends, becoming less frequent and substantive. In Greece, CSO involvement is also episodic and highly partisan. While labor unions were once more involved in negotiating sectoral agreements, their role has diminished since the bailout era of the 2010s, under the guise of austerity measures. This trend continued under the radical left-right coalition led by SYRIZA and persists under the current conservative government. Although CSOs participate in parliamentary debates and have access to draft bills, their recent contributions have primarily been obstructive, often in the form of strikes to prevent policy adoption.

Legislation generally supports the development of CSOs defending capital and labor interests. The government provides public funding to major labor confederations, such as the GSEE (private sector unions) and ADEDY (civil service unions). However, business associations, including those representing industrialists (SEV), shipowners (EEE), and liberal professionals like lawyers, engineers, and doctors, do not receive government funding. In some associations, such as the strong bank employee unions, membership dues are compulsorily deducted from employees' salaries.

The two aforementioned confederations have established associated think tanks, providing expertise for participation in the policymaking process. However, since the economic crisis of 2010, union input has been less influential in policy formulation.

Public participation in labor CSOs has also declined, with only a small proportion of the population expressing trust in labor unions (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2021). Despite this, unions frequently organize strikes, which have the capacity to disrupt policy implementation rather than policy formulation. Nonetheless, the government remains responsive to policy proposals from major CSOs. Representatives of capital and labor, along with other interest groups, are invited to parliamentary committee sessions to debate bills and participate in social partner negotiations to set minimum wages and salaries.

#### Citation:

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. 2021. "The Situation of Trade Unions in Greece." FES Briefing compiled by G. Bythimitris, September. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/athen/18276.pdf>



## Israel

### Score 6

Civil society organizations representing a diverse spectrum of economic opinions are very active in the public sphere. Comparative OECD data from 2017 indicates that 25% of Israeli employees are members of labor unions (OECD, 2017). The unions are consulted on and negotiate wage agreements across different sectors. For public service employees, membership in a labor union is mandatory. Membership fees are not tax deductible. Large organizations have the financial and informational strength to formulate policies, and many have registered lobbyists in the Knesset. In many cases, different organizations form coalitions and work together on various issues.

When major organizations put forward policy proposals, the government responds to them. This is evident in many pieces of legislation initiated by civil society organizations. These organizations also receive media attention and can voice their demands publicly. Although they influence policy design, the power of labor unions, as a key actor in policy design, has been decreasing since 1985. The primary institutions involved in formulating macroeconomic policy are the Ministry of Finance and Israel's central bank. Thus, although the organizations still have some veto power, their power is weaker than before and dependent on the specific political circumstances (Bondy and Maggor 2023). Moreover, public support for major labor unions is decreasing because they are perceived as representing more powerful and organized interests.

Citation:

OECD. 2017. "Main Indicators and Characteristics of Collective Bargaining: Israel." <https://www.oecd.org/employment/collective-bargaining-database-israel.pdf>

Bondy, A. S., and E. Maggor. 2023. "Balancing the Scales: Labour Incorporation and the Politics of Growth Model Transformation." *New Political Economy* 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2023.2217770>

## Italy

### Score 5

Italy boasts a wide variety of trade unions, with the CGIL, CISL, and UIL being the most prominent organizations. According to the most recent OECD estimate (2019), approximately 32.5% of wage and salary earners belong to a trade union. However, recent research suggests that this figure significantly overestimates union membership (Batut et al. 2023). This overestimation occurs because the data relies solely on self-reported information from the largest trade unions, lacking independent verification. A more realistic assessment suggests that only 25% or even 20% of workers are union members. The most influential employers' association is Confindustria.

In policy formulation, trade unions generally favor maintaining the status quo. They hold a relatively conservative stance and are hesitant to embrace innovative policies



in labor relations or pensions. However, there are notable distinctions among the three major trade unions, with CISL and UIL demonstrating a greater willingness to negotiate with the government and employers' associations on measures to enhance labor market flexibility.

In contrast, employers' associations tend to lean toward policy change, typically adopting a more forward-thinking approach. Despite their continued importance as policy players, trade unions and employers' associations have seen their influence on the decision-making process gradually erode due to the strengthening of the executive branch in Italy and an ongoing process of political disintermediation. While their involvement remains a constant feature in the policymaking and policy implementation processes, their participation is informal and unregulated compared to other countries (Lizzi and Pritoni 2019).

The current Meloni government has shown little interest in promoting consultations with trade unions on labor and fiscal law reforms. This attitude has probably been encouraged by divisions between CGIL and UIL on one side and CISL on the other regarding the minimum wage proposal advanced by the opposition.

Both trade unions and employers' associations have established research departments that frequently collaborate with experts and draw on scholarly knowledge. Their policy proposals are often comprehensive and grounded in substantial policy expertise.

Citation:

Batut, C., Lojkine, U., and Santini, P. 2023. "Which Side Are You On? A Historical Study of Union Membership Composition in Seven Western Countries." *Industrial Relations* (January): 1–83.

Lizzi, R., and Pritoni, A. 2019. "Lobbying in Hard Times. Interest Groups and Italian Policy-Making at the Season of Unmediated Democracy." *Rivista Italiana di Politiche Pubbliche* 14(2): 157–179.

[https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/data/trade-unions/trade-union-density\\_data-00371-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/data/trade-unions/trade-union-density_data-00371-en)

## Portugal

Score 5

The capacity of CSOs to actively participate in shaping relevant policies in Portugal depends on a combination of legal, organizational, governmental, and societal factors.

Legally, prominent CSOs in social welfare and labor engage in the policymaking process through the Economic and Social Council (CES), particularly within the Permanent Commission for Social Concertation (CPCS). This constitutional body serves as a platform for negotiation and dialogue among sovereign bodies, economic entities, and social agents, contributing to policy formulation and decision-making.

In Portugal, civil society is primarily dominated by organizations advocating for specific group interests, such as those representing labor and capital, including trade

unions, professional associations, pensioners' groups, as well as business and financial organizations. In practice, these organizations often react to government measures rather than taking a proactive role in shaping policy debates.

While labor CSOs have recently garnered media attention for advocating the interests of both teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as healthcare professionals, through prominent protests and strikes in 2022 and 2023, the number of citizens reporting membership in organizations like trade unions has steadily decreased over time. This decline has been substantial, plummeting from 15% in 2002 to the lowest level documented in the post-election study conducted in 2022 (Serra-Silva & Oliveira, 2023). As a result, the overall influence and impact of major CSOs continue to be constrained and insufficient in Portugal.

Membership fees in CSOs, such as union dues, are tax-deductible. Similarly, citizens can choose to allocate 0.5% of their income tax to civil society organizations.

Citation:

Conselho Económico e Social. n.d. " <https://ces.pt/concertacao-social/>"

Serra-Silva, S. and Oliveira, R. 2023. "Associational Involvement and Political Participation in Portugal: Insights from a Longitudinal and Comparative Study." In Lisi, M., ed. *Interest Groups and Political Representation in Portugal and Beyond*. London: Routledge, 47-88.

## United Kingdom

### Score 5

Falling trade union membership and its concentration in areas of public services are key characteristics of labor-related CSOs, while employer representation is split between different organizations. Neither side has a formal role in the policy formulation process, so their capacity to participate in the creation of policy is through pressure politics, as indicated in the question description. Institutions of corporatism had been introduced in the 1960s but were largely abandoned during Margaret Thatcher's time as prime minister (from 1979) and were not revived by her successors. From 1999, devolved Scottish and Welsh governments signaled a greater willingness to consult or work closely with unions, professional groups, and third sector representatives (Greer and Jarman 2008).

Although unions and employer organizations have some capacity for generating policy papers and ideas, their influence is not great, nor do they attract active support from a significant share of the population. However, in financial services, bodies such as UK Finance can exert considerable influence on changes in financial regulation and related aspects of policy formulation, based on having relevant expertise.

Beyond the term "social partners" (a phrase not commonly used in UK politics) implied in the expression "major CSOs," there exists a diverse array of other organizations – think tanks, lobby groups, and NGOs focused on specific policy

areas. These organizations have substantial capacities for influencing UK government policy formulation, though there is less think tank capacity around devolved governments. Their influence varies depending on the government in power.

For example, newer organizations like the Resolution Foundation have been able to connect with the current government, while the Institute of Economic Affairs was closely aligned with the short-lived Liz Truss government in 2022. Previously, the Institute for Public Policy Research contributed to New Labour's policy development. The Tony Blair Institute is another well-resourced entity that generates policy ideas likely to influence the government following the general election expected within the next year.

Citation:

Greer, S. and Jarman, H. 2008. "Devolution and Policy Styles." In Trench, A., eds. Exeter. 2008. *The State of the Nations 2008*. Exeter: Imprint Academic.

## United States

### Score 5

Unions underwrote the affluence of the American working class in the twentieth century. They secured higher wages, limited working hours, improved working conditions, and a range of "fringe benefits," including health insurance and pensions for their members (Moody 2014).

Trade union membership in the United States is still largely governed by the framework established in the National Labor Relations Act, known popularly as the Wagner Act, passed in 1935 during the New Deal Era. The legislation created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), a federal agency that enforces labor law in the U.S. The NLRB regulates union activity, including ballots and strikes. It also has a quasi-judicial function, issuing rules on the application of labor law, some of which can be quite consequential. The board comprises five individuals, each appointed by the president for five-year terms. The chairperson is chosen from among them by the president and serves at the president's pleasure (Milkman 2019).

The peak density of the unionized workforce occurred in 1954, when 35% of non-farm workers were unionized. The peak number of total union members was in 1983, with 17.7 million workers in a union, or about 20% of the workforce. Today, only about 10% of workers are in a union. This decline has been driven by the collapse of private sector unions. In 1970, 30% of private sector workers were in a union. Forty years later, that figure had dropped to just 6%. In contrast, 34% of public sector workers are currently unionized, a level equivalent to the peak of the unionized private sector workforce in the 1950s (Walker 2014).

There is a significant disparity in unionization across industries. In local government, including public safety, 40% of workers belong to a union. In education, the figure is

34%. However, in retail, only 3% are union members, and in food and drink services, it is just 1%. Women make up 46% of union members. One in three union members are non-white. African Americans have the highest union density at about 13%; Asian Americans have the lowest at about 8% (Frymer and Grumbach 2020).

In the United States, the labor movement has a comparatively limited impact on policymaking in most areas. Low unionization rates in the private sector limit the social and political influence of labor unions, and the absence of a stand-alone labor party helps explain this relatively limited impact (Maioni 1998).

Citation:

Antonia Maioni. 1998. *Parting at the Crossroads: The Emergence of Health Insurance in the United States and Canada*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kim Moody. 2014. *In Solidarity*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Alexis Walker. 2014. "Labor's Enduring Divide: The Distinct Path of Public Sector Unions in the United States." *Studies in American Political Development*.

Michael Brown. 1997/98. "Bargaining for Social Rights: Unions and the Re-emergence of Welfare Capitalism." *Political Science Quarterly*.

Paul Frymer and Jacob Grumbach. 2020. "Labor Unions and White Racial Politics." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Ruth Milkman. 2019. "The World We Have Lost: US Labor in the Obama Years." In *Looking Back on President Barack Obama's Legacy*, ed. W. Rich. Palgrave.

## France

### Score 4

Business associations can formulate policy proposals and contribute to agenda setting. They have their own research capabilities and can successfully lobby government and parliamentarians. Two organizations have significant influence. The major employers union, the *Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF)*, is a peak association federating sector-level associations. It represents 750,000 major firms. The other major organization is the *Confédération Générale des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (CGPME)*, whose membership base includes around 1.7 million small- and medium-size firms. This association often complains that the specific interests of small businesses are marginalized by larger national groups and the government.

Trade unions suffer from various shortcomings. First, membership rates are among the lowest in the circle of Western democracies, encompassing only about 8% of the workforce (5% in the private sector). A second problem is that the relatively small membership is split between several different and rival trade unions. The split within the trade union movement is political but also concerns different approaches to the role of trade unions in policymaking. Two corporatist and "conservative" unions – the *CGT* and *FO* – have taken advantage of their footing in the civil service and public sector, and tend to resist or reject any serious change. They have relied upon mass mobilization to block reforms, even if their ability to mobilize is diminishing except in a few sectors such as public transport. Whereas these organizations refuse negotiations and compromises with the government, two other trade unions – *CFDT*

and UNSA – have adopted more moderate positions, and try to balance advocacy for workers' interests with a constructive role in negotiating reforms.

Nonetheless, this lack of representativeness is somewhat compensated for by the support they get in the “professional elections” that take place every five years. The turnout rate for the last “professional elections” reached 43.7% in the public sector and 38.2% in the private sector in 2022. This explains why these elections are so crucial. For the past two elections, the CFDT has led the polls, tightly followed by the more radical CGT. Furthermore, the government regularly validates partial agreements for entire economic sectors, with the result that collective bargaining agreements cover 98% of workers in France.

In general, the unions seek to compensate for their membership weakness at the company level by negotiating at the sectoral level or even at the national level, as well as through their capacity for social mobilization, quite frequently organizing mass protests in the streets. In so doing, they rarely manage to overcome their political split and rivalries; however, the opposition to pension reform in 2023 created a rare united front across the eight major trade unions. Despite the massive rejection by voters and trade unions and the absence of a legislative majority, President Macron signed the reform into law on April 15, 2023. The unions' campaign thus ultimately failed, but the unitary approach improved their image, and a slight increase in membership was evident in the wake of the debates.

Government attitudes toward CSO proposals have not been constant. Over the last 20 years, governments have called for more involvement of social partner CSOs in the field of social and labor policies, and have been willing to take into account their proposals. Governments have also endorsed new rules enhancing the role of social negotiation and concertation. However, governmental practice has not always been in line with this rhetorical commitment. Moreover, since 2017, President Macron has tended to drastically reduce the role of economic and social CSOs in the policymaking process, stressing the monopoly of the political institutions – government, parliament – in policymaking.

Citation:

Tristan Haute. 2020. “Les logiques plurielles d’une très faible participation : retour sur les scrutins auprès des salariés des très petites entreprises.” *La Revue de l’Ires* 2020/2-3 (101-102): 3-27.

Woll, Cornelia. 2006. “La réforme du Medef: chronique des difficultés de l’action collective patronale.” *Revue française de science politique* 56 (2): 255-279.

## Hungary

Score 4

After the systemic change in 1990, civil society in Hungary developed quickly, fueled by the internationalization of Hungarian society and the introduction of tax deductions for civil society organizations. This development was steady until 2010, when Fidesz and Orbán retook power, after which the number of CSOs stagnated and dropped slightly. At the same time, NGOs' income and employees' earnings

grew significantly (KSH 2024). The number of employees remained relatively stable. Since 2016, civil society organizations engaged with the political system in the broadest sense have operated in an increasingly hostile environment. The background is the so-called Lex NGO of 2017, which aimed to bring CSOs under government control. The infighting between civil society and the government has forced CSOs to divert resources from their original tasks to ensure proper operation.

The government has entered this battle by creating numerous government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) to further its illiberal and nationalist narrative. As a result, “only organizations friendly and close to the government can effectively engage in lobbying” (United States Agency for International Development 2022: 5). Many of these organizations are involved in the distribution of financial resources from government and EU funds and are vulnerable to corruption. Instruments for managing state support for CSOs include the National Cooperation Fund and the Village and Town Civil Funds. The operation of these funds is rather opaque and benefits the Fidesz nomenclature (Civic Forum 2023: 12).

The politicization of civil society has had negative consequences for NGOs, as bridging the ideological rift between the illiberal and liberal camps is nearly impossible without losing the support of the home camp. The weakness of organized interests in the labor sector is not new. Attempts by former left-wing governments to organize tripartite consultations were unsuccessful, and trade unions and employee associations remain fragmented. Not surprisingly, Hungary ranks extremely low within the EU in terms of the number of strikes (European Trade Union Institute 2024).

Teachers’ strikes directed at the government’s educational policies were made impossible by a government decree issued in February 2022. Combined with the employer-oriented economic policy of the Orbán governments, trade unions, which are weak in membership and organizational capacity, fail to exert relevant influence. Overall, the ability of major civil society organizations to shape public policies in their fields is relatively low. This holds even for the most significant employers’ association, the MGYOSZ. Anti-corruption NGOs Transparency International Hungary and K-Monitor have been involved in the Anti-Corruption Task Force of the Integrity Authority, a state agency created in 2022 under pressure from the European Commission (Telex 2022). However, they have failed to exert significant influence with regard to improving the transparency of public procurement or politicians’ wealth declarations.

Citation:

KSH. 2022. <https://www.ksh.hu/s/helyzetkep-2022/#/kiadvany/nonprofit-szektor>

European Trade Union Institute. 2024. “Strike Map.” <https://www.etui.org/strikes-map>

Civic Forum. 2023. “Civic Space Report 2023, Hungary.” <https://civic-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Civic-Space-Report-2023-HUNGARY-European-Civic-Forum.pdf>

United States Agency for International Development. 2022. “2021 Civil Society Organization Index Hungary, October.” [https://okotars.hu/sites/default/files/downloads/hungary\\_2021.pdf](https://okotars.hu/sites/default/files/downloads/hungary_2021.pdf)

Telex.hu. 2022. "Transparency International willing to join Anti-Corruption Task Force under certain conditions." October 6. <https://telex.hu/english/2022/10/06/transparency-international-willing-to-join-anti-corruption-task-force-under-certain-conditions>

## Poland

### Score 4

In Poland, trade unions play a pivotal role in the relationship between capital and labor, a distinction enshrined in the constitution, which guarantees the freedom to form and operate trade unions. The three major umbrella organizations are Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy "Solidarność" (NSZZ "Solidarność"), Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych (OPZZ) and Forum Związków Zawodowych (FZZ). These unions participate in the Social Dialogue Council with employer representatives and the government.

Beyond these primary organizations, there are roughly 300 federations, 273 national trade unions and approximately 24,000 local trade union entities. Around 7,000 workplace-based unions operate independently at the regional level, separate from the larger umbrella groups. Farmers' trade unions in Poland hold a distinct legal status. Major trade union organizations often utilize specialists or foundations, particularly in employers' associations, but rarely establish independent think tank institutions.

As of 2022, the country had 1.4 million members across 11,656 trade unions and 353 active employers' organizations with 21,600 members. The education sector employed the highest percentage of trade union members at 19.3%, while health and social care dominated the membership of employers' organizations at 16.6%. Most trade unions included plant, sub-plant and branch-level organizations (76.4%), followed by intercompany unions (20.8%). Additionally, there were federations, confederations, regional or sectoral structures, and 310 so-called unified trade unions (2.7%). From 2014 to 2022, trade union membership declined by 9.6%, whereas employers' organizations saw a 28.8% increase in membership (GUS 2023).

Furthermore, organizations and professional self-governments representing specific sectors, such as the judges' association Iustitia and the Supreme Medical Chamber, have gained prominence by opposing government policies. Generally, the PiS government paid little attention to proposals from the broader civil sector, with notable exceptions made for Solidarność, which was led by pro-government figures.

Citation:

GUS. 2023. "Partnerzy dialogu społecznego – organizacje pracodawców i związki zawodowe w 2022 r." [https://stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5490/16/2/1/partnerzy\\_dialogu\\_spoleczne\\_go\\_-\\_organizacje\\_pracodawcow\\_i\\_zwiazki\\_zawodowe\\_w\\_2022\\_r.pdf](https://stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5490/16/2/1/partnerzy_dialogu_spoleczne_go_-_organizacje_pracodawcow_i_zwiazki_zawodowe_w_2022_r.pdf)

Indicator **Effective Civil Society Organizations  
(Social Welfare)**

Question **To what extent do civil society organizations (CSOs) have the capacity to actively participate in the co-creation of relevant policies?**

30 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = All the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 8-6 = Most of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 5-3 = Few of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 2-1 = None of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.

## Germany

Score 9 Every German citizen has the right to form and join associations and organizations (Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1949, Art. 9). Welfare associations like the Red Cross or Caritas receive approximately 90% of their funding through social insurance (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, n.d.). In contrast, clubs such as sports clubs or youth groups like the Scout movement are primarily financed by their own revenue, including membership fees, donations, and entrance fees. Additionally, they may be eligible for grants from state, federal, or EU funding (Deutsches Ehrenamt, n.d.). Membership fees for nonprofit, charitable, or cultural organizations are tax-deductible, while those for leisure organizations, such as sports clubs, are not (American Express, 2023).

Important welfare associations participate in various advisory councils within federal ministries, particularly the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesregierung, 2019). Organizations such as churches, trade chambers, and welfare associations may be invited to comment on draft laws before they are discussed in the Bundestag, the German parliament (Bundesministerium der Finanzen, n.d.). Beyond this, they have no official role in the policymaking process. However, due to their prominence and influence, they can initiate and shape public discussions and draw attention to specific issues. Social welfare CSOs sometimes make suggestions for new laws or amendments to existing laws, but the Bundestag or the federal government is not obliged to consider them.



Free welfare work is primarily organized through six main organizations, such as the Red Cross, Caritas, and Diakonie. Together, they form the Federal Association of Free Welfare Care, collaborating to increase their political and public influence and achieve their mutual goals (Bundesverband der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege, n.d.). The Federal Association of Free Welfare Care has approximately 1.7 million full-time employees, mostly engaged in care work, and between 2.5 and 3 million volunteers (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, n.d.). Overall, there are more than 600,000 associations in Germany with more than 50 million members. About 27 million people are part of a sports club.

For most major CSOs, there are no studies assessing the quality of their reputations. However, the Red Cross achieved second place out of 130 ranked firms and organizations in the Purpose Readiness Index, which measures the credibility of German companies in terms of their positive contribution to society (GlobeOne, 2022).

Citation:

American Express. 2023. "Steuern und Mitgliedsbeiträge: Welche sind steuerlich absetzbar?" <https://www.americanexpress.com/de-de/kampagnen/guide/wirtschaftswissen/steuern/steuern-und-mitgliedsbeitraege-10071>

Bundesministerium der Finanzen. n.d. "Gesetze und Gesetzesvorhaben." [https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Web/DE/Service/Gesetze\\_Gesetzesvorhaben/Gesetze\\_Gesetzgebungsvorhaben.html](https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Web/DE/Service/Gesetze_Gesetzesvorhaben/Gesetze_Gesetzgebungsvorhaben.html)

Bundesregierung. 2019. "Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Christoph Meyer, Christian Dürr, Renata Alt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP, Drucksache 19/7912." <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/084/1908448.pdf>.

Bundesrepublik Deutschland. 1949. Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland. <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/BJNR000010949.html>

Bundesverband der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege. n.d. "Freie Wohlfahrtspflege – ihre Spitzenverbände." <https://www.bagfw.de/ueber-uns/mitgliedsverbaende>

Bundesverband der Vereine und des Ehrenamts e.V. n.d. "Das sind WIR | die Vereine in Deutschland." <https://bundesverband.bvve.de/vereine-in-deutschland/>

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. n.d. "Wohlfahrtsverbände." <https://www.bpb.de/kurzknapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202214/wohlfahrtsverbaende/>

Deutsches Ehrenamt. n.d. "So bekommen Sie Fördermittel für Vereine." <https://deutsches-ehrenamt.de/vereinswissen/foerdertipps/>

GlobeOne. 2022. "Purpose Readiness Index Deutschland 2022." <https://globe-one.com/german/lateststudies/purpose-readiness-index-deutschland-2022/#lateststudy>

## Norway

### Score 9

The public sector is the primary provider of social welfare services; however, civil society ("nonprofit") organizations (CSOs) have played a pioneering and significant role in developing many of the social and health services now provided by the state. Currently, 10 – 12% of welfare services, measured by expenditures, are provided by CSOs, primarily within a contractual relationship with, and financed by, the public sector. Service production by non-public organizations is subject to the same laws and regulations as public and private providers.

CSOs enjoy a high degree of popular support but are almost entirely dependent on state financing. In some areas – most notably within activation of the elderly and actions targeted at the very poor – unpaid volunteer work is crucial. Their high legitimacy and extensive knowledge in working with socially and economically marginalized groups give them significant influence on public social policies. Policy proposals from civil society organizations are frequently considered by the government and add legitimacy to public policies. In areas such as active labor market measures, refugee centers and settlement, and childcare services, private (nonprofit) providers operate in a contractual relationship with the public sector.

In the provision of welfare services through contractual arrangements with the public sector, there is a distinction between CSOs and what are called “commercial” welfare producers. While the role of CSOs (“nonprofit” organizations) enjoys broad popular support, the presence of commercial (“for-profit”) organizations is ideologically controversial. At the local government level, there are examples of favoring nonprofit CSOs in public tenders. Political parties on the left argue for a system in which service producers with economic surplus as one of their objectives should be excluded from publicly financed welfare production.

Citation:

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2020-13/id2788017/>

<https://avkommersialiseringstutvalget.no/>

## Sweden

### Score 9

In Sweden, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in shaping social welfare policies through active participation in the policymaking process articulated through the referral system [remiss]. With a long-standing tradition of robust civil society engagement, these organizations possess significant capacity to influence and co-create relevant policies in the realm of social welfare. Through advocacy, research, and grassroots mobilization, CSOs articulate the needs and concerns of diverse communities, ensuring that policy decisions are informed by a broad spectrum of voices. This participatory approach fosters transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of social welfare initiatives.

The Swedish government recognizes the value of collaboration with CSOs and has established mechanisms to facilitate their involvement in policy development. This is partly because increasing iterations of right-wing coalition governments have promoted the transfer of the provision of welfare services, such as the handling of crises, to civil society organizations with their large networks of organized volunteers (see Petridou et al., 2021).

Various advisory bodies and consultative forums provide platforms for dialogue between government officials and representatives of civil society. Moreover, funding

schemes and grants support the operational capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs), empowering them to conduct research, organize campaigns, and implement programs aimed at addressing social welfare challenges. By leveraging their expertise and grassroots networks, CSOs contribute invaluable insights and practical solutions to the policymaking process, enriching the discourse and enhancing the responsiveness of government initiatives.

However, despite these strengths, challenges persist in ensuring that civil society organizations can fully participate in policy co-creation in Sweden's social welfare sector. Structural barriers such as limited resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and unequal access to decision-making processes can hinder the meaningful engagement of CSOs, particularly those representing marginalized or underrepresented groups. Moreover, shifts in political dynamics or changes in government priorities may impact the extent to which CSOs are included in policy discussions, potentially undermining the continuity and effectiveness of collaborative efforts. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing commitment from both government institutions and civil society actors to foster a culture of partnership, mutual respect, and shared responsibility in shaping policies that promote social justice and equity.

The public agency responsible for civil society issues in Sweden is the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, focusing on youth policy and policy on civil society. It also has the mandate to distribute funds to civil society in the form of support for organizations, projects, and international collaboration.

The structure of CSOs in Sweden is complex. CSOs may be voluntary, faith-based, foundations, member-based organizations, consultancies and financing entities, limited liability companies with restrictions on gain distributions to shareholders, and cooperatives (MUCF, 2024).

The latest annual report released by the agency in 2023, with results concerning 2022, finds that some volunteer CSOs are still grappling with the consequences of the pandemic, particularly in terms of shrinking membership among the elderly. Additionally, high electricity prices and the Russian invasion of Ukraine present further challenges (MUCF, 2023).

Citation:

MUCF. 2024. "Civilsamhällets Organisationsformer." <https://www.mucf.se/uppdrag/kunskapsstod-till-det-civilsamhallet/civilsamhallets-organisationsformer>

MUCF. 2023. Ett År med Nya Utmaningar: Uppföljning av ideella föreningars villkor 2022. <https://www.mucf.se/publikationer/ett-ar-med-nya-utmaningar>

Petridou, E., Sparf, J., and Pihl, K. 2020. "Resilience Work in Swedish Local Governance: Evidence from the Areas of Climate Change Adaptation, Migration, and Violent Extremism." In *Understanding Disaster Risk: A Multidimensional Approach*, eds. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 225-238.

## Austria

**Score 8** Social welfare associations play an important role in Austrian politics. To some extent, the very nature of the Austrian welfare state reflects the major influence of these various groups. For example, the pensioners' association enjoys a public status that no government has been willing or able to ignore (Ettinger 2016). Other groups, such as youth or family associations, have been able to express their views, but their impact on public policy has remained less obvious. In terms of intergenerational justice – and due to the strong influence of pensioners' associations and demographic changes – such imbalances may be problematic.

Organized religious communities, particularly the officially recognized denominations, play a formal role in the decision-making process. The unique Austrian institution of the “officially recognized religious denomination” institutionalizes the participation of major religious groups in policymaking. Similar to economic interest groups, they are often – though not always – consulted before the cabinet approves the draft of a law. This is a critical stage of the process, as most cabinet-approved drafts are also approved by parliament.

Citation:  
Ettinger, Karl. 2016. “Die Macht der Pensionisten.” *Die Presse*, February 13.  
<https://www.diepresse.com/4925458/die-macht-der-pensionisten>  
<https://www.agenda-austria.at/grafiken/die-macht-der-pensionisten/>

## Belgium

**Score 8** A wide range of civil society groups influence policy formation in Europe, and Belgium excels in this regard. Many noneconomic interest associations, including environmental, cultural, religious/philosophical, sports/leisure, and minority groups (such as individuals with disabilities), receive state funding.

The largest groups can make proposals and influence policy effectively. Consociationalism in Belgium ensures that some socially important decisions are made smoothly. For instance, the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2003, euthanasia in 2002, and the extension of euthanasia to minors in 2014 followed intense but dispassionate debates. A recent example involves the introduction of compulsory courses on emotional and relational life in education, which initially met with violent opposition, including school arson and vandalism. Despite significant media coverage, this opposition was marginal and occurred only after the policy had been voted on, in stark contrast to similar issues in France or the United States.

A key reason for this smooth decision-making is the predominance of political parties. Some groups and associations that receive funding either initially have or later develop preferential relationships with political parties or government actors.

As a result, social groups, associations, and publicly funded schools often have long-standing ties to political entities. This creates a strong incentive for noneconomic interest associations to propose well-founded policies, as there is a high probability that these proposals will be debated in parliament. The downside of this structure is a dependence on public funding.

Citation:

Press article on the extension of euthanasia to minors: [https://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2014/02/13/la-belgique-va-etendre-l-euthanasie-aux-mineurs\\_4365959\\_3214.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2014/02/13/la-belgique-va-etendre-l-euthanasie-aux-mineurs_4365959_3214.html)

Press articles on the controversy around the emotional and relational life courses:

<https://www.rtbf.be/article/des-cette-annee-les-eleves-auront-au-minimum-deux-animations-evras-durant-leur-scolaire-a-quoi-ces-cours-deduction-sexuelle-vont-ils-ressembler-11245785>

<https://www.lecho.be/economie-politique/belgique/general/l-opposition-a-evras-federe-des-mouvements-tres-eloignes/10492739.html>

[https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20180715\\_03615174](https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20180715_03615174)

## Denmark

Score 8

Since the welfare state is responsible for providing most welfare services – including child care, education, healthcare and old-age care – the role of associations is to represent citizens and voice their needs and demands. For instance, there are nationwide associations like Ældre Sagen (association for seniors) and associations for specific groups of patients with particular illnesses. These associations are generally quite visible in public debates, and actively propose policies and participate in the policy formulation process.

Nevertheless, there is increasing attention being paid to co-creation and coproduction of social welfare, prompted by concerns that a small workforce, along with rising demand for social welfare, will strain the welfare state (Andersen et al. 2020). Additionally, worries about the welfare state's future capacity to manage an increasing number of older people have sparked a debate on whether civil society can assume greater responsibility, allowing professionals more time to focus on core activities.

Citation:

Andersen, SC, et al. 2020. "How to Increase Citizen Coproduction: Replication and Extension of Existing Research." *International Public Management Journal* 23 (5): 696-712.

## Finland

Score 8

In Finland, the Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health (SOSTE) serves as a comprehensive umbrella organization for social welfare organizations. Established in 2012, SOSTE was founded by the Association of Voluntary Health, Social and Welfare Organizations (YTY), the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health (STKL), and the Finnish Center for Health Promotion (Tekry).

SOSTE brings together 200 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to social affairs and health, along with numerous partner members. The collective mission of SOSTE focuses on fostering the health and well-being of all individuals. Through collaboration with its members and partners, SOSTE actively engages in laying the groundwork for health, inclusive participation and a just society.

SOSTE and its partner organizations are regularly consulted by the government. For example, SOSTE is currently represented on the Social Security Reform Committee, whose mandate extends from 2020 to 2027. However, the government does not feel obliged to accept the viewpoints of SOSTE or its partner organizations.

SOSTE and its partner organizations are funded almost exclusively through the receipts of the state gambling monopoly. The Orpo government aims to partially dismantle the monopoly and replace it with a licensing system. Consequently, SOSTE's funding level for 2024 dropped dramatically, leading to downsizing within the organization. This reduction will diminish the organization's capacity to retain expert staffers and influence policies.

Citation:

<https://www.soste.fi/en/etusivu/>

## New Zealand

### Score 8

New Zealand follows the Westminster model of democracy, characterized by limited access points for veto players and the centralization of political decision-making power in the executive. Despite this institutional setup, civil society organizations have had considerable success influencing government policy in the field of social welfare through various means (Grey 2015; O'Brien 2015).

Interest groups have, through media campaigns and other communication strategies, been able to frame public debates on social welfare issues. For example, public support for the “26 for Babies” group, which ran a social media campaign and a range of mainstream media events, led to a 2014 budget announcement that the National-led government would increase paid parental leave from 14 to 18 weeks in 2016, despite earlier proclamations by National that it would veto a private member's bill on extending paid parental leave to 26 weeks.

Moreover, interest groups have shaped social welfare policy by publishing reports and research at both the agenda-setting and evaluation stages of the policy process. For instance, the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has published evaluation reports showing the inequities caused by the Working for Families policy, which provides payments to “working” parents but not to parents receiving social welfare benefits. CPAG has also taken cases to the Human Rights Tribunal and the High Court to demonstrate that the government's policy was discriminatory under the law. The legal proceedings held the attention of the media for a number of years between 2002 and 2014. In 2017, Prime Minister Ardern appointed herself minister for child

poverty, and the Child Poverty Reduction Act was passed in 2018. The act requires current and future governments to set three-year and 10-year targets for reducing child poverty.

Interest groups have also turned to international courts and supranational bodies to force policy change. In a recent example from 2022, civil society representatives formally asked the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to put pressure on the New Zealand government to address a range of disability issues (Shivas 2022). Meanwhile, Māori groups have used the Waitangi Tribunal to coerce the government into passing welfare policies designed to reduce inequities experienced by Māori. As a result, various policies – such as the Public Health and Disability Act and the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act – now reference the Treaty of Waitangi and include measures specific to improving welfare outcomes for Māori (Moore 2021).

Citation:

Grey, S. 2015. “Interest groups and policy.” In *Government and Politics in Aotearoa New Zealand*. 6th ed., ed. J. Hayward. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moore, C. 2021. “Māori and Social Policy.” In *Government and Politics in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. J. Hayward, 7th ed. Oxford University Press.

O’Brien, M. 2015. “Child poverty policy.” In J. Hayward, ed. *Government and Politics in Aotearoa New Zealand*. 6th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shivas, O. 2022. “UN Committee ‘Concerned’ NZ Government Ignoring Disability Rights’ Advice.” *Stuff*, August 27. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/pou-tiaki/129628760/un-committee-concerned-nz-government-ignoring-disability-rights-advice>

## Slovakia

### Score 8

The state of social welfare in Slovakia mirrors the conditions observed in the capital and labor sectors. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Slovakia possess sufficient organizational strength to independently formulate policies or engage in a collaborative policymaking process with the government. Additionally, several CSOs provide social welfare services and are part of the Association of Social Services Providers, participating in the SR’s Council of Non-Governmental and Nonprofit Organizations.

The most influential welfare policy contributors include INEKO, INESS, Socioforum, and others. These organizations share their expertise with CSO representatives who have access to decision-making processes. Among CSOs delivering welfare services, Liga proti rakovine is the most prominent, with the Red Cross ranking second in visibility (for more, see *Analýza socioekonomického prínosu neziskového sektora a stavu a trendov rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti*, 2020).

Citation:

*Analýza socioekonomického prínosu neziskového sektora a stavu a trendov rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti*. 2020. Bratislava: Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre rozvoj občianskej spoločnosti.

## Slovenia

### Score 8

Slovenia's Vibrant civil society sector comprising a diverse array of associations. However, it relies primarily on voluntary work and suffers from low levels of professionalization and limited resources. Just over 12,000 people are employed in the non-governmental sector, with more than half of these workers employed in institutes (zavodi), despite institutes making up only 13% of all non-governmental organizations.

In 2021, associations (društva), the most numerous type of non-governmental organization due to the prevalence of local firemen associations, employed 5,178 people. The share of employees in non-governmental organizations was a mere 1.24%, which is extremely low compared to other countries. A 2017 study by Johns Hopkins University found the global average to be 3.3% and the EU average to be 3.67%.

Volunteer work offsets the low level of professionalization. Volunteering has a long and rich tradition in Slovenia, connecting people at both local and national levels. In 2022, the total number of volunteers in voluntary organizations increased. That year, 2,341 volunteer organizations submitted reports on volunteering, with 226,106 volunteers contributing 9,245,305 hours. Most volunteer hours were dedicated to social welfare.

Some traditional civil society organizations active in the welfare field have a long history and a strong local network. Although their work relies heavily on volunteers, the largest organizations also have professional leadership. These include Karitas Slovenia (founded in 1990), the Red Cross (1944), the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (1953), Slovenian Philanthropy (1992), and the Slovenian Association of Pensioners' Associations (1946). Given the tradition of a strong welfare state, the reduction of state services, and decreased budgets for social services, the demand for the services provided by civil society organizations has increased, especially during economic and financial crises.

#### Citation:

CNVOS. 2023. "Delež zaposlenih v NVO glede na aktivno prebivalstvo." <https://www.cnvos.si/nvo-sektor-dejstva-stevilke/delez-zaposlenih-v-nvo-glede-na-aktivno-prebivalstvo/>

Slovenska Filantropija. 2024. "Prostovoljstvo danes." <https://www.prostovoljstvo.org/prostovoljstvo-danes>

Rakar, Tatjana, and Deželan, Tomaž. 2023. "The strength of civil society in Slovenia after three decades of post-communist experience." In *Handbook of Civil Society and Social Movements in Small States*, eds. Lino Briguglio. Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 248-261.



## Switzerland

### Score 8

While trade union membership fees are tax-deductible, other social welfare groups – such as church-affiliated organizations – do not enjoy these organizational safeguards. In addition to the plethora of organizations in the areas of social policy, social welfare and vocational training, there are also local and cantonal public organizations in these areas. Private and public organizations work together, but it is difficult to summarize and assess the power and effectiveness of these very different organizations.

In contrast to almost all European democracies, interest organizations in Switzerland may exert influence using the channels afforded by direct democracy. They can trigger a referendum or propose a new constitutional article by way of a so-called initiative. Moreover, as the Swiss administration is weak in international comparison and parliaments are weakly professionalized, CSOs have specialized sectoral expertise that is needed and used within the Swiss politico-administrative system (Christiansen et al. 2017; Sager et al. 2022). In this regard, these organizations have more opportunities to advocate on behalf of their preferences than do comparable organizations in other countries. However, CSOs do not have the capacity to match the influence of economic actors and industries in many sectors such as health, and Switzerland is well-known for its weak structural regulation of harmful products such as tobacco in European comparison (Mavrot 2021).

#### Citation:

Christiansen, Peter Munk, André Mach, and Frédéric Varone. 2018. “How Corporatist Institutions Shape the Access of Citizen Groups to Policy-Makers: Evidence from Denmark and Switzerland.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 25 (4): 526-545. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2016.1268194

Mavrot, Céline. 2021. “Playing the Multilevel Game: Successful Tobacco Control Advocacy Strategies in a Federal System.” In *Casebook on Advocacy in Public Health*, eds. Ildfonso Hernandez-Aguado, Lucy Anne Parker, Michael Moore, and Deborah Klein Walker, 194-203. Geneva: World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA).

Sager, F., Asticher, L., and Pleger, L.E. 2022. “Lobbyismus in der Schweiz.” In *Handbuch Lobbyismus*, eds. A. Polk and K. Mause. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-32324-0\\_32-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-32324-0_32-1)

## Ireland

### Score 7

Irish social welfare CSOs exert pressure on the legislature and government through pressure politics, pluralism, protests, campaigning and advocacy. Some of these organizations are better integrated into the policy formulation process. Historically, there was quasi-corporatism with the Community and Voluntary Pillar, which includes the Community Platform – a network of 26 groups, some of which have their own membership within the Pillar. Many of these groups are actively consulted by the government through pre-budget submission processes and ad hoc policy consultations. The Amnesty International Report (2022) highlights various societal issues, including concerns about past institutional abuse and the contemporary lack of access to adequate housing, notably for Ukrainians and other refugees. By late

2023, 500 male international protection applicants were experiencing homelessness. Ongoing issues include the use of facial recognition technology in policing public spaces, which is more likely to be introduced following the Dublin riots in November 2023. The Civicus Monitor (2023) scored Ireland highly in freedom rankings but noted concerns about LGBTQI rights, anti-immigrant sentiment and issues related to digital surveillance. The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (2022) consistently ranked Ireland 11th out of 142 countries, with an overall score of 82, similar to the rankings in 2021 and 2023.

There are at least 29,000 nonprofit organizations in Ireland (Benefacts). Volunteering and service provision activities, including sports, culture and charity, dominate and often operate “in the shadow of the state.” During the COVID-19 pandemic, civil society established new relationships with local government and other actors. Advocacy campaigns to influence government policy continue to prefer insider consensual change strategies based on clear engagement structures with the government (Vissar 2019) and there is significant demand for more collaborative governance.

However, the Irish state exhibits a passive-aggressive relationship with civil society, espousing partnership and deliberation while also suppressing and inhibiting advocacy (Harvey 2014). This has led to campaigns by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) for the right to dissent. Irish environmental groups face the highest legal costs in the EU and are often threatened with funding cuts when they pursue legal action against the state. In 2021, the ICCL led the Coalition for Civil Society Freedom, seeking legal reforms to lift prohibitions on civil society actors fundraising for legitimate advocacy work. While much of civil society, particularly the voluntary sector, is now service-oriented and organized into fragmented siloed sectors, it remains a source of politically active citizenship in various public spheres. These include cultural, political and policy-based summer schools, mind festivals, talk forums and arts and culture events, which, although not unique to Ireland, are nonetheless popular (Murphy 2023). Ireland has also experimented with national, regional and local deliberative forms of collaborative governance, including local environmental spheres (JCFC 2020).

Citation:

Murphy, M.P., and O'Connor, O. 2021. *Civil Society Organisations and Policy Analysis: Resilience in the Context of Shifting Political Opportunity Structures? Policy Analysis in Ireland*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Murphy, M. P. 2023. *Creating an Ecosocial Welfare Future*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Amnesty International. 2023. “Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The state of the world’s human rights.” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2023/03/amnesty-international-report-2022-23>

Visser, A. 2019. “Ireland Emerging from the Crisis.” In *Report on the State of Civil Society in the EU and Russia*, eds. Harvey B., Berlin: EU-Russia Civil Society Forum.

WJP. 2022. “Rule of Law Index.” Ireland Insights. <https://worldjusticeproject.org>

Civicus Monitor. 2023. “2023 State of Civil Society Report.” [https://www.civicus.org/documents/reports-and-publications/SOCS/2023/state-of-civil-society-report-2023\\_en.pdf](https://www.civicus.org/documents/reports-and-publications/SOCS/2023/state-of-civil-society-report-2023_en.pdf)

Benefacts. 2018. “Analysis 2018.” <https://analysis2018.benefacts.ie/report/thirdsector>

Harvey, B. 2014. *Are We Paying for That?* Dublin: Advocacy Coalition.

## Israel

### Score 7

A large proportion of social welfare policy is implemented by civil society organizations (Shiffer 2018). As a result, civil society organizations greatly influence policy formulation because policymakers and the public perceive them as having knowledge and expertise in their respective fields. At the same time, their dependence on public budgets limits their inclination to criticize the government and advocate for alternative policies.

Some donations to civil society organizations are tax deductible. In addition, civil society organizations participate in a policy design roundtable coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office, and committee Knesset hearings where they present policy proposals and reports. Moreover, major organizations are also members of various interministerial committees.

Lastly, reports concerning at-risk youth and poverty published by central organizations receive broad media coverage. At the same time, it should be noted that government-contracted social service providers face fierce competition, which might hinder their ability to effectively cooperate with each other.

Almost all major activities of social welfare organizations are promoted through coalitions of several organizations working together to meet a common goal. Each organization brings its own resources in terms of public support, expertise, media access, political connections, and more.

The organizations have no veto power over government decisions. However, they do have significant public legitimacy. Therefore, when they place an issue on the agenda that receives public and media interest, the government is more likely to respond.

#### Citation:

Shiffer, V. 2018. "The Impact of Privatization on the Non-profit Sector and on Civil Society in Israel." In A. Paz-Fuchs, R. Mandelkern, and I. Galnoor, eds., *The Privatization of Israel: The Withdrawal of State Responsibility*, 341–364. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58261-4\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58261-4_14)

## Latvia

### Score 7

The major CSOs can form alliances to represent interests, as they have sufficient organizational capacities. However, smaller CSOs struggle with corporate resources. According to the Monitoring Report 2023, 83% of all CSOs (about 25,600 in 2023) do not have any employed staff. The same report identified that about half of all registered CSOs are active and operational (Civic Alliance Latvia, 2023). In terms of membership, the law requires a minimum of two members for a CSO to operate.

Regarding finances, in 2022, all CSOs received donations totaling €97.7 million. However, donations constitute only around 16% of CSOs' income (Civic Alliance Latvia, 2023). The other income sources are project-type funding and allocations from public institutions.

The 2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia indicates that Latvia's CSOs have seen an improvement in their overall sustainability score. However, population support and involvement in CSOs need to be higher. The Civic Alliance reports that only 2% (in 2018) of the population are NGO members. The report also shows that the number of CSOs has decreased since 2018 (Civic Alliance Latvia (2023)). Overall, CSOs – except for large labor CSOs – have limited capacity to conduct research on their specialized issues.

The Civic Alliance is the umbrella organization for all civil society organizations (CSOs) in Latvia, regardless of their sector or capacity. The public benefit organization stipulates that any such organization has the right to receive tax relief if it registers as a public benefit organization. Additionally, any business that donates to public benefit organizations receives a tax deduction.

The 2023 Monitoring Report of the Latvian Civic Alliance reflects that while the number of CSOs accepting donations from businesses is increasing, it benefits fewer CSOs – primarily those with a certain level of organizational strength. Moreover, financial donations from public agencies have grown in recent years.

The social welfare CSOs with the highest number of employees are the Latvian Red Cross and the Latvian Union of Samaritans. However, these CSOs differ significantly in their capacity to generate policy proposals and participate in policy implementation. Some CSOs delivering social services have accumulated capacity and can influence policy. In contrast, others, such as groups representing seniors or patients, still need to develop and have limited impact on the policy process or outcomes.

Citation:

2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. 25th edition. January 2023. <https://www.fhi360.org/projects/civil-society-organization-sustainability-index-csosi>

Public Benefit Organization Law. <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/90822-public-benefit-organization-law>  
Civic Alliance Latvia (2023). NVO sektora monitorings 2023. (in Latvian). [https://nvo.lv/uploads/nvo\\_sektora\\_monitorings\\_2023\\_pap181.pdf](https://nvo.lv/uploads/nvo_sektora_monitorings_2023_pap181.pdf)

Civic Alliance Latvia (2022). Resources of civil society organizations: current situation and needs 2022. [https://nvo.lv/lv/portfelis/petijumi/resources\\_of\\_civil\\_society\\_organisations\\_current\\_situation\\_and\\_needs\\_2022](https://nvo.lv/lv/portfelis/petijumi/resources_of_civil_society_organisations_current_situation_and_needs_2022)

Nevalstisko organizāciju un Ministru kabineta sadarbības memoranda īstenošanas padome. (in Latvian). Retrieved from <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/nevalstisko-organizaciju-un-ministru-kabineta-sadarbibas-memoranda-istenosanas-padome>

## Lithuania

### Score 7

There are various CSOs active in the field of social welfare, such as the Food Bank and others. Lithuanian laws allow taxpayers to transfer up to 1.2% of their personal income tax to the CSOs of their choice. There are also frequent fundraising events aimed at encouraging the general public to donate to various CSOs, such as Maltesers. It should be noted that most CSOs of this type focus on problem-solving through fundraising and mobilizing volunteers rather than on participation in policy debates.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in CSO activities aimed at assisting vulnerable groups in coping with temporary restrictions. Another wave of donations and activism followed Russia's large-scale war against Ukraine in 2022, with various initiatives focused on helping refugees from Ukraine settle in Lithuania and providing humanitarian and other types of support for Ukrainians defending their country. According to research by the Civil Society Institute conducted in 2022, around two-thirds of the population supported Ukrainians in some capacity, most often by donating money. Some NGOs, such as Blue/Yellow, have been active since 2014. This group had raised more than €1 million by 13 December 2023. However, in a civic empowerment study by the Civil Society Institute conducted in 2022, respondents asked about the influence NGOs and communities have on political decisions important for society provided only 5.1 points to this topic out of a possible 10.

In addition to donations from personal income tax and charities, some CSOs in this field receive funding from state institutions, the EU Social Fund or European Economic Area funding programs. For example, the project on civic empowerment conducted by the Civil Society Institute (Civitas) was funded by the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labor. The Civil Society Institute is also an example of an CSO that has been working to develop a culture of cooperation between NGOs and state institutions in creating new public policy initiatives, often by attracting scholars from academia.

The government has established a fund to strengthen NGOs' capacity to contribute to policy initiatives and public policymaking. For example, in 2022 approximately €2.9 million were allocated for NGO projects, with around 90% of the funds actually disbursed. Nevertheless, funding remains one of the biggest challenges for the long-term sustainability and capacity of CSOs.

#### Citation:

Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labor. "NGO policy." <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/nevyriausybinu-organizaciju-politika/nvo-fondas>

Civil Society Institute. 2023. "Projects." <http://www.civitas.lt/en/projects/>

Blue/Yellow, <https://blue-yellow.lt/en/about-us>

## Netherlands

### Score 7

The Civicus Monitor rates the Netherlands as one of the world's 32 open civil spaces. International references to the “polder model” as a form of consensus-building through practices of societal consultation testify to the Dutch reputation for negotiating nonparliamentary support for public policies, often on contested issues, as a precondition for parliamentary approval. In this form of neocorporatism and network governance, the government consults extensively with vested interest groups in civil society during policy preparation, and attempts to involve them in policy implementation. It has been a strong factor in the modes of political operation and public policymaking deployed by all the Rutte governments.

The downside is that interest representation in civil society has become so focused on consultative relations with the state that interest representation is getting in the way of self-organization within civil society. Most sectors in civil society – healthcare, youth care, care for the elderly, sports, education, and even groups representing state employees such as local civil servants, police officers and professionals working in the judiciary – are assembled in councils, forums, platforms, “tables” and other arrangements intended to influence policy preparation and implementation. One might well speak of an “étatization” of Dutch social civil society. Professional associations representing the interests of teachers, general practitioner doctors, nurses, patients, youth care workers, farmers, sports officials and many others frequently express their disaffection with agreements negotiated. Added to the glaring government failures like the continuing story of the child benefit scandal, and the inability to bring closure to the Groningen gas and earthquake fiasco, these disappointments have contributed to a general decline of confidence in government in a country that used to be a high-trust society.

Even the High Council of State (Hoge Raad) issued a warning that agreements reached using the polder model are too often presented to parliament as a fait accompli. They also too often lead to very broad platform legislation that specifies future goals and allocates a budget, but leaves implementation plans and legal implications undetermined. Another criticism is that this model leads to sluggish policymaking, creating a “musical chairs” process in which the responsibilities of government, business, and influential civil society or non-governmental organizations remain blurred, thus paralyzing effective decision-making.

Citation:

Civicus. 2022. “Monitor Tracking Civic Space.”

CBS. 2023. “Minste vertrouwen in Tweede Kamer in 10 jaar tijd.” 9 May.

Fatima Bajja. 2022. “Wantrouwen in de overheid: ‘Burgers zijn kopschuw geworden’.” NOS Nieuws November 15.

NU.nl. 2022. “Politiek houdt demonstrerende huisartsen tegen die naar Binnenhof willen.” 1 Juli.

RTL Nieuws. 2023. “Vandaag demonstratie. Vaker onbevoegde leraren voor de klas: ‘Geen onderwijs is erger’.”

RTL Nieuws February 3.

RTL Nieuws. 2023. "Grote lerarenstaking op 5 oktober: 'Laten ons niet piepelen'." RTL Nieuws June 28.

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Wikipedia. n.d. "Toeslagenaffaire."

NU.nl. 2023. "Dit zijn de belangrijkste punten uit het rapport over de aardbevingen in Groningen." February 24.

## United States

### Score 7

The United States has a thriving charity sector. The federal tax code treats contributions to charitable organizations generously. Social welfare organizations have a charitable aim but legally enjoy greater scope to lobby and engage in political activity than straightforward charities (Johnson 2018).

Since the 2010 Citizens United case, social welfare organizations have been allowed to raise and spend unlimited funds to advocate for their causes (Witko 2017). They are also typically permitted to engage in such activities without disclosing their donors. This has led to accusations of "astroturf" activism, where groups that appear to be large-scale grassroots campaign organizations are actually well-funded initiatives by a small number of wealthy donors, or even a single individual, bankrolling the entire effort (Charnock 2020).

Religious organizations are another form of important social welfare organization in the United States. The United States has a much higher level of religious belief and participation than peer rich democracies. Many religious denominations and religiously inspired organizations are highly active in politics, lobbying on behalf of causes they care deeply about, including abortion, family, environment, poverty, and much else (Chand 2017).

Citation:

Richard Johnson. 2020. "Low-Resource Candidates and Fundraising Appeals." In E. Suhay, B. Grofman, and A. Treschel, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Christopher Witko. 2017. "Regulation and Upper-Class Bias in Campaign Finance." *Election Law Journal*.

Emily Charnock. 2020. *The Rise of Political Action Committees: Interest Group Electioneering and the Transformation of American Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Daniel Chand. 2017. "Lobbying and Nonprofits." *Social Science Quarterly*.

## Czechia

### Score 6

The best-organized section of the population concerned with welfare provision is pensioners. A large number of distinct organizations have individual members. Their activities span recreation, sport, welfare, and advisory services, and many also raise clearly political demands. The Rada seniorů České republiky (Council of Seniors of

the Czech Republic, RSČR) brings together 17 all-state organizations, 16 regional organizations, 24 municipal organizations, and many more local pensioners' clubs.

The council is represented, albeit in small numbers, in the advisory council on seniors and the aging population organized under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and one of its leading representatives also became an advisor to the relevant minister in 2022. The RSČR has presented clear and coherent political demands, most comprehensively prior to the last parliamentary elections in 2021. These demands include a call for pension reform to raise the share of pensions in GDP, restore the level of pensions relative to the average wage (which has declined markedly since 1989), reduce the required number of years to qualify for a full pension from 35 to 25, and ensure adequate provision for seniors in terms of health, housing, and other social services. This approach clearly differs from the direction taken by the Fiala government, as discussed in subsequent sections.

The RSČR's latest report on political activity referred positively to its warm and easy contacts with Babiš when he had been prime minister and praised his government for raising the pension level. Relations with ministers in the Fiala government have also been described as correct, and the organization claimed in its report on activities in 2022 to have brought about several changes to proposed legislation. Nevertheless, these organizations probably have considerable political influence due to their ability to mobilize a substantial number of voters, likely to be dissatisfied with the Fiala government.

During the review period, a major controversy in the social welfare domain centered on same-sex marriage and adoption, with civil society organizations actively driving the agenda. Both proponents (We are Fair) and opponents (Alliance for Family) demonstrated significant organizational strength, including financial resources, policy experts, and media campaigns. Access to government and ministerial levels favored the Alliance for Family due to the Christian Democrats' control of the social welfare portfolio. Despite greater public support for the legislation and backing from civil society organizations, including multinational corporations that addressed an open letter to the prime minister, opponents successfully delayed and currently prevent the adoption of the legislation. The introduction of last-minute surrogacy regulations further divided the proponents. While ministers from STAN and the Pirates openly supported same-sex marriage, the overall parliamentary votes, combined with the prime minister's silence and the stance of the ODS and Christian Democrats, suggest opposition rather than ambivalence.

Citation:

<https://www.rscr.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Zpr%C3%A1va-p%C5%99edsedy-RS-%C4%8CR.pdf>

<https://www.rscr.cz/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/v%C3%BDro%C4%8Dn%C3%AD-zpr%C3%A1va-2022.pdf>

<https://english.radio.cz/it-reminds-us-we-still-have-some-things-fight-prague-pride-kick-monday-8790561>

<https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/large-global-corporations-call-on-czech-pm-to-accept-same-sex-marriage>



## Estonia

**Score 6** National-level civil society organizations (CSOs) often receive project-based public funding, though this is less common for smaller, local CSOs. Membership fees and donations are tax-deductible for CSOs on the government-approved list. This list is updated annually. In 2022, about 2,700 CSOs were listed, including advocacy groups for people with disabilities or various diseases, as well as for child protection, family welfare and mental health.

The organizational strength of major CSOs varies, but they generally have limited financial and human resources to formulate policy proposals in-house or to commission expert advice from outside. None of the CSOs in social welfare have their own research analysis unit or institute.

Major civil society organizations active in a particular field often cooperate while participating in the policymaking process; sometimes they establish umbrella organizations or alliances. For example, Vaimse Tervise ja Heaolu Koalitsioon (VATEK) unites 53 organizations in the area of mental health and well-being. The Estonian Chamber of Disabled People (EPIKoda) is an umbrella organization that brings together 32 specific disability associations and unions. Major CSOs in this field are strategic partners of the Ministry of Social Welfare and are actively involved in policy advocacy and policymaking. According to existing regulations and norms, the government is obliged to respond to policy proposals put forward by major CSOs during the drafting of new laws or the revision of existing regulations. Overall, Estonia has developed a neoconservative approach to CSO engagement, and the general public remains loosely involved in their activities.

## Greece

**Score 6** The Greek constitution enshrines the principle of the “Welfare State of Law” (Article 25), including rights to education, health, and social security. The constitution mandates that state authorities must not obstruct the exercise of these rights, and citizens are required to uphold social solidarity (Paragraph 4, Article 25).

However, few CSOs possess the organizational strength necessary to influence public policies. The responsibility for shaping welfare policies primarily lies with the government, public administration, and parliament. While many CSOs engage in social welfare activities, their role in policy formulation is limited.

Additionally, many CSOs in Greece rely on the state (e.g., the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, local municipalities) and, to some extent, on private donations for financial support and infrastructure, such as state-owned buildings.

Even the largest CSOs often lack the expertise required to contribute to public policymaking. When welfare policy bills are submitted to parliament, CSO representatives are invited to participate in parliamentary debates and testify before the parliament's Permanent Committee on Social Affairs (Parliament, 2024).

In the past, CSOs faced public suspicion due to involvement in misappropriating public funds allocated by relevant ministries. For example, in December 2022, criminal investigations were launched against the child charity "Arc of the World," headed by a well-known low-ranking Greek Orthodox priest, who, along with 10 others, was investigated on four felony charges (Keep Talking Greece, 2022). This case remained unresolved in 2023.

Citation:

Keep Talking Greece. 2022. "Father Antonios and another ten investigated for charity's financial management." <https://www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2022/12/02/child-charity-financial-investigation>

Parliament. 2024. "Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs." <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Koinovouleftikes-Epitropes/CommitteeDetailView?CommitteeId=583b7a49-8542-41c0-8e16-e1c22246bfa6>

## Italy

### Score 6

In May 2023, Istat released a comprehensive report on the Italian third sector, showcasing a dynamic landscape of over 360,000 organizations dedicated to social welfare. These organizations employ nearly 900,000 individuals and mobilize the voluntary efforts of nearly 5 million individuals. Notably, Northern Italy and the central regions, with their strong civic traditions, exhibit the highest concentration of these organizations and volunteers. This sector is pivotal in Italian society, contributing approximately €80 billion, or nearly 5% of GDP, annually. To support their endeavors, third-sector organizations increasingly rely on the 5x1000 of Irpef. This contribution allows taxpayers to allocate a portion of their income tax to these organizations. With over 15 million taxpayers participating in this initiative, the third sector garners significant support from the Italian public (Rapporto sulla sussidiarietà 2021/22).

Italian law (Legislative Decree 117/2017) mandates that public administrations, to uphold the principles of subsidiarity, must actively involve third-sector CSOs in planning and managing social programs and services. The engagement of social welfare CSOs is primarily concentrated at the regional and local levels, particularly in northern and central Italy. In contrast, their participation at the national level remains relatively limited.

The high level of fragmentation among CSOs reduces their capacity to shape national-level public policies, although their influence on regional and city-level policies is greater.

Citation:

Rapporto Istat: <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2023/05/Censimento-non-profit-primi-risultati.pdf>

Rapporto sulla sussidiarietà 2021/22: [https://www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/rapp/rapporto\\_sussidiarieta\\_\\_21-22.pdf](https://www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/rapp/rapporto_sussidiarieta__21-22.pdf)

## United Kingdom

### Score 6

The UK has an abundance of NGOs and other entities that contribute to routine policy development, particularly in social welfare. These organizations engage in various activities such as responding to government consultations, participating in government working groups, and influencing through publications, events, and informal contacts with decision-makers. Their strategy and influence depend on the alignment of their positions with those of the UK government, ranging from visible pressure politics on contentious issues to informal discussions on shared agendas. Many of these bodies have charitable status, which confers fiscal advantages.

Examples of entities with capacities relevant to social welfare, all aiming to influence government, include:

**The Joseph Rowntree Foundation:** Employing 150 staff, this foundation focuses on a range of social welfare topics such as poverty, social security, housing, and issues around race and ethnicity. Funded by shares donated by Quaker businessman and social reformer Joseph Rowntree, the foundation aims to influence public debate by engaging with and applying pressure on those in power through the quality of their arguments and ideas, and by building powerful coalitions and movements for change, centering on the voices of those who benefit least from the status quo.

**The National Centre for Social Research:** Conducts surveys and works with governments, NGOs, charities, and other organizations to drive understanding and help them make sound decisions that shape society.

**Social Market Foundation:** A nonpartisan think tank conducting research on various aspects of public policy, including economics and market regulation, work, skills and education, and public sector reform.

**The Centre for Social Justice:** Founded by former Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan Smith, this organization seeks to influence government policies and laws to address the root causes of poverty, which include family breakdown, educational failure, worklessness, addiction, problem debt and housing, criminal justice, and modern slavery. The CSJ published the interim report of a commission on social justice, which opens with the line: “The country is deeply divided. There are those who are getting by and there are those who are not.”

Citation:

[https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CSJ-Two\\_Nations.pdf](https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CSJ-Two_Nations.pdf)

## Australia

### Score 5

As noted for CSOs in capital and labor, the formal rules of the Australian political economy allow social welfare CSOs to build strength through membership and fundraising, using those resources to shape public policies.

The record of CSO influence across major policy areas is mixed. For example, there is evidence of government consultation with CSOs in the integrity domain in crafting recent laws to create a federal anti-corruption commission. However, the influence of CSOs in the contentious domains of asylum and immigration has been more muted. Following the High Court's ruling against indefinite detention, the government passed new legislation in December 2023 allowing for the detention or "supervision" of immigrants convicted of serious violent or sexual offenses and deemed high-risk, a test not applied to Australian citizens.

Youth groups and multicultural societies have been influential, particularly in state policymaking, as shown by the development of several multiculturalism programs advancing the agendas of CSOs in this area (Jakubowicz 2023; Office for Youth 2022). However, many CSOs in this sector lack a strong and reliable funding base, relying on government grants to fund their operations and activities. This reliance on government grants constrains their capacity to advance their interests.

CSOs advocating for disadvantaged groups, such as the Australian Council of Social Service, are relatively prominent in public debates and have probably influenced policies in areas such as welfare payment levels.

#### Citation:

Jakubowicz, A. 2023. "A major review of the government's multicultural policies is under way – what is it seeking to achieve?" *The Conversation* June 7. <https://theconversation.com/a-major-review-of-the-governments-multicultural-policies-is-under-way-what-is-it-seeking-to-achieve-206983>

Office for Youth. 2022. "Federal Budget Commits \$10.5 Million for a New Youth Engagement Model." <https://www.youth.gov.au/news/announcements/federal-budget-commits-105-million-new-youth-engagement-model>

## Canada

### Score 5

As stated previously, Canada has a free associational system, but in the social welfare sector as elsewhere, interest groups and civil society organizations have access to limited public funding.

In general, civil society organizations (CSOs) in Canada working in the social welfare sector do not have direct and continuous access to government officials and policymakers for effective advocacy and input. The degree of access, however, can vary. Larger, more established CSOs often have better connections. CSOs also need knowledge and expertise on the specific policy issues they seek to influence, which

some possess to varying degrees. While larger CSOs may have specialized policy staff, smaller ones often lack dedicated expertise. Participating in consultations, advocacy campaigns, and similar activities also requires time and money. Larger CSOs have more resources to devote to policy work, whereas many smaller CSOs are underfunded (Phillips and Orsini 2002).

Connections with other CSOs and academics can help amplify influence and access expertise. While some CSOs collaborate effectively with each other, others operate in silos. There are opportunities to enhance CSO capacity through funding, partnerships, and government commitment to consultation. Some CSOs receive grants to provide services, such as refugee settlement or women's shelters, and can use those funds to support their lobbying activities (Pal 1993). However, resource limitations and unequal access will persist to some degree.

Due to these constraints, the policy capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the area of social policy in Canada can vary widely depending on the size, focus, and resources of each organization. "Policy capacity" refers to an organization's ability to effectively engage in policy analysis, advocacy, and influence decision-making processes. Adequate funding and resources are crucial for civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs to build and maintain policy capacity. Funding sources may include grants, donations, and partnerships. Financial stability enables organizations to invest in staff training, research initiatives, and advocacy campaigns. Larger NGOs with significant resources, staffing, and expertise may have greater policy capacity. These organizations often have dedicated policy teams, researchers, and advocacy specialists.

NGOs with strong research capacity and subject-matter expertise are better equipped to analyze policy issues, propose solutions, and engage in evidence-based advocacy than those with weaker capabilities. Some NGOs may collaborate with academic institutions or experts to enhance their research capabilities. The ability to collaborate in this way and form strategic alliances with other NGOs, civil society groups, and stakeholders can enhance an organization's policy influence. Networking allows NGOs to share resources, information, and amplify their collective voice.

NGOs with effective access to government officials, policymakers, and key decision-makers can have a greater impact on policy development than those without such access. Establishing relationships with government agencies and officials often allows NGOs to present their perspectives and recommendations directly (Brock 2020).

NGOs that effectively communicate their messages to the public and garner public support can influence policy debates and decisions. Public awareness campaigns, media outreach, and social media engagement contribute to an organization's policy advocacy efforts. Issues that resonate with the public, policymakers, or specific interest groups may attract more attention and support.

The effectiveness of an NGO's advocacy strategies – including its ability to engage in constructive dialogue, propose viable solutions, and mobilize public support – contributes to its policy capacity. NGOs that are adaptable and open to learning from their experiences are better positioned to navigate changing policy landscapes. This adaptability includes staying informed about policy developments, assessing the impact of their advocacy efforts, and adjusting strategies accordingly.

Citation:

Brock, Kathy L. 2020. "Government and Non-Profit Collaboration in Times of Deliverology, Policy Innovation Laboratories and Hubs, and New Public Governance." *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 31 (2): 257–70.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-019-00145-0>Pal, Leslie A. 1993. *Interests of State: The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism, and Feminism in Canada*. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Phillips, Susan D. 2007. "Policy Analysis and the Voluntary Sector: Evolving Policy Styles." In *Policy Analysis in Canada: The State of the Art*, eds. L. Dobuzinskis, M. Howlett, and D. Laycock, 272–84. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Phillips, Susan, and Tessa Hebb. 2010. "Financing the Third Sector: Introduction." *Policy and Society* 29 (3): 181–87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polsoc.2010.07.001>

Phillips, Susan, and Michael Orsini. 2002. *Mapping the Links: Citizen Involvement in Policy Processes*. Canadian Policy Research Networks, Discussion Paper.

## Portugal

### Score 5

CSOs dedicated to social welfare hold limited sway over Portuguese society. Some of these organizations find representation within the Economic and Social Council (CES), particularly through participation in the Permanent Commission for Social Concertation (CPCS).

Prominent CSOs in this field include Social Economy Entities, such as Private Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS), as well as various foundations and non-governmental organizations with a social focus, such as the Portuguese Red Cross, the Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV) and Caritas (the official social charity organization of the Church). These organizations can access and rely on government financial support, albeit often encountering insufficiencies. Nevertheless, they manage to maintain their independence and autonomy.

Only a select few associations have the capability to formulate policy proposals, and even among those, resources are severely constrained. An exception to this pattern is the Portuguese League Against Cancer, which stands out as a civil society institution closely collaborating with the health ministry on cancer screening initiatives.

## Spain

**Score 5** With the exception of trade unions and employers' associations, noneconomic interest groups in Spain are relatively weak, making it difficult for them to influence political decision-making with relevant policy proposals. The lack of a strong, organized civil society discourages the government from considering these associations' views in policy formulation, as this would complicate the process without necessarily adding social legitimacy. Their influence largely depends on their participation within political parties.

For example, although women's associations are weak as autonomous organizations, they have become increasingly influential within political parties, especially the PSOE. Similarly, the LGBTQ+ movement has successfully defended homosexual rights. Platforms and networks have been able to gain media attention and shape public policy by demanding more transparency, better mortgage regulation, and changes in healthcare and education. Over the last several years, pensioners have staged large protests to demand fairer pensions for themselves and future generations.

## France

**Score 4** Social welfare CSOs are particularly active among the poorest sectors of society, including migrants, youth, the elderly and the disabled.

The decrease in subsidized jobs has hit the welfare sector particularly hard. In addition, the abolishment of the wealth tax – another major measure of the first Macron administration – also diminished donations, as these were previously used to reduce taxes. The pandemic years have created additional difficulties, with considerably more demand for services and a lower number of volunteers.

The major challenge such organizations face today is the need to find new funding in the context of declining public contributions. At the same time, public oversight has tended to become stricter, especially in the health sector, with the creation of regional oversight agencies that behave in a rather interventionist manner.

Social welfare CSOs' influence on policymaking is limited, and there are no signs that it has increased in recent years. Rather, they are policy takers, subject to changing government priorities in a strongly centralized country. Only the largest associations, such as the Red Cross and a few others, have the effective ability to influence public decision-making.

### Citation:

Bolleyer, Nicole. 2018. *The State and Civil Society: Regulating Interest Groups, Parties, and Public Benefit Organizations in Contemporary Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ewald, F. 2020. *The Birth of Solidarity: The History of the French Welfare State*. Durham: Duke University Press.

## Hungary

### Score 4

During the successive Orbán governments, the share of GDP dedicated to social welfare decreased from 21.8% in 2010 to 16% in 2022 (KSH 2024). This reduction makes CSOs important partners in addressing social issues. NGOs often provide services and support in areas where the state is unable or unwilling to do so. These organizations work in various fields, including homelessness, poverty reduction, disability services, elderly care, child protection and support for marginalized communities such as the Roma. Their activities range from direct service provision to advocacy and policy influence. In some cases, partnerships exist between the government and NGOs or CSOs, wherein the government may contract with these organizations to deliver certain social services. However, the organizational incapacity of Hungarian social welfare organizations to organize and advocate effectively makes them relatively minor players in the system. Foreign-based NGOs often face government-induced work limitations based on the Lex NGO and the Sovereignty Protection Act. This is especially true regarding migration issues and social issues surrounding LGBTQ+ rights.

Although most NGOs are organizationally weak with respect to membership, their social support, as expressed through 1% personal income tax donations, reached record-high levels in 2023 (Népszava 2023). This indicates that an increasing share of the population finds their work important and worthy of support.

Citation:

KSH (Hungarian Statistical Office). 2024. [www.ksh.hu](http://www.ksh.hu)

Népszava. 2023. "Rekordot döntöttek az idei év adó 1 százalékos felajánlásai, a Partizán behúzta a harmadik helyet." 15 September. [https://nepszava.hu/3208783\\_rekordot-dontottek-az-idei-ev-ado-1-szazalekos-felajanlasai-a-partizan-behuzta-a-harmadik-helyet](https://nepszava.hu/3208783_rekordot-dontottek-az-idei-ev-ado-1-szazalekos-felajanlasai-a-partizan-behuzta-a-harmadik-helyet)

## Japan

### Score 4

One important feature of Japan's civil society is that most organizations are involved in the provision of services and do not seek to provide expertise or shape policy (Ogawa 2021). The number of organizations promoting healthcare and welfare is 29,641, making it the largest group among Japanese NPOs. NPOs have been particularly active in addressing social problems exacerbated by the economic stagnation of the 1990s, such as suicides and hikikomori (i.e., extreme social withdrawal). The government has provided some funding and encouraged private-public cooperation in this field.

Contrary to the employers' associations and trade unions, social welfare NPOs do not possess strong connections with the political elites. Although government oversight over NPO activities is much less stringent than before 1998, it is still difficult to function as an NPO without the active promotion by or cooperation of authorities.



## Citation:

Cabinet Office, Government of Japan. 2023. “Tokutei Hieiri Katsudô Hôjin no Katsudô bun’ya ni tsuite” [On the Activities of Specified Non-profit Corporations]. <https://www.npo-homepage.go.jp/about/toukei-info/ninshou-bunyabetsu>

Japan NPO Center. 2014. “Non-profits in Japan.” <https://www.jnpoc.ne.jp/en/nonprofits-in-japan/>

Ogawa, Akihiro. 2021. “Civil Society in Japan.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, eds. R.J. Pekkanen and S.M. Pekkanen, 299-316. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Global Development Research Center. 1998. “Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities.” [https://www.gdrc.org/ngo/jp-npo\\_law.pdf](https://www.gdrc.org/ngo/jp-npo_law.pdf)

## Poland

### Score 4

Poland has a wide array of organizations based on common interests, such as patient groups, parent associations and youth organizations. These groups can form federations and platforms, such as the portal [ngo.pl](http://ngo.pl). They enjoy the same legal protections as other collective activities, including benefits such as the ability to offset membership fees from income. Many large organizations, such as the Batory Foundation and Klon/Javor, have research units staffed by policy experts.

The number of registered organizations grew more than threefold from 2002 to 2021, reaching 138,000. However, the proportion of actively operating organizations is decreasing. The main areas of activity – sports, education and culture – constitute about two-thirds of the social sector in Poland. While the industry primarily provides services and information, fewer organizations are now engaged in advocacy and public mobilization activities such as representing member interests or educating the public. From 2004 to 2021, the average number of members and volunteers per organization declined from 42 to 25 and from 10 to five, respectively. This trend is partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a broader shift toward more grassroots-based social engagement, often outside traditional NGO structures (Klon, 2023).

Grants and subsidies from local authorities, public administration and private sources have been the strongest funding sources for NGOs, typically awarded through competitive processes. The ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party has often used public funds to support pro-government organizations. The government’s engagement with civil society organizations in decision-making processes has been limited. For example, there was a notable lack of dialogue with teachers, parents and NGOs during efforts to centralize and increase supervision over the education system.

## Citation:

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. 2023. “Statement by civil society organisations after the 2023 parliamentary elections.” <https://hfhf.pl/en/news/statement-by-civil-society-organisations-after-the-2023-parliamentary-elections>

Klon/Javor. 2023. “Kondycja organizacji pozarządowych. Trendy 2002-2022.” <https://www.klon.org.pl/#section1>

Indicator **Effective Civil Society Organizations (Environment)**

Question **To what extent do civil society organizations (CSOs) have the capacity to actively participate in the co-creation of relevant policies?**

30 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = All the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 8-6 = Most of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 5-3 = Few of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.
- 2-1 = None of the major CSOs active in the field have the capacity to shape public policies.

## Sweden

Score 10 Environmental civil society organizations (CSOs) are significant actors in the Swedish environmental policymaking process, much like other societal sectors. While several important initiatives exist, including the notable Fridays for Future started by Greta Thunberg (see [www.fridaysforfuture.org](http://www.fridaysforfuture.org)), the largest environmental CSO in Sweden is The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), which has been in operation since 1909. This member-based not-for-profit organization, like all Swedish CSOs, receives state funding in addition to membership fees. It boasts 200,000 members (Naturskyddsföreningen, 2024).

SSNC has local chapters and extensive international operations supported by Sida. The organization has five objectives:

1. Atmosphere: clean air and limited impact on the climate;
2. Land-based ecosystems: a viable nature in forests and on land;
3. Aquatic ecosystems: vibrant waters from spring to ocean;
4. People: environmentally sound individuals in sustainable societies; and
5. The association's resources: a strong and influential organization.

In pursuit of the last objective, SSNC collaborates with organizations in ten countries and four continents (Naturskyddsföreningen, 2024).

Citation:

Naturskyddsföreningen. 2024. "Our Prioritized Areas." <https://www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/our-prioritised-areas/>

## Germany

### Score 9

Environmental associations enjoy high levels of respect and trust in German society. According to a 2016 survey, 60% of German citizens reported having great or very great trust in environmental organizations. This compares with 69% for the police, 44% for trade unions, 29% for churches, and 18% for political parties (Polis Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Marktforschung mbH, 2016). Therefore, environmental CSOs are well-positioned to draw attention to environmental issues and inform the public about nature and environmental concerns.

Environmental CSOs are primarily funded by membership fees and donations, but they may also receive public funding (Bundesamt für Naturschutz, n.d.). The federal government finances certain projects conducted by environmental associations if they strengthen awareness and engagement for the protection of nature and the environment (Umweltbundesamt, 2023). For instance, the German branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) received €33 million in government funding from Germany and abroad during the 2020-2021 accounting year (Fuchs, 2022). Additionally, membership fees and donations to organizations active in environmental and nature protection are tax-deductible (LohnsteuerKompakt, n.d.).

Major German environmental CSOs, such as NABU, BUND, and WWF, have the organizational strength to independently formulate policies and often propose enhancements and amendments to existing laws. For example, a group of CSOs proposed a revised version of the Federal Forests Act (Bundeswaldgesetz) in fall 2023 (NABU, 2023). These organizations also contribute to the development and enhancement of the national sustainability strategy (Bundesregierung, 2023).

The German League for Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection (Deutscher Naturschutzring, DNR) serves as the principal umbrella organization for German environmental CSOs. It comprises approximately 100 member organizations, collectively reaching 11 million people (Global Nature Fund, n.d.). The DNR coordinates projects among its members, seeks to influence political discourse on environmental and climate protection, and advocates for a diverse, open-minded, and tolerant society (Deutscher Naturschutzring, n.d.). The largest German environmental CSO is the German Union for Nature Conservation (Naturschutzbund Deutschland, NABU), with more than 900,000 members. NABU is also part of the DNR (NABU, n.d.).

CSOs mainly have an advisory role in the political process in Germany. While environmental CSOs often propose new laws and regulations, these are merely suggestions, and the federal government and parliament are not obliged to consider them. The role of environmental CSOs in the policymaking process is further discussed under “Effective Involvement of Civil Society Organizations (Environment).”

## Citation:

Bundesamt für Naturschutz. n.d. "Einnahmestruktur großer Natur- und Umweltschutzverbände." <https://www.bfn.de/daten-und-fakten/einnahmestruktur-grosser-natur-und-umweltschutzverbaende>

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NABU. n.d. "Wir sind, was wir tun. Die Naturschutzmacher\*innen." <https://www.nabu.de/wir-ueber-uns/index.html>

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## Denmark

### Score 8

There is an increasing number of NGOs and associations dealing with environmental issues. Naturfredningsforeningen (The Danish Society for Nature Conservation) has a long tradition and has in recent years become more vocal on environmental issues. Eighteen green organizations have formed a forum – det grønne kontakudvalg – which coordinates and cooperates on environmental issues and participates in the debate and political process. CONCITO – the green think tank – aims to provide information on climate and policies to accelerate the green transition.

In the tradition of tripartite negotiations, the government recently initiated "green" tripartite negotiations to identify broad-based long-term solutions that would allow for the achievement of climate goals and the green transition while maintaining a competitive food-producing sector.

As part of the Economics Council, there is also the Environmental Economic Council (since 2007), which has 24 members representing the chairmanship (an independent group of academics), unions, employers, NGOs, the Danish government and independent economic experts. The members of the Environmental Economic Council meet once a year to discuss a report prepared by the chairmanship.

## Citation:

Concito. <https://concito.dk>

Danish Society for Nature Conservation. <https://www.dn.dk/home/english-page/>

## Netherlands

### Score 8

Green civil society action in the Netherlands follows three strategies. First, there are the very cooperative and policy-oriented actions from the vested nature and environmental organizations like Natuurmonumenten, Wereld Natuur Fonds, Provinciale Landschappen and Vogelbescherming. Jointly, they represent almost 2 million members, all of whom are paying donors. (Compare this to total political party membership in 2023 of just 379,000.) The Foundation of Nature and Environment Federations supports green civil organizations at the local and provincial levels (claiming 1,300 affiliated local groups) and influences policymaking at the provincial level (claiming participation in 728 policy projects across 13 provinces).

Second, green NGOs dissatisfied with the influence possible through the polder model, and which have witnessed one implementation delay after another, have successfully turned to the judiciary to force the government to finally take its climate goal commitments seriously. This group gained momentum after two successful legal challenges. Internationally famous was the Urgenda ruling of 20 December 2019, which forced the Dutch government to start implementing its CO2 emission promises in earnest. The initiators founded Urgenda as a network organization of so-called regional spinners that identify connect and boost sustainability projects in the areas of climate and energy, building, mobility, production, and agriculture and biodiversity. Another successful organization is Johan Vollenbroek's Mobilization for the Environment (MOB). MOB acts as a representative of resident and environmental organizations in the legal review of environmental permits, and in challenging violations of environmental regulations. MOB established its reputation through a successful legal challenge to the state's PFAS policy. More recently, MOB successfully challenged the government's failure to implement its nitrogen emission policy.

Irritated by this strategy, interpreted as leading to "rule by judges" ("dikastocracy"), parliament accepted a motion in February 2023 that urged the government to explore the possibility of complicating legal action by citizen interest organizations by imposing stricter rules governing representativeness. This motion was rejected as being incompatible with a unanimously adopted 2020 law on class action lawsuits, which allows interest groups to seek the enforcement of the government's own laws and regulations in court.

A third strategy is civil disobedience, in which organizations step up street demonstrations, causing a nuisance for other citizens as a consciousness-raising tactic. This strategy, particularly used by (traditionally) Greenpeace and more recently by Extinction Rebellion, follows a more general trend toward tougher street protests and demonstrations.

## Citation:

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## New Zealand

### Score 8

In New Zealand, public concerns about climate change and other environmental issues have grown considerably in recent years. One measure of this concern is the increasing support for environmental organizations. For example, both Greenpeace and Forest & Bird reported over \$9 million in donations in 2021 and 2022, respectively (Greenpeace Aotearoa 2021; Forest & Bird 2022).

There are differences among environmental organizations in terms of resources, funding, leadership and strategies. For example, larger, established organizations such as Greenpeace and Forest & Bird have comparatively formal structures that influence their governance and fundraising strategies. In contrast, organizations such as CANA and Save Happy Valley have more grassroots, devolved and informal structures. Additionally, some organizations, including Generation Zero and 350 Aotearoa, adopt hybrid approaches that combine both formal and informal structures. Some of these organizations, such as Greenpeace New Zealand and 350 Aotearoa, have links to global environmental movement actors (Kurian et al. 2022).

New Zealand's environmental movement has achieved significant successes over the years, leading to positive changes in policies and practices. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, widespread public protests against nuclear testing and the entry of nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed ships led to the enactment of legislation declaring New Zealand a nuclear-free zone. More recently, environmental interest groups played a key role in getting the Zero Carbon Act enacted in 2019, which makes it mandatory for governments to take action on climate (Hayward 2022).

Māori-led campaigns have also significantly influenced environmental politics. For Māori activists, the fight against climate change and ecological degradation is intertwined with long-standing struggles for decolonization and control over land

and resources (Kurian et al. 2022). Similar to other environmentalist actors, Māori groups have taken direct protest action to achieve their objectives, such as the occupation of Ihumātao from 2016 to 2020. Additionally, they have utilized the Waitangi Tribunal to reach negotiated settlements with the government. Many of these settlements included cultural redress aimed at restoring Māori communities' relationships with the environment and prescribed the establishment of Māori-led institutions with environmental policy and decision-making functions, such as the Waikato River Authority and the Te Urewera Board (Wheen 2022).

However, Māori have also raised concerns and held protests in response to a number of climate change initiatives that were introduced. For example, Iwi leaders (Māori tribal leaders) were not consulted on the oil and gas ban, and there was considerable resistance to the government's policy to lock up "significant natural areas" on private land, including Māori land. In combination, these initiatives were seen as the government "grabbing" Indigenous resources and land (Harman 2021).

Citation:

Forest & Bird. 2022. "Annual Report 2022." <https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/resources/forest-bird-annual-report-2022>

Greenpeace Aotearoa. 2021. "Annual Impact Report 2021." <https://www.greenpeace.org/aotearoa/publication/2021-annual-impact-report/>

Harman, R. 2021. "Maori Lead Protests Against Shaw's New Environmental Protection Regulations." Politik, June 9. <https://www.politik.co.nz/maori-lead-protests-against-shaws-new-environmental-protection-regulations/>

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## Slovenia

### Score 8

Several civil society organizations are active in the environmental sector. These organizations are fragmented, each covering different areas of environmental protection, and are often small with few members. Organizations that operate in the public interest can register with the relevant ministry. This status provides better opportunities to receive state funding. Currently, 44 organizations are registered with the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. These organizations are important actors in environmental protection.

In addition to purely national environmental organizations, there are also national sections of international environmental organizations in Slovenia, such as Green Peace Slovenia. Some national environmental organizations are also well-networked regionally. Alpe Adria Green, which aims for regional integration to solve common ecological problems, has managed to connect all the countries of the former

Yugoslavia, Italy, and Slovenia. Balkan River Defense is an organization that campaigns for clean rivers in the Balkans. Other environmental organizations form joint advocacy coalitions, such as Plan B for Slovenia, which has brought together 38 organizations active in sustainable development over the last ten years.

The activities of environmental organizations and other progressive civil society groups gained significant public attention during the so-called “referendum on waters,” when the then-government of Prime Minister Janša (SDS) attempted to liberalize legislation to reduce environmental protections. This would have allowed for increased economic activity, particularly construction projects in protected coastal and river areas.

Environmental organizations were also active in 2023, along with local citizen initiatives addressing specific problems. In March 2023, Youth for Climate Justice organized climate protests in Ljubljana and Maribor, urging authorities to take action against the environmental crisis. The construction of a CO2 sewer in the area of the Ljubljana aquifer sparked several protests. The project, taking place without the appropriate permits, could contaminate drinking water in the event of an accident or earthquake, as the sewer is located in the central part of the Kleče water protection area.

The 8th of March Institute, Eko Anhovo and Dolina Soče associations, and the Danes citizens’ initiative submitted more than 6,000 certified signatures to the National Assembly in September 2023 to propose an amendment to the Environmental Protection Act. This initiative arose primarily due to industrial pollution in Anhovo, where residents suffer from significant health problems and premature deaths. One of the aims of the proposed amendment was to ensure that emission standards for waste incineration are the same as those for co-incineration. The amendment made this possible, eliminating the previous disparity where cement plants faced less stringent requirements than incineration plants. The law was passed in 2024.

Citation:

Civicus/European Civic Monitor 2022. “Country Update: Slovenia. Overview of Recent Restrictions to Civic Freedoms.” <https://civicus.org/documents/SloveniaCountryBrief.6April2022.pdf>

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Plan B za Slovenijo 2024: Mreža Plan B za Slovenijo. <https://planbzaslovenijo.si>

Balkan River Defence: About. <https://balkanriverdefence.org/about/>

Mednarodni okoljski center Alpe Adria Green: Kdo smo – kaj delamo. <https://alpeadriagreen.org/kaj-delamo/>

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## Switzerland

Score 8

A plethora of environmental groups exist in Switzerland. Four large organizations – Greenpeace, Pro Natura, the Transport Club (Verkehrsclub der Schweiz) and WWF Switzerland – cooperate in the Alliance for the Environment (Umweltallianz; <https://umweltallianz.ch/>). Steven Eichenberger (2020; Mach et al 2020) has found that citizen groups – including environmental groups – are strongly represented in the political system. Their share of seats in various commissions and their overall influence are comparable to the influence wielded by trade unions. Evidently, such groups are very capable of cooperating (Alliance for the Environment). Bailer and Bütikofer echo Eichenberger’s finding that environmental groups are a strong parliamentary lobbying influence (Bailer and Bütikofer 2023: 187). In the most recent European Social Survey (wave 10), about one-quarter of all respondents claimed to volunteer for a not-for-profit or charitable organization – which is a comparatively high share.

In contrast to the case in almost all European democracies, interest organizations may exert influence using the opportunities afforded by direct democracy. They can trigger a referendum or suggest a new constitutional article by way of a so-called initiative. For more on the institution of direct democracy, see Vatter (2018) and Stadelmann and Leemann (2023). This is a very powerful lever for citizen groups and interest associations.

In this regard, these organizations have substantially more power than comparable organizations in other countries. For example, the environmentally focused Transport Club (Verkehrsclub) has successfully collected signatures for a referendum against a massive motorway expansion. While environmental CSOs have considerable means and access to the political system, their concrete influence on policies remains limited, as Swiss domestic climate-change policy is in line with a typical industrial country perspective, and is strongly influenced by industry (Ingold/Pflieger 2016).

Citation:

Bailer, Stefanie, and Sarah Bütikofer. 2023. “Parliament.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Swiss Politics*, eds. Patrick Emmenegger, Flavia Fossati, Silja Häusermann, Yannis Papadopoulos, Pascal Sciarini, and Adrian Vatter. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 174–194. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192871787.013.9>

Eichenberger, Steven. 2020. “The Rise of Citizen Groups within the Administration and Parliament in Switzerland.” *Swiss Political Science Review* 26: 206–227. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/spsr.12394>

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Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27043-8\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27043-8_4)

Stadelmann-Steffen, Isabelle, and Lucas Leemann. 2023. "Direct Democracy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Swiss Politics*, eds. Patrick Emmenegger, Flavia Fossati, Silja Häusermann, Yannis Papadopoulos, Pascal Sciarini, and Adrian Vatter. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 156–173. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192871787.013.8>

Vatter, Adrian. 2018. *Das politische System der Schweiz*. 3rd ed. Baden-Baden: Nomos (UTB).

## Australia

Score 7

The discussion regarding CSOs in labor, capital, and social welfare also applies to environmental CSOs. Major environmental CSOs are active, capable, and influential, but their influence is not consistent or guaranteed, depending on a favorable opportunity structure, particularly who is in power and how open or amenable they are to the CSO's activism.

Environmental activism has seen long-term growth in civil society participation (Gulliver 2022). The number of environmental CSOs has increased, and they have diversified their focus on specific environmental issues or representing particular communities. This movement has been crucial in shifting the mainstream view on the importance of climate change and the need for government action to combat human contributions to global warming. However, their effectiveness was limited under the previous center-right Coalition Government. Their influence has become more discernible since the center-left Labor Party came to power in 2022.

Citation:

Gulliver, R. 2022. "How Australia's Expanding Environmental Movement is Breaking the Climate Action Deadlock in Politics." *The Conversation* June 9. <https://theconversation.com/how-australias-expanding-environmental-movement-is-breaking-the-climate-action-deadlock-in-politics-183825>

## Canada

Score 7

The policy capacity of non-governmental (NGO) or civil society organizations (CSOs) in any area of policymaking can vary widely depending on the size, focus, and resources of each organization. Adequate funding and resources are crucial for NGO/CSOs to build and maintain their ability to influence policy. Larger NGOs with significant resources, staffing, and expertise may have greater policy capacity. Financial stability, in particular, enables organizations to invest in staff training, research initiatives, and advocacy campaigns. Funding sources may include grants, donations, and partnerships. These organizations often have dedicated policy teams, researchers, and advocacy specialists.

CSOs with strong research capacity and subject-matter expertise are better equipped to analyze policy issues, propose solutions, and engage in evidence-based advocacy than those with weaker capabilities. Some NGOs may collaborate with academic institutions or experts to enhance their research capabilities. The ability to collaborate in this way and form strategic alliances with other NGOs, civil society groups, and stakeholders can enhance an organization's policy influence.

Networking allows these organizations to share resources and information and amplify their collective voice. Issues that resonate with the public, policymakers, or specific interest groups may attract more attention and support. Public awareness campaigns, media outreach, and social media engagement are all part of such organizations' policy advocacy efforts.

In the environmental sphere, Canada has several large, influential, and effective civil society organizations, including some with a global reach. Major national environmental organizations in Canada include Greenpeace Canada, part of the global Greenpeace network founded in Vancouver after protests surrounding a U.S. nuclear test in Amchitka, Alaska, in 1971. It is one of the country's most prominent environmental advocacy groups, campaigning on issues like climate change, protecting oceans and forests, and promoting renewable energy.

Other prominent and well-resourced civil society organizations include the Sierra Club Canada, a branch of the U.S.-based Sierra Club. This organization focuses on protecting wilderness areas and ecosystems and works on issues related to national parks, endangered species, and sustainable development. Similarly, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Canada is the Canadian arm of the Swiss-based global conservation organization, concentrating on wildlife protection, sustainable food sources, and curbing threats from habitat loss and climate change.

Based in Quebec, Equiterre is another prominent organization promoting environmental and social justice issues, with campaigns around sustainable agriculture, transportation, and consumption habits. Its former director is now the federal Minister of the Environment. Smaller organizations, like the David Suzuki Foundation – named after a renowned Canadian environmentalist and TV host – have a significant media presence despite their size.

These large national groups often work with more regionally focused environmental organizations across Canada's provinces and territories. They play an important role in shaping environmental policies and raising public awareness on key ecological issues facing the country.

Citation:

Savoie, Donald J. 1999. *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

## Finland

### Score 7

Finland boasts a large number of civil society associations, societies and groups working to protect the environment. The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC) is the oldest and most impactful environmental organization in Finland. With 150 local associations and a multitude of engaged members across the country, its collective efforts are dedicated to halting biodiversity loss and

addressing global warming. FANC has over 30,000 members and 15 district organizations nationwide.

The government regularly consults environmental organizations. However, there are constant tensions between the viewpoints expressed by these organizations and those of various industries. The most heated debates concern the use of natural resources, specifically forests and mineral resources. Environmental organizations also clash with Metsähallitus – the organization that governs state-owned natural resources. The state owns 35% of all the forests in Finland.

The disputes over the use of natural resources extend to the academic level as well. Industries and environmental organizations do not share the same knowledge base. Instead, they constantly criticize each other for publishing biased information.

Citation:  
<https://www.sll.fi/en/>

## Ireland

### Score 7

Irish environmental CSOs exert pressure on the legislature and government through pressure politics, pluralism, protest and prefiguration. Some are better integrated into the policy formulation process through historical quasi-corporatism, with the Irish Environmental Network representing environmental CSOs. Additionally, some large CSOs participate directly in government policy processes, often overlapping informally with Green Party membership and engaging in COP-like processes to monitor the implementation of the Irish Climate Action Plan. Few CSOs leverage their own academic staff or think tanks, or engage in collaborative efforts with academic institutions, but many employ a research or policy officer. Wagner and Ylä-Anttila (2018) examined the Irish climate policy network and concluded that domestic NGOs are weak, with powerful economic actors and government departments dominating, a view supported by Flynn (2003). However, it can be argued that the Environmental Pillar has become more effective at policy influencing in recent years. Other CSOs engage in different theories of change, including ruptural and symbiotic approaches (Murphy 2023).

Citation:  
Murphy, M. P. 2023. *Creating an Ecosocial Welfare State*. Bristol: Policy Press.  
Wagner, P., and T. Ylä-Anttila. 2018. "Who Got Their Way? Advocacy Coalitions and the Irish Climate Change Law." *Environmental Politics* 27 (5): 872–891.  
Flynn, B. 2003. "Much Talk but Little Action? 'New' Environmental Policy Instruments in Ireland." *Environmental Politics* 12 (1): 137–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/714000656>

## Lithuania

### Score 7

Environmental CSOs have become increasingly active and visible in policy debates in Lithuania. They participated actively in the preparation of the long-term Lithuania

2050 strategy. They also react on an ad hoc basis to initiatives from the government and other societal groups, such as farmers.

In addition to benefiting from donations of up to 1.2% of personal income tax from taxpayers, they also receive project-based funding from state institutions and EU programs. For example, the Baltic Environmental Forum received funding from the EU LIFE program and the Lithuanian government for its projects such as Natura Lit. Environmental CSOs are well connected to similar organizations in other European countries. The Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labor coordinates state funding for NGOs and provides relevant information on its website.

Citation:

Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labor. "NGO policy (in Lithuanian)." <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/nevyriausybinu-organizaciju-politika/nvo-teikiamas-finansavimas/nvo-teikiamas-finansavimas-2023>  
Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania. <https://bef.lt/?lang=en>

## Norway

### Score 7

In Norway, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in environmental protection is intrinsically linked to energy production. Since the mid-1960s, accelerated development of hydroelectric facilities has led to the redirection of natural rivers and waterfalls into pipelines and dams, often to the marked protest of environmentalists and agricultural interests. A conflict between economic growth and the preservation of nature has since dominated the relationship between CSOs and the government. An important actor is the 150-year-old Norwegian Trekking Organization, which has consistently voiced the interests of pristine nature (DNT, 2023).

The discovery and exploitation of significant oil and gas resources on the Norwegian continental shelf intensified the tension between economic and preservation concerns. Questions about the pace and areas of exploitation heightened the conflict between industrial interests, jobs, and an alliance of environmentalists and conventional fishers. A third layer of conflict emerged in the tension between nature preservation and climate needs, illustrated by current debates about the location of windmills. The push for sustainable energy production requires more renewable energy from hydro, wind, and solar sources, which in turn necessitates grid extensions. These developments threaten the traditional use of land for recreational and agricultural purposes.

The environmental CSOs are typically underfunded, reliant on membership fees and donations. The impact of their activities on public policy is mainly indirect, achieved through organizing protests that receive substantial media attention. When protests influence policy development, they have so far typically led to postponements of planned projects or procedural changes rather than a reevaluation of policy goals. An example is the massive protests against onshore wind farms in 2019, which resulted

in the government shelving plans for a national search for “appropriate areas” for wind farms and instead calling for better coordination between the Energy Regulatory Authority (which issues operation licenses) and municipalities’ area planning processes. This aligns with other observations about the potential dilemmas that arise from the principle of local self-determination.

In 2021, Norway’s supreme court – the country’s highest court – determined that some wind power plants were violating the South Sami people’s human right to cultural practices by hindering reindeer herding. As a result, Sami people and other activists blocked entry to the Ministry of Oil and Energy in 2023. In December of that year, a compromise was adopted: the windmills would stand for 25 years, and the Sami people would have the right to veto future expansions. This demonstrates that smaller actors can also influence policies regarding climate and environmental matters.

Citation:

DNT. 2023. “About the Norwegian Trekking Association (DNT).” <https://www.dnt.no/om-dnt/english/about-the-norwegian-trekking-association/>

## United States

### Score 7

The environmental movement has a long history in the United States (McCright et al. 2014). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, various groups (e.g., the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society) were formed. The movement had a second wave in the 1960s and 1970s, which saw significant legislative advances. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which remains the premier federal agency for the management of the natural environment, was established in 1970 by executive order by President Richard Nixon and subsequently placed on statutory footing by Congress (Price 2021). The agency enforces environmental regulations (e.g., regarding air, water, hazardous waste) and funds environmental research in over two dozen federal laboratories.

The 1970s was a decade of significant climate legislation. These include the Clean Air Act of 1970, the Clean Water Act of 1972, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA), the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA), and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) (Turner 2018).

Today, there are a significant number of environmental CSOs with sizable public memberships. The National Wildlife Federation, for example, has over 4 million members, while the National Resources Defense Council has 2.5 million members. These organizations, however, face stiff competition from industry, which can afford high-powered lobbyists and lawyers to advocate for their interests in courts and in the corridors of Congress and state legislatures. In 2022, for example, the Supreme Court ruled against the EPA’s Clean Power Plan as an overreach of its statutory

authority. The consequence of this ruling was to limit the EPA's power to regulate emissions (Gonzalez 2019).

Citation:

George Gonzalez. 2019. "The Obama Administration's Global Warming Legacy: Going With the Flow and the Politics of Failure." In *Looking Back on President Obama's Legacy*, ed. W. Rich. Palgrave.

Aaron McCright, Chenyang Xiao, and Riley Dunlap. 2014. "Political Polarization on Support for Government Spending on Environmental Protection in the USA, 1974-2012." *Social Science Research*.

James Turner. 2018. *The Republican Reversal: Conservatives and the Environment from Nixon to Trump*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

John Price. 2021. *The Last Liberal Republican*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.

## Belgium

Score 6

Belgium provides public funding to various civil society organizations (CSOs), and a significant proportion of the workforce is employed in the nonprofit sector. Contributions to CSOs are tax-deductible, with 45% of the amount given being deductible, up to a maximum of 10% of net annual revenues or €392,200. Despite this support, the capacity of CSOs (excluding unions) to design and shape public policies is rather limited. However, CSOs are often consulted by parliamentary commissions and the government, where they can influence the decision-making process (Squevin and Aubin 2021).

Belgium has been significantly influenced by widespread awareness of climate issues. Social movements have emerged in various forms, some more consensual with broad support from the population and politicians but with wide-ranging demands that made political follow-up vague and difficult. Others, more radical, have been less widely supported by the population and often poorly regarded by politicians.

In 2018-2019, young people were at the forefront of the citizen's climate movement, with weekly demonstrations initiated by "climate express" and "coalition climate," supported by young students, propelling environmental concerns to the top of election debates.

With the COVID-19 crisis, the war in Ukraine, and other international events somewhat slowing these largely consensual social movements, the more radical fringe of the climate movement has continued the struggle through civil disobedience actions, such as occupations of zones to be defended in Arlon and blockades of TotalEnergies depots. Meanwhile, the marches continue, though less frequently.

Citation:

<https://www.revuepolitique.be/le-mouvement-climat-doit-assumer-son-aile-radicale/>

<https://www.lalibre.be/planete/environnement/2023/05/10/code-rouge-revient-et-prevoit-des-actions-contre-engie-notre-dependance-aux-combustibles-fossiles-a-des-consequences-devastatrices-KIR2UXWCHJDMXP4R6IGOV7ODSE/>

climat.be

Squevin, P., and D. Aubin. 2023. "Policy Advice Utilization in Belgian Ministerial Cabinets: The Contingent Importance of Internal and External Sources of Advice." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 89 (4): 1012-1029.



## Estonia

### Score 6

Nonprofit CSOs acting in the public interest may receive tax benefits, including deductions from donations and membership fees. Eligible CSOs are listed in a government decree, updated annually. Only a few environment-focused CSOs – such as those focused on animal welfare or forest education – appear on this list, and they are generally not influential.

Organizationally, environmental CSOs are not strong; they have very limited financial and human resources with which to formulate policy proposals or commission expert advice. None of the CSOs in the environmental sector has its own research analysis unit or institute. Unlike the social welfare sector, cooperation between environmental CSOs and ministries is nonstructured and overshadowed by strong for-profit interest groups, such as energy firms and the forest industry (see details from the website of the Ministry of Climate, Lobby activities). In this vein, a cooperation platform, Rohetiiger (Green Tiger) – which unites over 80 companies – deserves special attention due to its close links to the Ministry of Climate.

According to effective regulations and norms, the government is obliged to respond to policy proposals put forward by major CSOs and engage communities in the process of drafting or revising existing regulations. However, this rule is not always followed, a fact that has led to several public protests and social media movements. The protection of forests is a primary concern for citizens; some of these actions have resulted in court cases against the State Forest Management Center (Telegram 18 July 2022).

#### Citation:

Ministry of Climate. 2023. "<https://kliimaministeerium.ee/lobitegevus>"

Telegram. 2022. "Kohus hakkab esmakordselt hindama süüdistust RMK seaduserikkumistes kogukonna kaasamisel." July 18. <https://www.telegram.ee/eesti/kohus-hakkab-esmakordselt-hindama-suudistust-rmk-seaduserikkumistes-kogukonna-kaasamisel>

## Israel

### Score 6

Israel's major environmental organizations are very active in the policy sphere. Most environmental initiatives, such as the Bottle Deposit Law and Clear Air Law, were initiated by civil society organizations. Since environmental issues are not high on the government's political agenda, these organizations are the main policy entrepreneurs in the field. They also have research departments and expertise, which enables them to formulate policy proposals. In addition, they are seen as non-partisan, which ensures broad public support for their activities.

However, because environmental issues are not high on the political agenda, civil society organizations often fail to promote their goals and the public participates relatively little in their activities.



Environmental organizations include several large groups and a few smaller ones. In most cases, these organizations collaborate on and form coalitions around environmental issues. There is also a relatively clear division of labor among the organizations based on each one's resources. Some organizations focus more on lobbying, while others focus on public education and grassroots activities. Additionally, an Israeli think tank supports environmental activities, trains activists, and provides tools and knowledge to enhance environmental efforts. This think tank collaborates with local authorities and participates in policymaking.

Citation:

Heshel Organization <https://heshel.org.il/>

## Italy

Score 6

By Law 8/1986, Italy boasts a network of 81 nationwide environmental CSOs officially recognized by the Ministry of Environment. These organizations are pivotal in safeguarding the environment and addressing pressing environmental challenges. Among these CSOs, several stand out for their significant contributions, including Legambiente, Greenpeace, WWF, and FAI. With their deep expertise, vast networks, and dedicated volunteers, these established environmental organizations play a relevant role in advocating for sustainable practices and environmental policies in Italy. They are recognized as stakeholders by the government and are regularly consulted during the policy process, albeit in a somewhat ritual manner. In addition to these established organizations, less structured environmental movements have emerged recently. Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion have gained significant prominence among these movements, particularly among young people.

## Latvia

Score 6

Environmental CSOs face the same financial, staff, and organizational challenges as all CSOs in Latvia. Some strong environmental CSOs can provide policy analysis for the wider public and the responsible ministry.

The trends indicate an increasing openness among the population to engage in environmental protection. Civic Alliance reports that only 26% of the population participated in ecological clean-up efforts in 2018 (Civic Alliance Latvia, 2022). Therefore, the capacity of CSOs to mobilize the population largely depends on the public image of environmental CSOs and the general perception of the issue.

Citation:

Civic Alliance Latvia. 2023. NVO sektora monitorings 2023. [https://nvo.lv/uploads/nvo\\_sektora\\_monitorings\\_2023\\_pap181.pdf](https://nvo.lv/uploads/nvo_sektora_monitorings_2023_pap181.pdf)

Civic Alliance Latvia. 2022. "Resources of Civil Society Organisations: Current Situation and Needs 2022." [https://nvo.lv/uploads/cso\\_resources\\_current\\_situation\\_and\\_needs\\_2022.pdf](https://nvo.lv/uploads/cso_resources_current_situation_and_needs_2022.pdf)

## Portugal

### Score 6

Portugal has a specific legislative framework in place to support CSOs with an environmental focus, specifically non-governmental environmental organizations (ONGAs), under Lei n.º 35/98. This law defines their status, including governmental financial and technical assistance, rights to partake in the development of relevant policies and environmental legislation, and opportunities for radio and television broadcasting.

Major environmental CSOs, including ZERO, Quercus, and the Portuguese Association for Environmental Education (ASPEA), have not significantly impacted policy formulation. Recently, protest-based and youth-led movements, such as Climáximo and the School Strike for Climate (Greve Climática Estudantil), have emerged and engaged in frontline activism against climate change. While they generate media attention through their protests, they do not participate in policy formulation.

Despite the growing prominence of climate change and environmental protection in contemporary society, Portuguese citizens exhibit a noticeable lack of participation in organizations and associations dedicated to these issues. However, a recent 2023 study reveals a paradox: While these environmental associations are deemed trustworthy by the population, with about 40% of respondents rating them as the most reliable – the only category to surpass the average, compared to trade unions and others (Lisi & Oliveira, 2023) – active involvement remains surprisingly low (Serra-Silva & Oliveira, 2023).

#### Citation:

Organizações Não-Governamentais do Ambiente. 1998. Lei n.º 35/98, de 18 de Julho. [https://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei\\_mostra\\_articulado.php?nid=755&tabela=leis&so\\_miolo=](https://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid=755&tabela=leis&so_miolo=)

Lisi, M., and Oliveira, R. 2023. "Interest Groups, Political Representation and Citizen Preferences." In Lisi, M., ed. *Interest Groups and Political Representation in Portugal and Beyond*. London: Routledge, 89-116.

Serra-Silva, S., and Oliveira, R. 2023. "Associational Involvement and Political Participation in Portugal: Insights from a Longitudinal and Comparative Study." In Lisi, M., ed. *Interest Groups and Political Representation in Portugal and Beyond*. London: Routledge, 47-88.

## Slovakia

### Score 6

The situation for environmental CSOs in Slovakia parallels that in the economy, labor, and social welfare sectors. The most prominent environmental CSO is Slovak Greenpeace, followed by Sloboda Zvierat and LO Vlk (*Analyza socioekonomického prínosu neziskového sektora a stavu a trendov rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti*, 2020). Environmental CSOs, such as Ekofórum, which comprises 22 member organizations, collaborate to represent the sector in the Government Council for CSOs.

Environmental CSOs face challenges in influencing government policies and securing widespread public support due to differing opinions and the limited willingness of citizens to support environmental protection (Analýza socioekonomického prínosu neziskového sektora a stavu a trendov rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti, 2020). While they have significantly improved environmental protection and awareness, their activities sometimes encounter public opposition, particularly when they affect daily life.

A prominent issue is the debate over brown bear management. Some experts, primarily from environmental CSOs, argue that the bear population is low and that the problem lies with human behavior. In contrast, farmers and hunters advocate for regulating bear numbers due to increasing encounters in villages and cities. This debate was a significant topic in the 2023 election campaign, with the current Fico government promising regulation (Plávalová, 2023).

Citation:

Analýza socioekonomického prínosu neziskového sektora a stavu a trendov rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti. 2020. Bratislava: Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre rozvoj občianskej spoločnosti.

Plávalová, B. 2023. "Odstrel medveďov závisí od výsledku volieb. Ako sa k nemu stavajú jednotlivé strany?" <https://domov.sme.sk/c/23195395/parlamentne-volby-2023-politicke-strany-medved-kampan.html>

## Spain

Score 6

Environmental interest associations in Spain also face challenges in influencing political decision-making. Major groups in climate policy include Greenpeace, WWF, Amigos de la Tierra, Ecologistas en Acción, and SeoBirdLife. However, these organizations have gradually gained technical competence and increasingly rely on academic expertise and specialized publications to influence public opinion and policymakers.

While the general population supports environmental protection, there is little active participation in civil society organizations' activities. Leading environmental groups benefit from their international or European umbrella organizations to put forward policy proposals. During the review period, CSOs participated in consultations on the design of government environmental strategies. Major CSOs collaborated to urge the government to accelerate an ecologically and socially just transition and to use the EU Council presidency to push for ambitious climate goals during COP28.

## United Kingdom

Score 6

The UK has an abundance of NGOs and other entities that contribute to policy development in environmental matters. The term "major CSOs" does not fully capture how these capacities are exercised in the UK. These organizations often have charitable status and access to government through various channels. Examples of prominent entities include (though this list is not exhaustive):

The Green Alliance: This organization covers a range of environmental research and acts as the secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Environment. It embraces technical research as well as the study of political leadership.

E3G: Highly ranked in the University of Pennsylvania ratings of think tanks, E3G is judged to be foremost in the UK and second in Europe. Its focus is on climate change, and it claims to “work closely with like-minded partners in government, politics, civil society, science, the media, public interest foundations, and elsewhere.”

University Research Groups: These include the Grantham Institute at LSE, the Georgina Mace Centre for the Living Planet at Imperial College London, and the Conservation Research Institute at the University of Cambridge.

While many relevant groups support the UK government’s “net zero” commitments, significant doubts remain about how well the broad strategy translates into concrete measures (Sasse et al. 2022).

Citation:

Sasse, T., Rutter, J., Shephard, M., and Norris, E. 2020. Net Zero: How Government Can Meet Its Climate Change Target. London: Institute for Government. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/net-zero>

## Austria

### Score 5

International organizations, such as Greenpeace or WWF, have long held an established place in Austria’s CSO landscape. Donations to these organizations are tax deductible.

While civil society-based environmental policy has long been dominated by established and well-known organizations rooted in the late twentieth century, new initiatives and organizations have emerged more recently. In 2019, a new alliance called “Klimaprotest.at” was formed, comprising new movements and environmental CSOs. This alliance played important roles in building networks and coordinating protests (Simsa et al. 2021).

Since 2019, Austria, like many other countries, has witnessed major public protests against climate change and the government’s climate policies. In late September 2019, up to 150,000 people across Austria protested against climate change and demanded new anti-climate change policies. This movement also sparked new organizational collaborations between different groups, leading to the creation of “umbrella organizations.”

In recent years, new-style environmental or anti-climate-change movements, such as the Austrian branch of “The Last Generation,” have drawn considerable public

attention through various public protest activities. Despite demands for a “climate law” and immediate government action to combat climate change, there have been very limited tangible effects.

Many observers agree that environmental issues were largely sidelined by the pandemic and economic concerns. More specifically, many believe that the concrete involvement of environmental CSOs in drafting laws and governmental orders has been rather limited.

Citation:

Simsa, R., Mayer, F., Muckenhuber, S., and Schweinschwaller, T. 2021. Rahmenbedingungen für die Zivilgesellschaft in Österreich. Berlin: Maecenata Institut für Philanthropie und Zivilgesellschaft. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-73615-2>

[https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/bauen\\_wohnen\\_und\\_umwelt/oeffentlichkeitsbeteiligung-im-umweltbereich/umweltbezogene-plaene-programme-und-politiken.html](https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/bauen_wohnen_und_umwelt/oeffentlichkeitsbeteiligung-im-umweltbereich/umweltbezogene-plaene-programme-und-politiken.html)

[https://boku.ac.at/fileadmin/data/H03000/H73000/H73200/ReSciPI/Diskussionspapier\\_ReSciPI\\_Klimapolitikberatung\\_in\\_%C3%96sterreich.pdf](https://boku.ac.at/fileadmin/data/H03000/H73000/H73200/ReSciPI/Diskussionspapier_ReSciPI_Klimapolitikberatung_in_%C3%96sterreich.pdf)

Daniel, Antje. 2022. “Jung und Widerständig. Die Fridays for Future in Wien.” In *Das Politische in der Demokratiebildung*, eds. Susanne Reitmair-Juárez and Dirk Lange, 136-159. *Wochenschau Wissenschaft*.

<https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/internationaler-klimastreik-wo-in-oesterreich-demonstriert-wird/402593861>

## Czechia

### Score 5

Environmental groups have historically exerted limited influence on national-level environmental policy due to restricted institutional channels to the government, sporadic access to parliamentarians, and evolving consultation processes at the ministerial level. Nevertheless, they are represented in some government advisory committees.

The Green Circle serves as an illustrative example, dedicated to monitoring laws and policies and coordinating legislative campaigns. On the transnational level, the Rainbow Movement (Hnutí Duha) is part of the EU umbrella organization Friends of the Earth. It has 42 permanent employees and an annual budget of CZK 21 million; half of this funding comes from 6,089 individual donors, a quarter from foreign foundations, and a very small amount from Czech state organs. It claims as its main success for 2023 the parliamentary discussion of a law on community energy.

Environmental groups have some influence, particularly when supporting the application of EU directives and raising public awareness on specific issues, such as the poisoning of the Bečva river, referenced under Effective Legislative Interventions.

Citation:

<https://hnutiduha.cz/>

## Greece

**Score 5** The Greek constitution mandates state protection of the natural environment and citizens' rights to enjoy it (Article 24).

However, most environmental CSOs lack the organizational strength to influence environmental policy, apart from a few local branches of international NGOs like Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund.

Representatives of environmental CSOs are invited to present their views at sessions of the parliament's "Special Permanent Committee on Environmental Protection." These CSOs also participate in public deliberations on prospective environmental policies launched by the relevant ministry before submitting a bill to parliament.

Few CSOs have the financial and human resources needed to shape environmental public policies. This responsibility primarily falls to the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Although attempts to organize collective action on sustainable development issues exist, they are often incipient and periodic (Hellenic Platform for Development, 2024).

As a result, while many CSOs are active in environmental protection, their activities are often localized, and they do not contribute significantly to the formulation of environmental policies. Given Greece's vulnerability to climate change, the relative weakness of environmental CSOs in this Mediterranean country is surprising (van Versendaal 2023).

Citation:

Hellenic Platform for Development. 2024. "<https://sdgwatcheurope.org/hellenic-platform-greece/>"

Van Versendaal, H. 2023. "Why Green Parties in Greece Are Failing to Bloom." *Green European Journal*, August 4. <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/why-greeces-green-parties-are-failing-to-bloom/>

## Hungary

**Score 4** Like other CSOs in Hungary, those focusing on the environment and sustainability face hostile legal challenges and are targeted by laws, regulations and campaigns critical of such organizations. Laws including the Lex NGO and the Sovereignty Protection Act (SPA) create a legally unstable environment. While Hungary's environmental policies are less politicized than others, such as those addressing migration, the government is not a leader in the area of environmental sustainability. There is a strong bias toward fossil fuels and nuclear energy, coupled with efforts to develop foreign policy ties with Russia, to which Budapest is bound concerning gas, oil and fuel rods for the Nuclear Energy Plant in Paks.

Many CSOs in the environmental field are funded by foreign donors, making them particularly vulnerable to the Lex NGO and the SPA. Additionally, the close

involvement of Fidesz cadres with the construction industry often leads to clashes surrounding new construction projects, such as those around Lake Balaton. In this context, the ruling party views environmental CSOs as a threat, significantly reducing these organizations' advocacy capacities. Consequently, many environmental CSOs collaborate with other CSOs to address the democratic decline in Hungary. EU direct support to CSOs in the member states – through the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) program – is extremely helpful as a means of circumventing the obstacles established by the government and countering the monopoly held by government-friendly NGOs (GONGOs) on access to funds.

The most salient environmental conflicts during 2023 revolved around establishing new battery plants to serve the electric vehicle industry at several sites across the country, mostly financed by Asian companies. Public concerns centered on these factories' potential failure to meet pollution requirements and possible depletion of resources such as fresh water. Despite the minimal impact of national-level CSOs, several local grassroots initiatives have emerged near potential sites, such as the Mothers of Mikepércs for the Environment Association. These spontaneous civic groups have organized influential protest events and mobilized public opinion against battery plants, although they did not secure any concessions from local authorities (Inotai 2023).

Citation:

Inotai, Edit. 2023. "Locals Fear Battery Wasteland Nightmare in Hungary." *Balkan Insight*, October 19. <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/10/19/locals-fear-battery-wasteland-nightmare-in-hungary>

## Japan

### Score 4

The number of nonprofit organizations (NPO) specializing in the protection of the natural environment in Japan is 13,246. Environmental pollution provided the first impetus for the development of Japanese civil society in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1993, the government established the Japan Fund for Global Environment, which supports environmental conservation projects proposed by different, mainly local, NPOs.

Civil society organizations in the environmental field are generally small, and lack a national presence or the capacity to influence policy. However, in the case of nuclear power, citizen movements through class-action law suits have been successful in preventing idle power plants from being restarted following the Fukushima crisis. For this reason, the contribution of nuclear power to overall production is far lower than the government's stated goal (Koppenborg 2021). It will also make it more difficult to expand nuclear power production as a key method for achieving decarbonization. Government plans foresee a 46% reduction in greenhouse gases between 2020 and 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050. Unlike in the past, when energy policy was the realm of the so-called nuclear village (*genshiryoku mura*) – a pro-nuclear nexus of big business, bureaucrats, and politicians – environmental

legislative processes are now somewhat more transparent and open to different viewpoints.

Following 2011, there were widespread anti-nuclear demonstrations with participation numbers reminiscent of the student protests of the 1960s and 1970s. Paradoxically, the focus on the anti-nuclear movement may have made Japanese civil society organizations less interested in the topic of global warming.

Citation:

Bochorodycz, Beata. 2023. *Fukushima and Civil Society: The Japanese Anti-Nuclear Movement from a Socio-Political Perspective*. London and New York: Routledge.

Cabinet Office, Government of Japan. 2023. “Tokutei Hieiri Katsudô Hôjin no Katsudô bun’ya ni tsuite” [On the Activities of Specified Non-profit Corporations]. <https://www.npo-homepage.go.jp/about/toukei-info/ninshou-bunyabetsu>

Environmental Restoration and Conservation Agency. “Japan Fund for Global Environment.” <https://www.erca.go.jp/jfge/english/about/background.html>

Koppenborg, Florentine. 2021. “Nuclear Restart Politics: How the ‘Nuclear Village’ Lost Policy Implementation Power.” *Social Science Japan Journal* 24 (1): 115–135.

## Poland

### Score 4

The Polish environmental movement comprises various organizations, including associations, foundations, ecological clubs, civil coalitions and naturalist societies. Many of these organizations are designated as public benefit organizations. The landscape includes national branches of international groups, such as Greenpeace Polska and WWF Polska, alongside numerous national entities. As of 2022, environmental organizations accounted for 13% of all civil society organizations, a proportion that has remained stable since 2002 (Klon, 2023). While the Green Party’s political influence remains marginal, grassroots green activism – often localized – has gained increasing traction in recent years.

Environmental CSOs can access public funding, and membership dues are tax-deductible. From 2022 – 2025, the main funding initiative for the sector was the Regional Support Program for Environmental Education, sponsored by the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management. However, many organizations have had to seek alternative financing sources, including public donations and external grants.

Major environmental organizations have established analytical units, though permanent think tanks are rare, with the Institute for Sustainable Development being an exception. These units often include policy experts and collaborate with academic institutions. Common activities include producing reports, drafting position papers, issuing open letters and providing commentary on legal acts. These organizations also collaborate within larger networks like the Polish Green Network (Polska Zielona Sieć), the Federation of Greens Association “GAJA” (Związek



Stowarzyszeń Federacja Zielonych “GAJA”) and the Climate Coalition (Koalicja Klimatyczna).

Despite their efforts, the input from these CSOs is often overlooked in major policy initiatives.

Citation:

Klon/Javor. 2023. “Kondycja organizacji pozarządowych. Trendy 2002-2022.” <https://www.klon.org.pl/#section1>

The Institute for Sustainable Development. 2023. <https://www.pine.org.pl/english/>

<https://civic-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Civic-Space-Report-2023-POLAND-European-Civic-Forum.pdf>

## France

### Score 3

There has been considerable activism in the environmental field these past few years. French youth mobilized strongly in 2019’s Fridays for Future movement. In the following years, French chapters of Extinction Rebellion and Last Generation appeared.

Perhaps the most visible mobilization took place in opposition to the planned construction of a water reservoir near the town of Sainte-Soline in the department of Deux-Sèvres. Water reservoirs are viewed critically by environmental associations, but also by many locals, due to their consequences on the local environment. This movement led to two major demonstrations – accompanied by a massive police presence – in October 2022 and March 2023. Both demonstrations turned out to be very violent, while protesters accused the police of violently attacking them.

Following this demonstration, Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin ordered the dissolution of one of the most active movements behind the mobilization. The construction of the Deux-Sèvres reservoir was eventually authorized by the French administrative high court – the Conseil d’Etat – in April 2023.

These examples show that beyond a certain power of mobilization against public projects – mostly without success – environmental CSOs do not have substantial capacity to cooperate, form alliances, or help draft or shape public policies in this field. Nor have governments or the administration shown any willingness to grant them such a role.

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