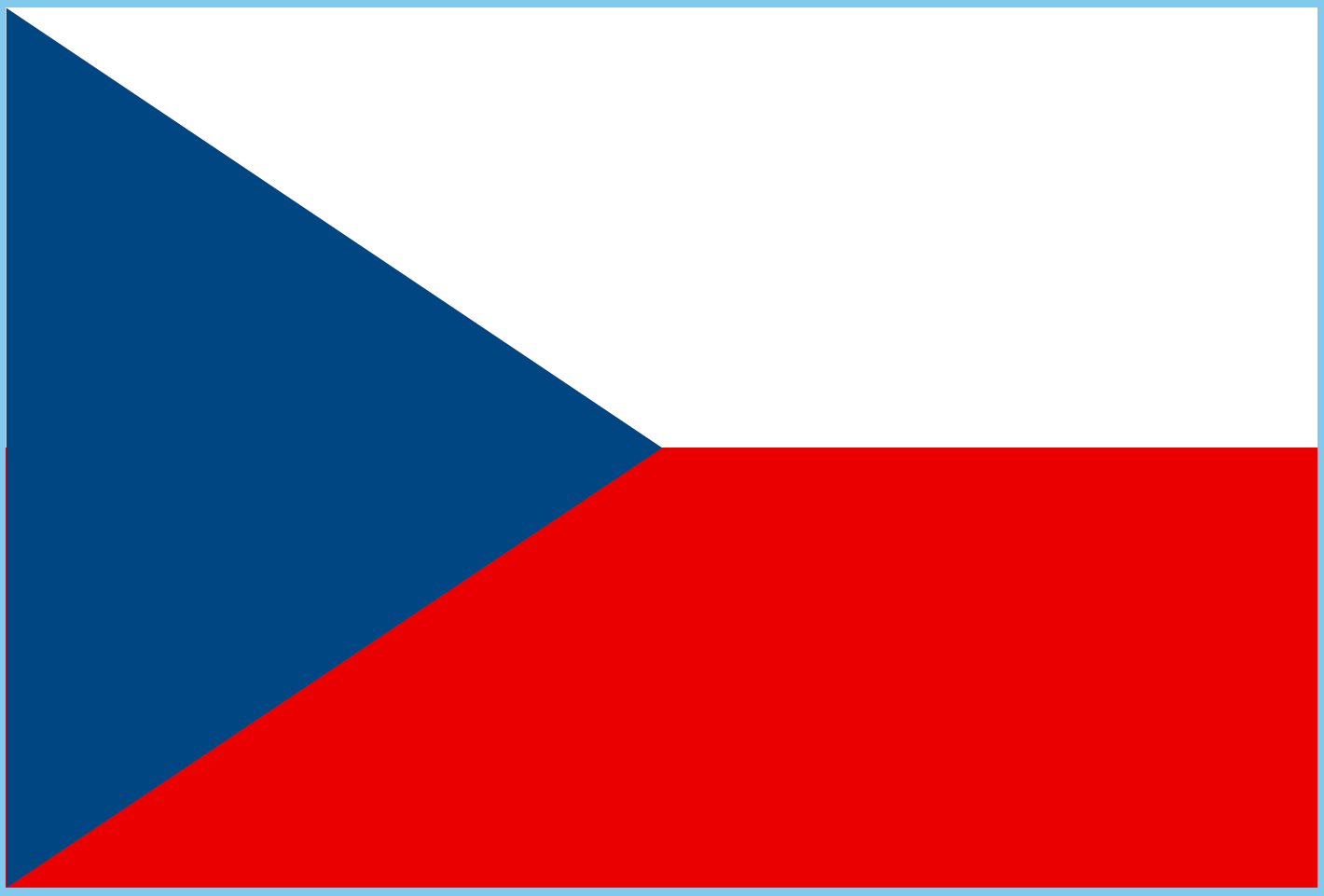
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Civic Space Report
October 2026



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Civic Space Report Czech Republic

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Czech Republic

Country Score: **Mostly Enabling**

Country Trend: ↘

3.25



Cluster A: 3.20
A1 Equal treatment: 3
A2 Political recognition as partners: 3
A3 Refrained authorities from smearing: 3
A4 No weaponization of state powers: 4
A5 Transparent and open public institutions: 3



Cluster B: 4.00
B1 Free establishment and operation: 4
B2 CSOs enjoy a safe space: 4
B3 Liberty of resourcing: 4
B4 Enabling fiscal environment: 4
B5 Free expression of criticism: 4



Cluster C: 3.60
C1 Citizens trust: 3
C2 Present in media: 3
C3 Free engagement: 4
C4 CSOs embedded in communities: 4
C5 Freedom of assembly: 4



Cluster D: 2.20
D1 Decision-making participation: 2
D2 Timely consultations: 2
D3 Policies for cooperation: 2
D4 Free advocacy: 3
D5 Government listens: 2

Civic Space Report – Czech Republic

Introduction

A defining feature of the research period (January 2025 – June 2026) is that it spans two markedly different governing coalitions. From January to early December 2025, under the outgoing *ODS*-led coalition with Prime Minister Petr Fiala, the conditions for civil society were broadly stable, but were noted for pre-existing weaknesses in consultation practice and one serious ministerial incident of vilifying rhetoric, as in January 2025. Following the parliamentary election of 3–4 October 2025 (won by the populist *ANO* party with 34.5% of the vote) and the formation, on 9 December 2025, of a coalition government of *ANO*, nationalist *Freedom and Direct Democracy* (SPD) party, and national-conservative *Motoristé sobě* (Motorists for Themselves) party under Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, the operating environment for civil society deteriorated somewhat.

The most consequential episode of the period was the drafting of a bill that would have required virtually anyone in the Czech Republic receiving foreign funding to register as an entity 'with foreign ties', modeled in part on legislation used elsewhere to suppress civil society; the bill was shelved in March 2026 only after sustained public mobilization, including a demonstration of an estimated 250,000 people in Prague. The government has stated it will still pursue lower-intensity reporting obligations for CSOs. This episode, alongside with funding cuts for the CSO sector, explicit government rhetoric distinguishing 'political NGOs' from others, and a contested overhaul of public-broadcasting funding, forms the throughline connecting most of the standards below.



Cluster A – Institutional and Political Environment and Narratives of CSOs

How do political institutions interact with and portray CSOs?

A1 – Equal treatment

> ***Standard.*** *The state treats all CSOs equally with regard to establishment, registration and activities, and does not restrict organizations for expressing critical views without privileging loyal or government-organised entities (GONGOs).*

Czech law applies a uniform registration and operating regime to all CSOs regardless of viewpoint: entry into the public register under Act No. 304/2013 Coll. and the Civil Code makes no distinction based on an organization's views, and no privileged government-organized non-governmental organization (GONGO) category exists in statute.

The new government's manifesto (*Programové prohlášení*) introduced the category of "political non-profit organizations" (Vláda ČR, 2025, p. 6), a framing with no basis in Czech law but used to justify differentiated treatment. The February 2026 state budget cut CSO-relevant funding across several ministries: Foreign Ministry support for international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance – including aid to Ukraine – was almost entirely cut, Ministry of Environment funding for environmental education and protection programs fell by roughly one-third, with the government stating it aimed to stop funding organizations that allegedly "block development and investment"; and Ministry of Interior funding for migrant integration was also reduced, alongside further

unspecified cuts reported across other ministries (Civic Space Watch, 2026b). For most of the period (January–November 2025), the outgoing government maintained broadly even-handed treatment; the shift is concentrated in the final seven months. Formal legal treatment remained equal throughout, but the funding decisions introduced a real, politically framed practical differential during that period.

Trend. Deteriorating – an unchanged formal legal regime accompanied by an executed, politically-framed funding differential, concentrated after the December 2025 change of government.

Score 3 – Mostly enabling: Formal registration and legal treatment remain uniform, but the February 2026 budget applied politically-framed cuts to specific categories of CSO activity – not merely rhetorical differentiation – which is why this falls short of "Enabling" despite no change to the underlying law.

A2 – Political recognition as partners

> ***Standard.*** *Public institutions and officeholders recognize CSOs as legitimate, independent democratic actors and engage them as partners rather than adversaries.*

Under the 2021–2030 Strategy for Cooperation between Public Administration and NGOs, institutionalized through the Government Council for NGOs, Czech governments have formally recognized CSOs as partners. (Vláda ČR, 2026) This framework functioned throughout most of 2025, even though it was under-resourced.

The October 2025 election changed the relationship. The incoming coalition's manifesto frames NGOs as a sector to be contained, proposes a public-funding registry for "political NGOs", and calls for a ban on state

funding for "political activism". (Vláda ČR 2025, p. 6, p. 8), (Balkan Insight/ BIRN, 2025); (Civic Space Watch, 2026a) But no significant meaningful action has yet materialized.

Also worth noting that who are the partners of the government changed entirely. Today, the governing coalition mostly talks only to radical NGOs very close to the represented parties.

Trend. Deteriorating since December 2025.

Score 3 – Mostly enabling: Formal partnership channels (NGO Council, 2021–2030 Strategy) remain intact, but real engagement has narrowed to organizations aligned with the coalition, and the manifesto explicitly reframes NGOs as a sector to be contained.

A3 – Refrained authorities from smearing

> ***Standard.*** *Officials and state bodies refrain from stigmatizing, vilifying, or delegitimizing rhetoric and smear campaigns against CSOs, including "foreign agent" or "enemy" framing, and do not treat international cooperation as a default form of illegitimate foreign interference.*

Vilifying rhetoric toward critical CSOs was a problem throughout the period, predating the change of government. In January 2025, Agriculture Minister Marek Výborný (KDU-ČSL) publicly blamed the environmental organization *Hnutí Duha* (The Rainbow Movement) for delaying flood-protection infrastructure after the catastrophic 2024 floods (Český rozhlas Plus, 2024), (European Civic Forum, 2025); the organization subsequently received hundreds of threatening and hateful messages, and personal data of its statutory representatives was misused to target individuals.

The pattern intensified after December 2025. A newly appointed government climate-policy commissioner suggested *Hnutí Duha* and *Arnika* could lose public grants over their advocacy and protest activities, and the deputy prime minister and foreign minister publicly branded *Hnutí*

Duha a "terrorist organization" – a claim the organization is contesting through a defamation suit filed in June 2026 against both of them. (Seznam Zprávy, 2026a), Civic Space Watch (2026a) *Hnutí Duha* won at the trial court against the would-be foreign minister Filip Turek for his comments that they were "parasites" just recently, but litigation is still ongoing. (iDnes 2026)

What permeates through most of the chapters is that the government changed its policies (CSO funding, CSO partners, CSO criticism,…) based on *viewpoint discrimination*, which we view as impermissible, even if we were otherwise supportive of (or neutral toward) less government spending or of a policy change.

No effective state mechanism restrained this rhetoric during the period, and no retraction followed. Vilifying language from senior officeholders recurred under two different governing configurations, but there is a change of degree (to the worse). As unfortunate as it is, it is nonetheless contained to a handful of NGOs, and the vast majority are not affected, at least yet.

Trend. Deteriorating – from an isolated ministerial incident to a sustained, senior-level campaign.

Score 3 – Mostly enabling: No systemic policy of vilification exists, but senior-level rhetoric – including a deputy PM publicly branding an NGO a "terrorist organization" – escalated from an isolated 2025 incident to a sustained campaign, with no institutional check.

A4 – No weaponization of state powers and good governance principles

> ***Standard.*** *The state does not deploy audits, inspections, tax, security or law-enforcement powers, or governance principles such as transparency or privacy protection, selectively or disproportionately to pressure CSOs.*

No evidence was found during the period of Czech authorities' use of audits, tax inspections, security services, or emergency powers in a targeted, disproportionate way against specific CSOs; no organization was investigated, raided, or sanctioned for its advocacy.

The clearest emerging risk is administrative, not coercive. After shelving a draft "foreign agents" registry bill, the Justice Minister announced the government would instead pursue a decree expanding CSOs' funding-disclosure obligations. (FundsforNGOs, 2026), (Wolf Theiss, 2025) The lobbying law that took effect on 1 July 2025 also created new registration and disclosure duties broad enough that CSO advocacy risks being swept in. Still, no enforcement action against CSOs under this law was reported within the period.

Trend. Stable, with early-warning signs of rising administrative burden.

Score 4 – Enabling: No evidence of targeted audits, raids or law-enforcement pressure; the deficit is emerging administrative burden from a planned disclosure decree and a new lobbying-registration law, neither yet enforced against CSOs.

A5 – Transparent and open public institutions

> ***Standard.*** *Public institutions operate transparently and proactively provide access to information, enabling CSOs and citizens to scrutinize decisions and hold authorities accountable.*

The Czech Republic maintains a reasonably strong formal transparency framework: Public registers for CSOs, contracts, and lobbying activity are open, and the country remains bound by access-to-information obligations consistent with the Aarhus Convention and the ICCPR.

Implementation is uneven. The 2025 civic-space report found that ministries frequently failed to conduct targeted consultations as required

by the 2021–2030 NGO cooperation strategy. (European Civic Forum, 2025) The civil-society oversight of legislation depends heavily on CSOs' own unfunded expertise rather than institutionalized transparency mechanisms.

Trend. Stable-to-declining on substantive consultation, despite persistent formal openness.

Score 3 – Mostly enabling: The formal transparency framework is strong, but substantive consultation is unevenly implemented, and oversight relies on CSOs' own unfunded capacity rather than institutionalized mechanisms.



Cluster B – Legal and Financial Framework for CSOs

What formal conditions shape CSO operations and sustainability?

B1 – Free establishment and operation

> ***Standard.*** *Everyone can freely establish, join or participate in a CSO; where registration is required, the procedure is clear, simple, quick and inexpensive; and the state does not interfere in internal governance or impose onerous monitoring.*

Establishing a CSO in the Czech Republic is and remains procedurally straightforward. Associations, foundations, and institutes register easily under the Civil Code and Act No. 304/2013 Coll., with a system unchanged over the period and low formation costs and timelines by regional standards.

Trend. Formally stable; practice destabilized by a serious, only partly withdrawn legislative threat (discussed in other chapters).

Score 4 – Enabling: Registration remains fast, cheap and legally unchanged; the only qualification is a legislative threat (the foreign-ties bill) that was shelved before taking effect.

B2 – CSOs enjoy a safe space and protection from arbitrariness

> ***Standard.*** *CSOs are protected against arbitrary or politically motivated suspension, dissolution or sanction; such measures rest on clear legal grounds, proportionality and independent judicial review.*

No CSO was suspended, dissolved, or administratively sanctioned on political grounds, and Czech courts continued to provide an accessible venue for redress – illustrated by *Hnutí Duha*'s own June 2026 defamation suit against a deputy prime minister and an MP. (Seznam Zprávy, 2026a)

Trend. No acute breach yet, but underlying risk rising.

Score 4 – Enabling: No CSO was suspended, dissolved or sanctioned on political grounds, and courts stayed accessible for redress; the deficit is a rising, not-yet-realized risk from the broader climate.

B3 – Liberality of resourcing

> ***Standard.*** *CSOs are free to seek, receive and use financial and material resources from domestic, foreign and international sources, public or private, with no distinction in treatment and without stigmatization.*

Formally, Czech law does not bar CSOs from seeking domestic, foreign or international funding, and no foreign-agent-style penalty on foreign funding was enacted during the period – the closest such proposal was shelved in March 2026. (FundsforNGOs, 2026)

In practice, resourcing conditions deteriorated in 2026. The February 2026 state budget cut CSO-relevant funding across several ministries: Foreign Ministry support for international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance – including aid to Ukraine – was largely cut, Ministry of Environment funding for environmental education and protection programs fell by roughly one-third, with the government stating it aimed to stop funding organizations that allegedly "block development and investment"; and Ministry of Interior funding for migrant integration was also reduced, alongside further unspecified cuts reported across other ministries (Civic Space Watch, 2026b). (Civic Space Watch, 2026b)

Trend. Deteriorating – a sharp public funding contraction concentrated in early 2026.

Score 4 – Enabling: No legal barrier to domestic, foreign or international funding exists, and the closest such proposal was shelved; the deficit is an already-executed funding contraction in the February 2026 budget.

B4 – Enabling fiscal environment

Standard. *CSOs and their donors enjoy a favorable and stable tax environment that supports resourcing and encourages philanthropy, with AML/CFT and sanctions measures applied proportionately and on a risk basis.*

No change to the Czech tax-deductibility regime for charitable donations was enacted during the period, and the basic architecture remained in force throughout. A January 2025 amendment to the Public Collections Act

simplified fundraising-campaign administration and introduced voluntary registration, reducing rather than increasing the compliance burden for donation-based fundraising. (European Civic Forum, 2025)

No CSO-specific AML/CFT enforcement action or "de-banking" case was documented in Czech sources during the period.

Trend. Broadly stable, with a new disclosure requirement as an emerging pressure point.

Score 4 – Enabling: The tax-deductibility regime is unchanged and a 2025 amendment simplified fundraising administration; the only emerging pressure point is a new disclosure requirement, not yet in force.

B5 – Free expressions of criticism

> ***Standard.*** *CSOs, activists and journalists can express opinions and criticism freely, online and offline, and are protected from SLAPPs, legal intimidation and disproportionate sanctions.*

The constitutional guarantee of free expression was not curtailed by new legislation during the period, and Czech civil society and journalists continued to publish sharply critical material about the government throughout, including detailed investigative and civic-space monitoring reporting on the government's own conduct toward NGOs.

Corporate SLAPP-type litigation was flagged in the 2025 civic-space report, in which corporations used the courts to discourage civil society engagement on environmental policy. (European Civic Forum, 2025) There is no dedicated anti-SLAPP safeguard in Czech law. More significant during 2026 was the chilling effect of senior officials' own rhetoric: being publicly branded a "terrorist organization" by the deputy prime minister carries reputational and potentially legal risk disproportionate to ordinary political criticism, and *Hnutí Duha*'s decision to sue for defamation

illustrates both the severity of the rhetoric and the organization's assessment that legal recourse was necessary. (Civic Space Watch, 2026a), (Seznam Zprávy, 2026a)

Formal expression rights remained intact and were actively exercised. Still, the material risk environment for CSOs voicing criticism – from both private SLAPP-style pressure and state-official vilification – worsened over the period.

Trend. Deteriorating, but driven by rhetoric, not new legal restrictions.

Score 4 – Enabling: No new legal restriction on expression was enacted and CSOs/journalists published freely throughout; the deficit is reputational and legal risk from officials' own vilifying rhetoric, absent an anti-SLAPP safeguard.



Cluster C – Public Engagement and Perceptions towards the Work of CSOs

How are CSOs perceived, and how do citizens engage with them?

C1 – Citizens' trust

> ***Standard.*** *Citizens broadly trust CSOs and regard them as legitimate, valuable contributors to public life.*

Long-running CVVM institutional trust surveys do not track CSOs as a distinct category with the same granularity as security or political

institutions, revealing a broader data gap that further limits accountability. The most direct recent measurement, a June 2025 STEM/OSF Foundation survey, found that roughly one-third of the public declares trust in CSOs' work, rising sharply – up to 20 points higher – among people with direct experience as donors, volunteers or service users, and considerably higher among younger respondents. (STEM / OSF Foundation, 2025)

The same research found generational and issue-based polarization. Younger people see CSOs as legitimate agents of change, while older respondents are supportive of CSOs in education, culture, charity and social care but far more skeptical of their involvement in political or advocacy work – a division that closely tracks the "political NGO" framing the incoming government began deploying at the same time.

Baseline trust was already moderate rather than strong at the start of the period, and escalating official rhetoric labeling advocacy CSOs as "political" or, in one case, as "terrorist" directly targets the more skeptical segment of public opinion, creating downward pressure on an already middling baseline.

Trend. Weak baseline, with downward pressure building from political rhetoric.

Score 3 – Mostly enabling: Roughly a third of the public trusts CSOs, rising sharply among those with direct experience; the deficit is an already-moderate baseline and generational polarization the "political NGO" framing is reinforcing.

C2 – Pluralistic presentation in media

Standard. *CSOs are represented in the media fairly and pluralistically, with access to diverse, independent outlets that report on their work without systemic bias.*

Czech Television and Czech Radio have functioned for three decades as internationally recognized models of independent public-service broadcasting, providing CSOs with reasonably diverse channels to reach the public.

This changed somewhat within the researched period. In April 2026, the Culture Ministry presented a bill abolishing the license-fee funding model and replacing it with fixed annual state allocations (Euronews, 2026) – while cutting Czech Television's funding from roughly €274 million to €233 million and Czech Radio's from about €102 million to €82 million. This was a bill international press-freedom organizations said was drafted "without proper consultation with [...] media experts [or] civil society policy stakeholders" and flagged as potentially incompatible with the EU's Media Freedom Act. (International Press Institute, 2026), (Reporters Without Borders, 2026) The government approved the law in June 2026 despite strikes by broadcaster staff and public protests, with critics warning that dependence on annual budget allocations exposes editorial decisions to political pressure.

Beyond public broadcasting, the private media sector includes outlets previously linked to the Prime Minister's business holdings, with a longstanding conflict-of-interest concern predating this period. Formal media pluralism remains intact, but the institutional guarantee of independent public-service coverage – an important channel for CSO visibility – was substantially weakened by the end of the period. Some of the private media outlets are opposed to CSOs – a noteworthy connection between large online media outlets *Echo24* and *Parlamentní listy* and the NGOs *Alliance for Family* and the aforementioned *Society for the Defense of the Freedom of Expression* (more below) that are very influential in today's governing coalition, connected through Marek Španěl, owner of the media outlets and a large benefactor of the NGOs. (Voxpot 2025)

Trend. Deteriorating in the first half of 2026 around public-broadcasting independence.

Score 3 – Mostly enabling: Formal media pluralism remains intact and public broadcasting has a long independence record; the deficit is a June 2026 law cutting broadcaster funding and shifting it to annual state allocations, passed without proper consultation.

C3 – Free engagement

> ***Standard.*** *Citizens can engage freely and safely in civic activities – volunteering, activism, donating, protest – and such participation is socially accepted and not penalized.*

Czechs exercised civic-engagement rights vigorously and without penalty throughout the period. The clearest evidence is the scale of public mobilization among other things against the draft "foreign agents" law in spring 2026, but primarily to support public media. Organizers estimated that roughly 250,000 people gathered at Prague's *Letná* plain, which was described as the country's largest anti-government demonstration since 2019 and full of explicit references to avoiding the trajectories of Hungary and Slovakia. (Reuters, 2026) Public-sector unions and public-media staff also mounted large-scale protests and strikes during the period without state interference. (Euronews, 2026).

Social norms remain broadly supportive of civic participation. Survey data show strong public approval of donating to NGOs, and personal experience as a volunteer or donor increases trust in NGOs. (STEM, 2025)

No credible reports emerged during the period of citizens facing legal or administrative penalty for volunteering, donating, or protesting. The record shows a strong, actively used civic space at the citizen-participation level, which serves as a counterweight to the more adversarial institutional climate described elsewhere in this assessment.

Trend. Stable, and arguably stronger than institutional trends elsewhere in this report would suggest.

Score 4 – Enabling: Citizens engaged in protest, volunteering and donation at high volume – including a 250,000-person demonstration – without any reported penalty; the strongest-performing standard in the assessment.

C4 – CSOs embedded in communities

> ***Standard.*** *CSOs are embedded in their communities and able to mobilize grassroots support, public solidarity and cross-sector backing in defense of civic space.*

CSOs demonstrated their ability to mobilize grassroots solidarity. When *Hnutí Duha* came under sustained political attack – first over the 2024 flood-response controversy and later over the "terrorist organization" label other organizations rallied in solidarity, and the organization reported broad public support alongside the hostile messages it received.

The spring 2026 mobilization against the foreign-ties registry bill likewise depended on a broad cross-section of civil society, professional groups (including universities and the media, both named as potential targets of the draft law), and ordinary citizens acting together, rather than on a single organization. Organizers of the *Letná* demonstration explicitly framed the protest around defending the wider civic and democratic space rather than any single organization's interests. (EUobserver, 2026), (Reuters, 2026)

Trend. Stable to strengthening, largely in reaction to institutional pressure.

Score 4 – Enabling: CSOs mobilized broad cross-sector and grassroots solidarity in response to institutional pressure, illustrated by both the *Hnutí Duha* support wave and the spring 2026 mobilization.

C5 – Freedom of assembly

> ***Standard.*** *Everyone can freely enjoy the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, to organize and participate in assemblies, without unwarranted interference.*

The legal framework for assembly is well established under Act No. 84/1990 Coll. on Freedom of Assembly and Article 19 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. Assemblies require only advance notification rather than authorization; spontaneous assemblies are permitted; and organizer liability is limited to preserving peacefulness. This system was unchanged during the period.

Practice was consistent with the formal guarantee. The roughly 250,000-strong *Letná* demonstration in spring 2026 (Reuters, 2026); protests by public media staff, and union-led rallies against austerity measures all proceeded without reports of state interference, mass detentions, or disproportionate policing – in contrast to more restrictive practices documented in some neighboring countries over the same period (AP, 2026).

Structural boundaries noted by assembly-rights specialists pre-date the period and remain in place – restrictions on organizers who are aliens, stateless persons, or non-resident legal entities – but these did not materially constrain the large-scale mobilizations that in fact occurred. (Rightofassembly.info, 2021); Assembly rights were exercised at unusually high volume during the period and were consistently respected by the authorities.

Trend. Stable and robustly exercised throughout the period.

Score 4 – Enabling: The notification-based assembly framework is unchanged and was exercised liberally, without state interference or disproportionate policing.



Cluster D – CSOs as Policy Makers

To what extent do CSOs influence and shape public policy?

D1 – Right to participate in decision-making including in the policy cycle

> ***Standard.*** *Everyone has the right to participate in decision-making; authorities ensure meaningful public and CSO participation across the policy cycle, with redress for non-compliance.*

The formal architecture for CSO participation in policymaking remains in place: The Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations is a standing consultative body mandated to comment on and help shape legislation affecting NGOs, and the 2021–2030 Strategy for Cooperation between Public Administration and NGOs formally commits ministries to structured engagement, reinforced through the Czech Republic's Open Government Partnership action plan for 2024–2026. (Vláda ČR, 2026)

Implementation was already uneven before the change of government. The 2025 report on civic space found that "civil dialogue across public administration remain[ed] weak", that several ministries "did not carry out targeted consultations" tied to strategy-monitoring recommendations, and that the strategy carries no dedicated budget item. This weak baseline deteriorated further in 2026. (European Civic Forum, 2025).

The right to participate therefore exists on paper and through a standing institutional channel, but its exercise in practice – for the most consequential legislation of the period – was largely bypassed.

Most worryingly, the current government moved various councils and agendas from the Office of the Government to ministries, e.g. the Council for Equality of Men and Women was moved to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The government is about to amend councils' statutes; they will now have to heed the government's manifesto instead of giving unbiased advice. It has led to resignations of council experts and warning from the EU. (iRozhlas 2026) These efforts are spearheaded by Tünde Bartha, a proven connection between the Babiš and Orbán governments. (iRozhlas 2026a), (Hlídací pes 2026)

Trend. A pre-existing problem of weak implementation became more pronounced on major pieces of 2026 legislation.

Score 2 – Restrictive leaning: The formal consultative architecture still exists but was bypassed on the period's most consequential legislation, and agenda transfers away from the Office of Government – driven by an official with documented Orbán-government ties – drew resignations and EU criticism.

D2 – Timely consultations and equal participation

Standard. *Consultations are launched early, allow adequate time, and supply the information needed for substantive input; participation is adequately resourced and accessible so grassroots and under-resourced CSOs are not excluded.*

When consultations were held formally, the quality was mixed even before the change of government. The 2025 civic-space report documented that no regulatory impact assessment was planned for at least one significant piece of NGO-relevant legislation. It criticized the lobbying law for imposing a disproportionate procedural burden on civil society participants relative to its anti-corruption benefits. (European Civic Forum, 2025)

Two flagship 2026 initiatives illustrate a further decline. The foreign-ties registry bill was drafted by a working group of coalition MPs. It only became public when a working version leaked in March 2026 – the opposite of early, resourced, accessible consultation. (Radio Prague International, 2026a) It is to be noted, ironically, that the bill was drafted by (or in cooperation with) an NGO with an Orwellian name, the *Society for the Defense of the Freedom of Expression* (SOSP), which is personally intertwined with the *Motoristé* party (most obviously through MP Sedláčková who used to serve as the Operations Manager at the SOSP). The public-media funding bill followed a similarly closed process, presented to broadcaster leadership only as an already-settled plan, with the Czech Radio director-general noting that staff were simply informed rather than consulted. (Radio Prague International, 2026b).

Grassroots and under-resourced CSOs – precisely the constituencies this standard is meant to protect from token consultation – had essentially no opportunity to shape the bills before they reached the public; input existed only reactively, through subsequent public mobilization.

Trend. Deteriorating – leaked or closed drafting replaced structured consultation.

Score 2 – Restrictive leaning: Formal consultation channels exist but were not used for either flagship 2026 initiative – the foreign-ties bill leaked rather than being consulted on, the media bill was presented as a settled plan – leaving grassroots CSOs no opportunity for input.

D3 – Policies encourage cooperation with CSOs

> ***Standard.*** *State policies actively facilitate cooperation with CSOs: there is a strategy/policy on cooperation, and transparent consultative bodies that genuinely feed into decision-making.*

The Czech Republic retains a nominal institutionalized cooperation framework – the 2021–2030 Strategy and the Government Council for NGOs – and a new action-plan cycle was due for government approval in spring 2025, suggesting policy continuity was intended at the start of the period. European Civic Forum (2025)

The change of government at the end of 2025 introduced a competing and contradictory policy direction. The new coalition's manifesto explicitly proposes ending "political NGO" funding, introducing a registry for publicly funded civil organizations, and barring "public money for political activism" (Vláda ČR, 2025) – proposals that reframe state–CSO cooperation as a risk to be managed rather than a public good to be facilitated, and which commentators pointed out "run throughout" the coalition document despite having no grounding in existing Czech law.

Whether the pre-existing strategy and council survive as functioning mechanisms under the new government's priorities was not yet resolved by the end of the period, but the direction of travel – from a chronically underused and underfunded though intact cooperation framework toward an adversarial funding and registration agenda – is unambiguous.

Trend. Deteriorating, with institutional continuity in question going forward.

Score 2 – Restrictive leaning: A nominal cooperation framework remains on paper, but the manifesto reframes CSO cooperation as a risk to be managed, and whether the framework survives in practice is unresolved.

D4 – Free advocacy and watchdogging

Standard. *CSOs can freely conduct advocacy, watchdog and campaigning activities to influence policy and opinion, without these being restricted, taxed or reclassified as prohibited "political" activity.*

Advocacy and watchdog CSOs operated without formal legal restrictions on their activities throughout the period. No law reclassifying advocacy as prohibited "political" activity was enacted, and organizations such as *Hnutí Duha*, *Arnika* and anti-corruption groups continued to publish critical analysis, campaign publicly and pursue legal action through June 2026. (Civic Space Watch, 2026a)

The practical environment nonetheless worsened. The incoming government's manifesto explicitly targets "public money for political activism". (Radio Prague International, 2026a) It proposes disclosure obligations aimed at organizations engaged in activities "that may influence public opinion and debate" – a definition broad enough to capture core watchdog functions. A government-appointed climate-policy commissioner suggested that advocacy and protest activities could specifically be grounds for losing public funding.

No advocacy organization was shut down, taxed punitively or legally barred from campaigning during the period, but the manifesto's own framing and an official's explicit suggestion that advocacy could cost organizations their funding constitute a material signal of intent that CSOs must now weigh in planning their activities.

The practical asymmetry extends beyond rhetoric. As detailed under D2, access to the legislative process itself has become uneven: organizations personally or institutionally aligned with the governing coalition had a practical channel into policymaking that watchdog organizations critical of the government did not. Free advocacy and watchdogging thus increasingly depends on viewpoint and an organization's proximity to the coalition rather than being uniformly available.

Trend. Deteriorating – a still-unrestricted formal position, but accompanied by explicit governing-coalition signals (manifesto language, a funding-linked threat from a sitting official) that watchdog activity specifically is being targeted for future constraint.

Score 3 – Mostly enabling: No advocacy organization was formally restricted, defunded or reclassified during the period, and critical

watchdog groups continued to publish and litigate through June 2026. The score reflects that practical access to the policy process has become asymmetric – coalition-aligned organizations had a hand in drafting major legislation while critical CSOs did not – alongside explicit official signals that advocacy-linked funding could be at risk.

D5 – Government listens

> ***Standard.*** *Public authorities give CSO and public input genuine consideration and provide reasoned, traceable feedback on how contributions affected the final decision.*

Even under the more CSO-engaged outgoing government, the feedback loop between civil society input and final legislative results was assessed as weak. The EU's 2024 Rule of Law Report noted that CSOs "expressed regrets that the Government does not generally take up its specific recommendations" from consultative bodies, including on lobbying and whistleblowing legislation, where "few of the points [...] were taken on board in the final legislation". This pre-existing weakness is the baseline against which we must read the 2026 developments. (European Commission, 2024)

The clearest 2026 illustration of the pattern came when the government reversed itself on the foreign-ties/NGO-disclosure legislation. Justice Minister Jeroným Tejc announced that neither his ministry nor the government was preparing such a law. (Seznam Zprávy 2026b) The reversal is telling less for what it did than for how it happened: it followed the leaked draft's public exposure and the *Letná* mobilization, not any acknowledged consultative process, and the government offered no reasoned account of which specific civil-society objections, if any, informed the decision – the draft was simply disowned rather than engaged with.

The *Letná* outcome and the subsequent bill withdrawal do show Czech authorities remain capable of responding to public pressure. But responsiveness by disavowal – reversing course without a reasoned, traceable account of why – is not the same as the institutional feedback mechanism this standard requires, and the standard's requirement was not met.

Trend. Persistently weak — responsiveness occurs only under acute public pressure, and even then without reasoned engagement or acknowledgment of civil society's role in the outcome.

Score 2 – Restrictive leaning: Letná shows authorities can respond to sustained public pressure, but the EU's own 2024 assessment found CSO recommendations routinely not taken up, and no reasoned, traceable feedback mechanism exists.

Conclusion

Across all twenty standards, the Czech Republic's civic space remains, in absolute terms, mostly enabling to enabling – no CSO was shut down, defunded punitively, or barred from campaigning, courts stayed open for redress, and citizens engaged in protest, volunteering and donation at historically high volume.

The direction of travel, however, is broadly negative, and the negative trend is concentrated almost entirely in the seven months following the December 2025 change of government. Three developments stand out: first, a shift in official narrative that recasts advocacy and human-rights-adjacent CSOs as "political" actors, running from budget language through ministerial rhetoric to a deputy prime minister's "terrorist organization" claim against a named organization; second, a marked decline in the *practice* of consultation, with the two most consequential pieces of 2026 legislation – the foreign-ties registry bill and the public-media funding overhaul – bypassing established consultative channels entirely; and third,

a real, already-executed contraction in public funding for CSO-relevant programming (development aid, environmental education, migrant integration) alongside a weakening of public-broadcasting independence, an important channel for CSO visibility.

Institutional continuity for the 2021–2030 NGO cooperation framework is now in question. Counterbalancing this, Czech civil society itself has proven resilient and assertive: the roughly 250,000-person *Letná* mobilization, sustained union and media-staff strikes, and CSOs' own recourse to litigation (including a sitting deputy PM being sued for defamation) show a civic culture still able and willing to defend itself, and public authorities have shown they can be moved by sustained pressure even without a formal feedback mechanism. The central risk for future editions of this assessment is that the pressure currently expressed mostly through rhetoric, administrative signaling and funding decisions could convert into binding legal restriction – particularly if the shelved foreign-ties provisions, or the lower-intensity reporting obligations the government says it will still pursue, are revived.

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