



ECF Rule of law Contribution 2025

Austria

By Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit

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Key civic space trends

- New law improves the regulatory environment for CSOs, but its implementation requires ongoing monitoring to ensure positive long-term effects.
- Economic instability poses challenges to democracy, as NGOs and media outlets face financial insecurity.
- A changing political environment might increase pressure on NGOs, particularly in the areas of funding, migration, and climate justice.

Summary

Civic space continues to be rated as “Open”, according to the CIVICUS Monitor.¹ There were no recommendations on civic space for Austria in the European Commission’s 2024 Rule of Law report. However, the report noted instances of SLAPPs against civil society organisations (CSOs) and concerns regarding the proportionality of legal action and detention measures targeting climate activists engaged in peaceful disobedience. The Austrian government passed the Freedom of Information Act in 2024, following the European Commission’s 2023 recommendation to “advance with the reform on access to official information taking into account the European standards on access to official documents.” Since the majority of the law will only come into force in September 2025, its implementation still has to be closely monitored.

In 2024, positive legal developments for the rule of law in Austria were reported. A new law to improve the regulatory environment for CSOs was passed. However, ongoing monitoring and systematic civil dialogue are key to ensure positive results the long-term. Economic instability continues to challenge democracy, NGOs and independent journalism. Lastly, a shifting political landscape is likely to increase pressure on NGOs, particularly those working on migration and climate justice, highlighting the need for continued support and financial stability in the sector to maintain its resilience.

Institutional, political, and socio-economic landscape

September 2024 marked the end of a five-year coalition between the conservative People’s Party (ÖVP) and the Greens (Die Grünen), led by Chancellor Karl Nehammer (ÖVP) and Vice-Chancellor Werner Kogler (Die Grünen). The period was shaped by crises and challenges, ranging from COVID-19 and wars in Europe and beyond, to climate change and high inflation. In these challenging times, civil society organisations (CSOs) played a vital role in providing health care, humanitarian aid, and support to refugees; in the fight for media freedom and free speech; and in pushing climate issues to the top of political agendas.

Overall, the past five years have demonstrated that CSOs are essential, especially in times of crisis. Handling these challenges effectively required dialogue between the various stakeholders which

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

resulted in major legal improvements for the third sector in 2024. These include reforms to tax rules for non-profit organisations, subsidies to mitigate rising energy costs, and strengthening support for voluntary organisations. However, it is crucial to closely monitor the implementation of the new laws to ensure positive long-term effect.

In 2024, Austria held several elections, including EU, national, and regional elections. The far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) emerged as the clear winner across all levels. In the EU elections, the FPÖ won 25.4% of the vote, followed by ÖVP (24.5%), the social democrats (SPÖ) on 23.2%, Die Grünen (11.1%), and the liberal party NEOS (10.1%).² FPÖ also made gains in regional elections, forming coalitions with ÖVP in both Vorarlberg³ and Steiermark.⁴ Finally, FPÖ won the majority of votes (28.85%) in the national general elections, which took place in autumn 2024, followed by ÖVP (26.27%), SPÖ (21.14%), NEOS (9.14%), and Die Grünen (8.24%).⁵ After coalition talks between various parties, in late February 2025, a deal was struck between the ÖVP, SPÖ, and NEOS to form the next government.⁶

According to a national survey, voters' support for FPÖ was based on its political agenda rather than its party leader, its credibility, or ability to advocate for the voters' personal interests.⁷ Its platform includes an anti-migration stance, measures against the so-called elites, and reducing high taxes,, among other issues.⁸

Austrians have been struggling with rising costs in recent years caused by the crises mentioned above. With a current budget deficit of approximately 4%, exceeding the EU's Maastricht criterion of 3%,⁹ and a recession expected to continue for at least another year,¹⁰ people are concerned about their living standards and their future in general.

Nevertheless, *Demokratiemonitor 2024*¹¹ found that the political system in Austria enjoys increased trust. The data signals an ongoing positive turn, with 43% (up from 39% in 2023) of people believe that the political system functions well, and 90% considering "democracy" the best form of government. Moreover, 44% of people trust the government (up from 39% in 2023). However, while approval of the political system has increased among wealthiest two-thirds of society, satisfaction has continued to decline among the poorest third.¹²

² <https://www.bundeswahlen.gv.at/2024/eu/>

³ <https://vorarlberg.orf.at/stories/3279827/>

⁴ <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000250124/kunasek-von-van-der-bellen-als-steirischer-landeshauptmann-angelobt>

⁵ <https://www.parlament.gv.at/aktuelles/news/Wahl-2024-Endergebnis-liegt-vor/>

⁶ <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/02/27/austrias-centrist-parties-clinch-coalition-deal-without-the-far-right>

⁷ <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000237895/nur-zwei-prozent-der-blauwähler-stimmen-wegen-herbert-kickl-fuer-die-fpoe>

⁸ <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000239377/warum-er-was-menschen-dazu-gebracht-hat-herbert-kickl-zu-wahlen>

⁹ <https://www.profil.at/wirtschaft/fiskalrat-christoph-badelt-budget-defizit-maastricht/402989664>

¹⁰ <https://www.wifo.ac.at/news/rezession-in-oesterreich-haelt-sich-hartnaeckig/>

¹¹ *Demokratiemonitor* is a representative nationwide survey that assesses the population's perception towards democracy in general and towards the political system in particular.

¹² https://www.demokratiemonitor.at/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2024_FORESIGHT-Pressunterlagen-DM24.pdf

The *Demokratieindex* survey evaluates the framework conditions of democracy in Austria on a yearly basis.¹³ While the overall results are generally positive for 2024, the authors of the survey emphasised the need for improvements to the judicial system in order to avoid a “two-tier” approach. They also highlighted the need for a more objective and independent executive power to enhance transparency. Additionally, the survey points out the need for improvements in quality media and independent journalism, particularly regarding the criteria for media funding, as well as the independence and transparency of the Austrian Public Broadcasting Corporation (ORF). Other highlighted topics include the prevention of femicides, provisions against torture (e.g. during repatriation), and medical treatment in prisons.¹⁴ Nevertheless, in international comparisons the state of the democracy in Austria continues to rank highly.¹⁵

In its 2024 Corruption Index, Transparency International rated Austria 25th (down from 20th in 2023 and 13th in 2022). According to the organisation, the biggest problems are the lack of independence of the Austrian judiciary and the country's inadequate prevention of corruption. Recurring political scandals including free-market dealings and personal enrichment, and the attempts to exert political influence on independent media are examples for deficits in the fight against corruption and democratic control. To overcome some of these problems, the Freedom of Information Act — the majority of which comes into force on 1 September — must be implemented consistently. This process must be monitored closely. Among other measures, the Transparency International also calls for the creation of an independent federal public prosecutor's office and for the protection of whistleblowers.¹⁶

In 2024, Statistics Austria published a report on the national development of the United Nation's (UN's) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The performance of Austria overall is considered positive, particularly in organic agriculture and renewable energies as accompanied with a decrease in energy consumption. However, challenges remain, in particular regarding land overuse and the Gender Pay Gap.¹⁷

The regulatory environment for civic freedoms

In Austria, CSOs are of great importance to political, cultural, and economic development, positively contributing to many peoples' lives. In comparison to other countries, Austria's legal framework for NGOs and associations is considered rather supportive, as civil rights and democracy are relatively well-developed.¹⁸ However, recent studies confirm that certain conditions for CSOs are largely dependent on the composition of the government and its stance towards civil society.¹⁹

¹³ <https://demokratieindex.at/>

¹⁴ <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000241889/zweiklassenjustiz-femizide-und-medienpolitik-druecken-demokratieindex>

¹⁵ <https://demokratieindex.at/internationale-indices/>

¹⁶ <https://www.diepresse.com/19350221/oesterreich-verliert-im-korruptionsindex-weiter-an-boden>

¹⁷

<https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/announcement/2024/06/20240617SDGIndikatorenbericht2024.pdf>

¹⁸ https://www.wu.ac.at/fileadmin/wu/d/cc/npocompetence/07_NPO_Downloads/civil-society-index_endbericht.pdf

¹⁹ <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2019-0029>

Freedom of association

The Austrian constitution guarantees the right to freedom of association for both natural persons and legal entities. An association, club or society is recognised as such if it is composed of at least two people with the objective of achieving a common, non-material goal. The registered office of the association must be located in Austria. Under the Associations Act (Vereinsgesetz 2002 - VerG), an association cannot be profit-oriented, and the associations' funds may only be used in pursuit of its original purpose.²⁰

To acquire public benefit status and associated tax benefits for the purpose of the federal tax code (Bundesabgabenordnung — BAO), an organisation has to pursue a public benefit purpose. Additionally, its statutes must ensure that, upon dissolution, the association's funds will be distributed exclusively to equal or similar non-profit purposes. According to Austrian lawyers and CSO representatives, the process for setting up associations or adopting another legal form is straightforward in Austria. The legal framework for the establishment of associations, foundations, and other kinds of non-profit or non-governmental organisations with social, political, cultural or other aims is neither obstructive nor restrictive.²¹

A reform of the respective law, which entered into force on 1 January 2024, has simplified administrative procedures. It reduced the waiting period for public benefit status from three years to one, and simplified procedures of independent auditors to confirm eligibility. It has also widened the scope of public benefit purposes, allowing organisations from all fields of activity (such as culture, human rights, sports, education, or animal protection, which were formerly neglected) to apply for public benefit status. This change has made public benefit status more accessible and attractive to smaller non-profit organisations and positively influenced their financial viability.²²

From the implementation of the law on 1 January to 15 November, an additional 350 organisations have received public-benefit status.²³ By the end of 2025, the total number of organisations with public benefit status is expected to double to around 3,000 organisations.

Closely monitoring and improving the implementation of the new law is important to ensure its long-term positive effects and achieve the benefits announced for both smaller and larger associations.

²⁰

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

²¹ https://www.wu.ac.at/fileadmin/wu/d/cc/npocompetence/07_NPO_Downloads/civil-society-index_endbericht.pdf

²² <https://www.parlament.gv.at/gegenstand/XXVII/ME/299>

²³ <https://www.fundraising.at/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/FVA-Spendenbericht-2024.pdf>

Freedom of peaceful assembly

In Austria, freedom of peaceful assembly is secured and regulated under the *Versammlungsgesetz* (Assembly Act).²⁴

In 2024, Amnesty International conducted a detailed analysis of the state of the right to protest across Europe, concluding that it is “under-protected and over-restricted.”²⁵ Its Austrian branch specifically highlighted concerns about police violence and the lack of thorough investigations, the increased criminalisation of protests, the use of surveillance tools, and ethnic profiling. Amnesty International Austria also criticised restrictive administrative directives that led to the dissolution of peaceful assemblies.²⁶ A notable example involved (counter-)demonstrations by Palestinian and Israeli groups following the Hamas-led attacks in Israel in October 2023 and the escalation of violence in Gaza.²⁷

On the issue of police violence, Amnesty International Austria welcomed the introduction of an independent body in 2023 to investigate allegations of abuse by police officers. However, it raised concerns about its effectiveness, as accusations of police misconduct rarely led to resolutions, and the lack of individual identification marks on police officers makes accountability nearly impossible.²⁸

Freedom of expression and the right to privacy

Freedom of expression is guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which was incorporated into Austria’s constitution in 1964.²⁹ Additionally, the 1981 Media Law provides the basis for media freedom in Austria.³⁰

In comparison to many other European countries, the Austrian Public Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) holds a relatively high market share.³¹ A 2023 amendment to the ORF law introduced significant changes to its income strategy, ensuring long-term financial stability and reducing dependence on government funding. While this marked a positive step toward independence,

²⁴

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

²⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur01/8199/2024/en/>

²⁶ <https://www.amnesty.at/presse/europa-repressive-gesetze-und-systematische-einschraenkungen-verhindern-friedlichen-protest/>

²⁷ <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000219346/proisraelische-demo-gegen-protestcamp-auf-wiener-uni-areal-im-alten-akh>

²⁸ <https://www.amnesty.at/presse/europa-repressive-gesetze-und-systematische-einschraenkungen-verhindern-friedlichen-protest/>

²⁹

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

³⁰

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

³¹ Trappel, F. (2023). Medien und Politik – ein Geben und Nehmen, in K. Praprotnik & F. Perlot (eds.), *Das Politische System Österreichs* (129-153). Wien: Böhlau Verlag

concerns about the ORF's autonomy persist.³² After the law was passed by the parliament, the Austrian Constitutional Court found parts of it unconstitutional, particularly concerning the composition of the ORF's governance bodies.³³ The required legal amendments to address these issues are due by March 2025.³⁴ It is of utmost importance that the changes are implemented as soon as possible in order to ensure ORF's independence and long-term financial stability.

Leading media figures and journalism advocates have called for broader reforms to protect independent journalism, a cornerstone of Austrian democracy. Several philanthropic initiatives launched in 2024 aim to address the funding challenges faced by independent journalism by proposing capacity-building measures and supporting sustainable business models.³⁵ In a statement addressed to the incoming government, Presseclub Concordia, Austria's most important journalist association, highlighted the most pressing problems for media institutions. Key concerns include financial struggles linked to changing consumer habits, disinformation, and attacks on journalists. The statement advocates for reforms such as: establishing a legal framework for independent, non-profit journalism; regulating social media platforms; enhancing media literacy; and implementing international regulations to prevent Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs).³⁶ The latter is also raised by Amnesty International Austria.³⁷

Safe Space

In 2024, rights and freedoms could largely be exercised without religious, gender, LGBTQI+, or ethnic discrimination.

However, combating structural and institutional racism continues to be crucial. An increase of racism — particularly against Muslims and Jews — was reported by several surveys. In 2023, Dokustelle Austria documented 1,522 cases of discrimination against Muslims (up from 1,324 cases in 2022), highlighting the increase of cases reported in schools.³⁸ Compared to other countries in the EU, Muslims experience a rather high level of discrimination in Austria.³⁹ An increase in hostilities against Muslims was also reported in a study by the University of Vienna. This study also found an increase in antisemitism in Austria.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Antisemitismus-Meldestelle reported

³²

<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10000785>

³³ <https://www.diepresse.com/17729627/der-vfgh-hebt-das-orf-gesetz-auf-was-fuer-eine-blamage>

³⁴ https://www.vfgh.gv.at/medien/ORF_Gesetz_Gremien.php

³⁵ <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000241760/loudon-gewissenhafter-journalismus-kann-verschwoerungen-eindaemmen>; <https://www.horizont.at/medien/news/martin-kotynek-die-oesterreichischemedienfoerderung-ist-kaputt-95078>

³⁶ <https://sh1.sendinblue.com/v4gic9jlxpfe.html?t=1732714945780>

³⁷ <https://www.amnesty.at/news-events/news/slapp-wie-einschuechterungsklagen-unsere-meinungsfreiheit-bedrohen/>

³⁸ https://dokustelle.at/fileadmin/Dokuments/Reports/Report_2023/Dokustelle_Oesterreich_Report_2023.pdf

³⁹ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-being-muslim-in-the-eu_en.pdf

⁴⁰ <https://religion.orf.at/stories/3228155/>

808 cases of antisemitism in the first half of 2024, an increase of 159.8%.⁴¹ ZARA, an Austrian NGO working on anti-racism, recorded 1,320 cases of racism in 2023, down from 1,479 in 2022. While the majority of the incidents (58%) occurred online, offences were also experienced in public space, (public) institutions, by the police, in the media and political environments.⁴² The implementation of a national action plan against racism remains a key demand of organisations reporting on racism in Austria.

In addition, residence status and citizenship continue to impact the access to various rights, such as the right to vote, which depends on Austrian citizenship. For example, in Vienna, one-third of residents have no right to vote in national elections. This includes non-Austrian EU citizens, who can only vote in certain local elections.⁴³ Furthermore, asylum seekers and refugees face challenges in the labour market, housing, and education. NGOs are calling for solutions and warn against political campaigns that promote societal polarisation.⁴⁴

Social deprivation has increased over the last year with 336,000 people (3.7% of the population) affected. Die Armutskonferenz, a network of more than 40 organisations addressing poverty and social deprivation in Austria, reported that children were particularly impacted, with the number living in deprivation increasing from 36,000 in 2022 to 88,000 in 2023.⁴⁵

Financial viability and sustainability of civil society

NGOs in Austria operate under various legal forms, with the “association” (*Verein*) being the most common. In 2019, a study conducted by the Vienna University of Economics and Business identified a total of 87,000 active associations.⁴⁶

For the first time, official economic data on the sector was published in 2024,⁴⁷ providing the following insights for the reporting year 2021:

- The non-profit sector in Austria generated a gross value added of €12.0 billion. This corresponds to a 3.3% share of Austria's total value added at basic prices..
- A total of 283,300 employment relationships were recorded in the non-profit sector, accounting for 5.9% of total employment in Austria.

⁴¹ https://www.antisemitismus-meldestelle.at/files/ugd/ed51c1_02be44d7b5a547b3aedb19cb0b1ae518.pdf

⁴² https://assets.zara.or.at/media/rassismusreport/ZARA_RacismReport_2023_EN_compressed.pdf

⁴³ <https://www.wien.gv.at/spezial/integrationsmonitor/gleichstellung-and-partizipation/fehlendes-wahlrecht-und-demokratiedefizit/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.amnesty.at/presse/ngos-am-weltfluechtlingstag-schluss-mit-politischen-irrliehern-her-mit-perspektiven/>; <https://www.amnesty.at/presse/gegen-polarisierung-start-der-initiative-das-gemeinsame-zuerst/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.armutskonferenz.at/news/news-2024/herausforderungen-kinderarmut-alleinerziehende-wohnen.html>

⁴⁶ <https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/unsere-themen/daten-und-fakten-zum-sektor>

⁴⁷ https://www.sozialministerium.at/dam/jcr:17322930-e7ac-4eca-9664-6f1a20bb64b3/BMSGPK_NPO-Satellitenkonto_Abschlussbericht.pdf

- A total of 367 million paid working hours were performed within non-profit organisations, corresponding to a share of 5.2% of all working hours in Austria.
- In the realm of voluntary activities, 3.8 million people contributed a total of 470 million unpaid hours.
- Overall, the gross value added of paid and unpaid working hours in the non-profit sector in one year amounted to approximately €22 billion.

These figures show the sector's importance and resilience, even in times of crisis. It also points out the significance of voluntary work, and that without the support of volunteers the challenges of recent crises could not have been handled the same way.

Public funding plays a pivotal role in financing CSOs, with over half of the income of organisations employing at least one staff member coming from performance-related payments by the public sector. An additional 16.5% comes from other public funding sources. There have been no major changes in the financing structure since these last numbers were published in 2013.⁴⁸ While public funding has become the most important source of income, bureaucratic burdens associated with accessing such funds have steadily increased. To ensure long-term efficiency, it is essential to simplify funding processes, improve legal certainty, and reduce administrative hurdles.

In some areas of CSOs' activities, the high reliance on governmental funding, coupled with a low systematic approach of political participation of civil society (see section on the right to participation) confirms the risk of dependence on the goodwill of governing parties on local, regional, or national level. An example of how the framework for CSOs' financial viability might quickly be turned upside down arose in 2024, when an ÖVP politician proposed legislation requiring the publication of donors' names for contributions exceeding €2,500.⁴⁹ Such a measure could jeopardise organisations' financial security and significantly alter donor behaviour.

Donations remain another vital source of income for CSOs. Recently, Fundraising Verband Austria (the umbrella organisation for all organisations receiving donations in Austria) reported that in 2023 Austrians donated €1.075 billion, slightly below the record €1.1 billion in 2022 which was driven by solidarity with Ukraine. In addition, the report states that 72% of the population, aged over 16, donated in 2022. Although the amount of donations has remained high, the unstable economic situation and rising costs are expected to negatively influence donation habits in the upcoming years.⁵⁰ This foresight stands in contrast to the positive effects expected as a result of the newly amended law⁵¹ that expanded tax deductibility to all charitable purposes. It remains uncertain whether the consequences of the new law will be able to contradict economic challenges and rising costs (see section on freedom of association).

However, while the past five years offered a relatively stable environment for NGOs in Austria despite multiple external crises, more challenges lie ahead. A changing political landscape paired

⁴⁸ Pennerstorfer, A., and Schneider, U. (2022). Der Nonprofit-Sektor in Österreich, in R. Simsa, M. Meyer, & C. Badelt (eds.), *Handbuch der Nonprofit-Organisationen. Strukturen und Management* (55-72). Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel Verlag.

⁴⁹ <https://www.diepresse.com/18845000/oevp-will-strengere-regeln-bei-ngo-finanzierung>

⁵⁰ <https://www.fundraising.at/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/FVA-Spendenbericht-2024.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://www.parlament.gv.at/gegenstand/XXVII/ME/299>

with austerity measures and economic uncertainty are likely to heavily affect the sector's financial viability and stability.

Civil dialogue and the right to participation

A study by the Vienna University of Economics and Business finds that "CSOs in Austria are deeply involved in political decision-making. CSOs have engaged in dialogue and negotiations with the government in many areas and have often been involved in legislative processes. Further, they provide social services and in return, they receive large shares of their funding from public sources. The public sector thus plays an important role for CSOs, influencing their organisational and financial structures. CSOs are particularly active in social services, health care and education. Furthermore, federalism and self-governance of the nine federal provinces are reflected in civil society and there are both strong local and umbrella organisations at the federal level."⁵²

However, there is no formal framework or legislation regulating civil dialogue. This results in inconsistent participation processes, heavily dependent on the willingness of individual ministries or departments. This inconsistency creates risks of exclusion and funding cuts when the political landscape shifts towards a hostile environment for CSOs, as already seen during the FPÖ-ÖVP coalition until 2019.⁵³

Cooperation between decision-makers and NGOs peaked between 2020-2024, with progress in taxation, subsidies, and voluntary services.

However, the current political developments, including a rise of the right-wing populist party FPÖ underscore the need for a unified and strong civil society voice to preserve these achievements.

Civil society resilience

Since the establishment of Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit, cooperation among NGOs in Austria has grown. The network now includes over 120 organisations, ranging from small and local associations to major entities such as the Austrian branches of the Red Cross, Caritas, Amnesty International, WWF, Transparency International and Birdlife. It also encompasses sector-specific umbrella organisations such as Sozialwirtschaft Österreich and arbeit plus (social and health) or Ökobüro and Umweltdachverband (environment). In 2024, new umbrella organisations joined the network, broadening its scope to include culture, science, and other previously underrepresented areas.⁵⁴ The continuous growth of Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit fosters collaboration within the sector and strengthens its resilience.

⁵² <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/73928>

⁵³ <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2019-0029>

⁵⁴ <https://www.gemeinnuetzig.at/ueber-uns/#unseremitglieder>

Public trust in civil society remains high compared to trust in politicians⁵⁵ or media,⁵⁶ with organisations providing medical services enjoying the greatest levels of trust, and climate activists the lowest.⁵⁷

Despite the sector's resilience during crises, its heavy reliance on government for cooperation and public donations leaves NGOs vulnerable. Increasing bureaucratic burdens, national budget deficits, and political uncertainties are expected to pose significant challenges in the coming years.

⁵⁵ <https://www.ogm.at/2024/08/30/ogm-apa-vertrauensindex-bundespolitikerinnen-august-2024//>

⁵⁶ <https://www.ogm.at/2024/11/01/ogm-apa-vertrauensindex-institutionen-oktober-2024//>

⁵⁷ <https://www.ogm.at/2024/12/13/ogm-apa-vertrauensindex-ngos-dezember-2024/>

Recommendations

Targeted recommendation: Secure core funding for civil society organisations' activities and services to strengthen their long-term stability and independence.

- Establish structured civil dialogue to ensure open, inclusive, ongoing, and transparent participation of civil society at all stages of the policy and decision-making processes.
- Amend the ORF law in accordance with the Austrian Constitutional Court's ruling to ensure the independence of the Austrian public service broadcasting. Additionally, implement measures to promote and fund a diverse and sustainable media landscape and protect independent journalism.
- Take steps to reduce bureaucratic burdens and harmonise funding processes to enhance NGOs' efficiency and impact.
- Recognise voluntary work as a key driver of social cohesion by establishing regular reporting mechanisms, improving framework conditions, and providing long-term financial support.

About the author

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