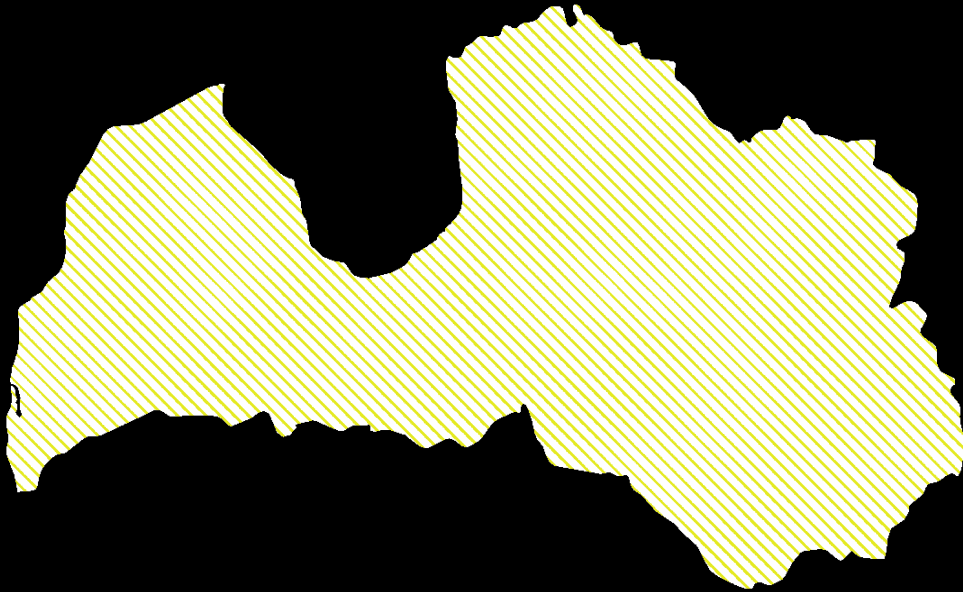
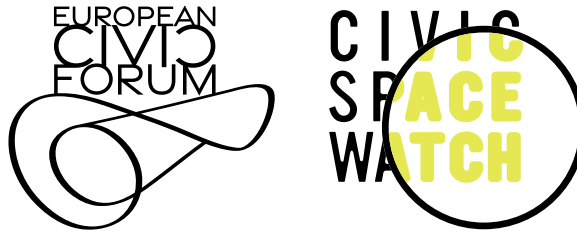


CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2025

# Latvia

By Civic Alliance Latvia





## **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

This report was published by the European Civic Forum (ECF) in June 2025, with chapters written by its secretariat, member organisations, and partner organisations, including as part of the Net4Defenders project. Much of the content originally appeared as part of ECF's submission to the European Commission's Rule of Law consultation. Each chapter reflects the views and analysis of its respective author. For more information about the European Civic Forum, please visit [www.civic-forum.eu](http://www.civic-forum.eu).

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Civic Alliance – Latvia (CAL)** is an independent umbrella organisation representing the common interests of civil society in Latvia, including associations and foundations, based on the fundamental freedoms of democracy and human rights. CAL implements dialogue with public administration and other decision-makers, creates a favourable environment for a strong, active and knowledgeable civil society at the local, national, and international levels.



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# Key civic space trends

-  An overall positive environment for civil society, although implementation gaps remain.
-  More measures needed for meaningful public participation at all levels.
-  Inadequate funding remains a significant constraint to CSO sustainability and societal resilience.

## Summary

Civic space in Latvia is rated as “open” by the CIVICUS Monitor,<sup>1</sup> and fundamental freedoms are generally well-respected. There were no recommendations related to civic space in the European Commission’s 2024 Rule of Law report. However, it noted that “civil society operates in an open space but calls for better availability and adequacy of financial resources.” In 2024, a number of positive changes were introduced, including the improvement of the *Saeima* (Latvian parliament) Declaration on the Development of Civil Society in Latvia and Cooperation with NGOs, the recognition of civil dialogue in a government declaration and action plan, and the approval of targeted programmes for civil dialogue. However, access to funding is declining, while inflation further increases operational costs, which in turn impacts the capacity and resilience of civil society organisations (CSOs).

The Commission’s 2024 report also noted progress in civic engagement through the Local Government Law (2022). However, CSOs report inconsistent

implementation, as many local governments are yet to integrate participatory mechanisms effectively. Many municipalities lack formalised participation mechanisms, and civil society engagement in policy-making is largely informal and non-binding. The Latvian government made no progress following the European Commission’s 2023 recommendation to continue working on the establishment of a lobby register. Although the Law on Transparency of Interest Representation entered into force in Latvia in 2023, the necessary regulations were still not adopted in 2024.

Furthermore, by the end of 2024, there was still no single institution responsible for overseeing the implementation of the law. Notably, on 25 June, the cabinet of ministers tasked the parliament with identifying a institution responsible for ensuring effective supervision of interest representation in Latvia. However, by the end of 2024, the parliament had yet to designate a responsible body.

## Institutional, political, and socio-economic landscape

In the more than 30 years since the restoration of the independence of the Baltic States, Latvia has developed a stable democratic state and the preconditions for active citizenship. However, for Latvia to have a stable civic movement based on democratic values and capable of effective organisation and quality public participation, several improvements, including targeted support for civil society development, are needed. A major systemic problem relates to the absence of a single public authority responsible for the functioning and development of civil society and

democracy. Civil society issues are fragmented: the culture ministry addresses them through integration policy, while the finance ministry through tax collection. The state chancellery oversees public participation at ministerial level, and the defence ministry addresses them from a national security perspective. At the same time, the justice ministry is responsible for drafting the Law on Associations and Foundations, and the cabinet of ministers oversees the implementation of the memorandum of understanding on the cooperation between the government and non-governmental

<sup>1</sup>. <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/latvia/>

organisations (NGOs). However, neither of these institutions assume responsibility for strengthening civil society, its development, and horizontal issues in a coordinated manner. At the same time, it should be noted that in the autumn of 2024, the culture minister, Agnese Lāce, appointed a freelance adviser for cooperation with NGOs.

On 17 December 2024, the cabinet of ministers approved the “Development Plan for a Cohesive and Civically Active Society 2024-2027”.<sup>2</sup> The plan promotes the development of a national, solidarity-based, open and civically active society through three action lines: national identity and belonging; democratic culture and inclusive citizenship; and integration.

Latvian civil society organisations (CSOs) raised the alarm and criticised the European Commission’s proposal for a directive on interest representation on behalf of “third countries” (as a part of the Defence of Democracy Package), which CSOs see as equivalent to so-called “foreign agents” laws globally. CSOs expressed concerns over threats to fundamental rights, potential discrimination, smear campaigns, and the stigmatisation of CSOs, and stressed the need for a comprehensive impact assessment of the directive. At the same time, the European Cross-Border Associations Directive was welcomed, as it facilitates the activities of non-profit organisations at EU level.

The Whistleblowing and Whistleblower Protection Report 2023,<sup>3</sup> published in 2024, revealed that 45 competent authorities (34 public authorities and 11 municipalities) received 386 applications in 2023, a 2% decrease compared to 2022. Of these, 106 were recognised as whistleblower reports (up from 99 in 2022).

In 2023:

- ▶ 4 criminal and 13 administrative proceedings were initiated based on whistleblower reports;
- ▶ 38 investigations were carried out, including inspections related to taxation, procurement, labour law, and occupational safety;
- ▶ 53 cases prompted corrective actions, such as departmental reviews, on-site inspections, and the formation of inspection commissions;
- ▶ Reported issues included violations in areas such as tax payments, construction safety, corruption, and workplace misconduct (including wage issues, employee treatment, and public sector compliance).

Data indicates that no more than nine cases of retaliation against whistleblowers were recorded in 2023. Whistleblowers played a vital role in ensuring accountability and upholding the rule of law across various sectors.

In 2024, the *Manabalss.lv* online platform continued to increase its importance, becoming one of the most widely used tools for the public to propose legislative changes. In total, 164 initiatives were published on *Manabalss.lv* in 2023 (out of 344 evaluated). In 2023, almost 60,000 new users joined *Manabalss.lv*, bringing the total number of unique users to 513,866. Meanwhile, 701,081 votes were cast.

In practice, however, civil society participation in decision-making tends to diverge from the legal framework, with the participation process often being formalistic rather than meaningful.

# The regulatory environment for civic freedoms

## Freedom of association

Latvian law guarantees freedom of association under the constitution, with CSOs primarily governed by the Law on Associations and Foundations. The registration process is accessible, and legal protections exist. However, discussions continue on appointing a dedicated civil society office within government structures to ensure stronger institutional support.

The operating environment for CSOs in 2024 shows a slight decline compared to the previous year, yet there are positive trends. In 2024, 952 new associations and foundations were founded, while 266 were dissolved, bringing the total number of associations and foundations in Latvia to 27,513.

2. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/357419-saliedetas-un-pilsoniski-aktivas-sabiedribas-attistibas-plans-2024-2027-gadam>

3. <https://www.trauksmescelejs.lv/sites/default/files/buttons-card-files/Trauksmes%20celsanas%20parskats%202023.pdf>

Amendments were made to the Law on Associations and Foundations, which regulates the establishment and day-to-day operation of associations and foundations. These amendments are expected to facilitate greater participation of members, the board, and other stakeholders in the organisations' decision-making process, and to enable more efficient operation by giving them the right to organise annual general members meetings online. A new classification of the fields of activity of associations and foundations was also introduced, making it mandatory for organisations to declare their field of activity when joining the Register of Associations and Foundations. The classification of the fields of activity was also improved to better reflect the nuances of the sector's activities. The

adopted amendments also simplify the liquidation process and allow the Register of Enterprises and the State Revenue Service to remove inactive organisations from the register. This significantly addresses the issue of state-maintained registers containing a high number of long-inactive organisations.

Although many stakeholder consultations took place, amendments to the Public Benefit Organisations Law had not been approved by the end of 2024. Although the drafting of amendments started in 2018, the amendments proposed by the ministry were not accepted by CSOs, as these were perceived as harmful to the sector and failed to gain consensus.<sup>4</sup>

## **Freedom of peaceful assembly**

In 2024, Latvian municipalities received 411 applications for pickets, marches, and assemblies, of which seven were refused. The number of applications has decreased significantly compared to 2023, when 636 applications were submitted, of which only one was refused. It is important to note that municipalities

provided data on the number of applications in 2024 only until November (data was collected during autumn 2024), whereas data for 2023 covers the whole year.<sup>5</sup>

A notable decline was observed in Riga, where the number of picket applications fell from 507 in 2023 to only 266 by October 2024.

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

Exercising freedom of expression without accountability and respect for the legal framework can contribute to hate speech, which most often appears in the form of anonymous comments. Relatively few criminal proceedings are initiated for such offences, but an increasing number of people are voluntarily reporting hate speech. However, the number of such cases remains small.

Hate speech is particularly found in the comments sections of news websites on social media. There is currently no common understanding of how to address this issue, and cooperation between law enforcement authorities and internet portals is not always effective. There is also a lack of public awareness that such activities are punishable and that people are not completely anonymous.<sup>6</sup>

While free speech is protected, digital rights remain a concern. Activists have reported incidents of doxing and online harassment, with limited state intervention to

curb such violations. The Liberties Rule of Law Report 2024 states that hate speech targeting CSOs and rights activists remains an issue in Latvia.<sup>7</sup>

Civic Alliance – Latvia's civic space report *Līmeņrādis*<sup>8</sup> highlights concerns about the spread of hate speech in Latvia's digital environment. The report also notes a polarisation of society, which has led to harsher reactions and verbal attacks on both organisations and individual activists.

In 2024, the Ombudsman intervened against a methodological guide for professionals working with children and young people, titled "SENSOA Flag System: How to respond to sexual behaviour of children and young people", developed by an association working on sexual and reproductive health and rights, Papardes zieds.<sup>9</sup> In his opinion, the Ombudsman stated that the methodological materials for identifying harmful sexual behaviour contravened Latvian law. The Ombudsman recommended that the association should not organise training sessions for specialists based on this method. By disregarding principles of good governance and

4. Nevalstisko organizāciju un Ministru kabineta sadarbības memoranda sēdes protokols

5. Data source: local governments of the Republic of Latvia, at the request of the CAL.

6. Civic space monitoring report: gala\_zinojums\_2024417.pdf

7. Liberties Rule of Law Report 2024 | Latvijas Cilvēktiesību centrs

8. [https://nvo.lv/en/zina/latvias\\_2024\\_civic\\_space\\_assessment\\_key\\_changes\\_in\\_access\\_to\\_funding](https://nvo.lv/en/zina/latvias_2024_civic_space_assessment_key_changes_in_access_to_funding)

9. Karogu sistēmas lietotājiem | Papardes zieds

failing to engage in dialogue with the association, the Ombudsman essentially questioned the ability of professionals to be aware of the limits of their competence and to act in accordance with Latvian law. The Ombudsman's opinion reflects a dangerous trend in Latvian society, where state institutions want to regulate and control the work of professionals on sexual and reproductive health of children and young adults. This has created insecurity and fear among both state and non-state sectors to deal with any issue concerning sexual and reproductive health of children and young people.

In 2024, Latvia introduced the first concrete attempts to regulate the use of AI in election campaigns. Amendments to the Election Campaigning Law, approved on 24 October 2024, require that election campaigns clearly and unambiguously indicate if artificial intelligence has been used in images, audio, or video content. The amendment also prohibits the use of automated systems to conduct electioneering through fake social media accounts.

## Safe space

While Latvia is generally considered to have “open” civic space, certain challenges continue to impact the safety and operational freedom of civil society actors.

Civil society actors working on politically sensitive topics have reported receiving threats and cyberattacks on their digital infrastructure. Despite these challenges, law enforcement has been slow to investigate and prosecute perpetrators, leading to concerns over the effectiveness of protective mechanisms for civic actors.

While the Latvian government has made commitments to support civil society and protect human rights defenders (HRDs), implementation has been inconsistent. The establishment of funding programmes for civic initiatives is a positive step, but legal protections for activists remain inadequate.

The increasing challenges facing civil society in Latvia indicate a need for more robust institutional protections. While legal frameworks exist, practical enforcement is a significant gap. The government must take concrete actions to prevent harassment, ensure accountability for attacks on activists, and create a more secure environment for civil society actors to operate without fear of retaliation.

Additionally, a lack of funding has forced regional and local media to suspend their activities, weakening independent media and limiting efforts to strengthen the information space against disinformation.

## Financial viability and sustainability of civil society

The financial sustainability of CSOs in Latvia continues to be one of the most pressing challenges, affecting their ability to operate independently, plan long-term strategies, and engage in meaningful civic participation. While there have been some positive developments in funding availability, including increased government and EU funding opportunities, structural issues persist, such as an over-reliance on single funding sources and administrative burdens.

Currently, several factors — including rapid inflation, the end of the funding period of the Active Citizens Fund (a grant programme of the European Economic

Area and Norway), and the lack of funding from the Swiss EEA Support Mechanism in Latvia — create a significant gap in CSO funding.

Although statistics show that funding for the associations and foundations sector is growing in absolute numbers, this is largely due to the rapid inflation. Furthermore, fewer associations and foundations report financial activity, therefore the already scarce funding is reaching fewer organisations. Meanwhile, funding programmes such as the NGO Fund (one of the central funding sources for NGOs in Latvia) have not increased their funding per project in line with inflation

(currently, the total available funding is €2.5 million per year). In 2024, more than half of the submitted projects were rejected due to insufficient funding.

The Active Citizens Fund, which has been a major source of funding for CSOs in recent years, ended in 2024. However, on 12 September 2024, an agreement was concluded between the EU and Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway on the implementation of the new EEA and Norway Grants financial period (2021-2028). The Civil Society Support Fund in Latvia will receive €9.88 million, but the funds are expected to be distributed in 2025 at the earliest, leaving a considerable gap in CSO funding during 2024 and 2025.<sup>10</sup>

The co-financing and pre-financing requirements for projects, especially large grants, are increasingly challenging, but there is no adequate programme in Latvia that can issue eligible pre-financing for associations and foundations or cover the co-financing part in cases where organisations manage to attract foreign funding to the state budget.

Associations and foundations continue to express dissatisfaction with the procedures governing the distribution of EU funds in Latvia. Although the European Commission's guidelines emphasise the need to include CSOs in the planning and absorption of the Structural Funds budget planning, decisions in Latvia are still often taken behind closed doors with minimal involvement of representatives of social groups, associations, and foundations.

As part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan programme “Public interest monitoring of the use of foreign investment and public funding”, the “EU Fund Monitoring” project is running in 2024. In this project, seven Latvian associations and foundations represent the interests of civil society and monitor public administration decisions to ensure that the public interest is considered in EU funds allocation in EU Fund Monitoring Committees and that the implementation of EU funds becomes more transparent. In the first year of implementation, the project has already achieved a number of positive outcomes for the sector, including improved accessibility of EU programme investments and increased consultations between ministries and CSOs on EU fund programmes.<sup>11</sup>

CSOs have also drawn attention to the legal uncertainty regarding the interpretation of the EU Financial Regulation and Latvia's national interpretation of

conflict-of-interest risks. In the Latvian context, the requirements of the EU Financial Regulation are practically unenforceable, due to the broad interpretation of conflict of interest, which includes “emotional ties” that people develop even as former colleagues, classmates, and volunteers. The issue has not been resolved, although the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, under the direction of Prime Minister Evika Siliņa, has formed a working group to propose amendments to the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in the Activities of Public Officials. Moreover, the Central Financial and Contracts Agency and the finance ministry are in the process of developing guidelines summarising key information on the criteria for assessing the risk of conflict of interest. These guidelines will include the questions a person should ask when participating in an evaluation or approval position related to EU funding and obtaining the status of a public official.

A significant threat to the funding of associations and foundations in 2024 was the proposal of the finance ministry to limit the possibilities of associations and foundations to carry out economic activities by amending the Corporate Income Tax Law. The proposed amendments stipulated that, from 1 January 2025, associations and foundations without public benefit status would have to pay corporate income tax on their economic activities. However, due to the high participation of associations and foundations during the public consultation, the ministry suspended the amendments to the Law on Corporate Income Tax, promising to organise discussions and exchange views with associations and foundations to examine alternative solutions.

The overall financial capacity of Latvia's civil society sector has been declining in recent years, with a decrease in the number of organisations demonstrating financial activity across all revenue categories. From 2019 to 2022, the number of organisations receiving donations decreased by 27%, while those receiving grants declined by 6%. While the total amount of donations increased — reaching €97.7 million in 2022, a 55% rise compared to the previous year — the number of organisations benefiting from these funds has been shrinking. This suggests that while a few well-established organisations have gained access to significant funding, many smaller and regional CSOs struggle to secure financial resources.

<sup>10</sup>. <https://www.activecitizensfund.lv/lv/jaunumi/aif-jaunumi/aktivo-iedzivotaju-fonda-turpinajums.html>

<sup>11</sup>. <https://providus.lv/projekti/es-fondu-uzraugi/>

A new EU-funded program (2024-2029) has been launched under the culture ministry, allocating over €4 million for strengthening civic engagement and social resilience. It will be implemented by Civic Alliance – Latvia, in cooperation with four regional resource centres.

Many CSOs in Latvia rely on a single dominant funding source, such as government grants, EU funding, or project-based support, which raises concerns about their long-term viability. Data from 2022 shows that only 16% of organisations reported incomes from donations, while 84% were primarily dependent on government or EU funding. This lack of financial diversification creates a vulnerability, as organisations may feel pressured to align their work with funders' priorities rather than addressing urgent civic needs. Our recommendations for strengthening financial viability are as follows:

1. Ensure long-term state funding mechanisms — the government should establish a permanent state budget allocation for CSOs to guarantee financial stability rather than relying on short-term project funding.
2. Simplify administrative processes — funding application and reporting requirements should be streamlined, particularly for small and regional organisations.
3. Improve tax incentives for private donations — the government should restore favourable tax conditions to encourage businesses and individuals to support civil society initiatives.
4. Diversify funding sources — CSOs should be supported in developing income-generating activities, such as social entrepreneurship, service provision, and crowdfunding mechanisms.
5. Increase EU funding accessibility — the distribution of EU funds should prioritise accessibility for smaller, community-based organisations to ensure a broader impact across Latvia.

## Civil dialogue and the right to participation

The legal framework in Latvia provides multiple mechanisms for civil society participation in governance. However, while the Memorandum Council and other consultative structures exist, the effectiveness and inclusiveness of these mechanisms vary significantly. CSOs still face challenges in accessing decision-making processes, and meaningful engagement is hindered by inconsistent implementation, lack of transparency, and insufficient government commitment to structured dialogue.

Latvia has established various formal structures for CSO participation, including the State Administration Structure Law and the Cabinet Rules of Procedure, which outline consultation mechanisms such as advisory councils, working groups, and public consultations. At the national level, each ministry has at least one consultative council, and parliamentary commissions regularly invite CSOs to provide opinions on policy matters.

One of the main institutional platforms for civil society engagement is the Memorandum of Cooperation between CSOs and the cabinet of ministers. This

Memorandum Council serves as a key forum for structured dialogue between civil society and the government. However, despite political commitments to strengthen it, the council lacks sufficient funding and institutional support to operate effectively.

In 2024, the new model of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Non-Governmental Organisations and the Cabinet of Ministers<sup>12</sup> was approved yet not implemented. The new model establishes the Memorandum Implementation Council as the central platform for civil dialogue, allows for the creation of working groups to address civil society development issues, and requires an extended annual meeting of the council with the participation of the prime minister and other ministers.

On 22 February, the *Saeima* approved a new declaration on the development of civil society in Latvia to improve and modernise dialogue with civil society.<sup>13</sup> The declaration reinforces commitments to mutual openness, cooperation, and inclusive civil and social dialogue. However, in 2024, several parliamentary decisions contradicted the declaration. For example,

<sup>12</sup>. <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/nevalstisko-organizaciju-un-ministru-kabineta-sadarbibas-memoranda-istenosanas-padome>

<sup>13</sup>. [https://saeima.lv/files/Deklaracija\\_par\\_sadarb\\_pilson\\_sabiedr\\_2202.pdf](https://saeima.lv/files/Deklaracija_par_sadarb_pilson_sabiedr_2202.pdf)

81 members of the parliament (MPs) voted against amendments to the Law on the Structure of State Administration, which would have provided for more opportunities for public participation in the work of the *Saeima*.

While consultation mechanisms exist, the quality and depth of engagement vary depending on political will and administrative practices. In some ministries, CSOs report positive collaboration, while in others, engagement remains superficial. Consultation processes are often rushed, with short deadlines and limited opportunities for meaningful input, making it difficult for CSOs to provide well-researched contributions.

Furthermore, CSOs highlight a lack of follow-up mechanisms, meaning that even when their recommendations are acknowledged, they are not always implemented or reflected in policy decisions. This weakens trust in the consultation process and discourages civil society actors from engaging in future discussions.

However, there were some positive developments in 2024. A specific support programme for the implementation of civic dialogue was launched with ESF+ funding. The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations by improving civil dialogue at all stages of decision-making and thereby strengthening trust in the state.

On 22 February, the *Saeima* approved a new declaration on the development of civil society in Latvia to improve and modernise dialogue with civil society.<sup>14</sup> The declaration reinforces commitments to mutual openness, cooperation, and inclusive civil and social dialogue. However, in 2024, several parliamentary decisions contradicted the declaration. For example, 81 MPs voted against amendments to the Law on the Structure of State Administration, which would have provided for more opportunities for public participation in the work of the *Saeima*.

Additionally, the culture minister appointed an advisor for cooperation with CSOs. The minister also committed to organising a civil dialogue meeting with CSO representatives at least every three months to strengthen dialogue and create a platform for discussion on important issues. However, in 2024, only one such dialogue meeting took place.

On 7 May, the annual *Saeima*-NGO forum was held to discuss Latvia's future in Europe, marking Latvia's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a member of the European Union and NATO. The *Saeima*-NGO Forum is an important initiative to promote cooperation between civil society and the *Saeima*, and to encourage the involvement of NGOs in legislative processes.

In 2024, the cabinet of ministers approved new rules on public participation in development planning,<sup>15</sup> extending it beyond policy-making to include reforms and budgetary issues. Citizens can now initiate participatory processes, and institutions must respond if participation opportunities are not provided. In addition, renewed and standardised forms of participation were introduced, including innovative methods such as think-tanks to improve the effectiveness of decision-making. However, the parliament did not support the application of these provisions at the parliamentary level. As of 1 September 2024, the Local Government Referendums Act enters into force.<sup>16</sup>

A significant step forward was made with the 2022 Local Government Law, which introduced new requirements for public participation in municipal decision-making. However, implementation at the local level remains inconsistent. A survey conducted on municipal engagement with CSOs found that:

- ▶ 655 associations and foundations participated in local government public participation mechanisms between 2020 and 2022.
- ▶ 309 of these organisations were based in Riga, while 346 were outside the capital, indicating that participation is not limited to urban areas but remains uneven.
- ▶ Many municipalities still lack formal civic participation mechanisms, and in many cases, CSOs are engaged only in informal discussions rather than structured decision-making processes.

Additionally, while local governments often collaborate with CSOs on community projects and social initiatives, they rarely involve them in policy planning, budgeting, or legislative processes, limiting the impact of civic participation on governance.

Despite progress, several barriers continue to hinder meaningful dialogue between CSOs and governing bodies. Limited institutional capacity and funding make it difficult for consultative bodies such as the Memorandum Council to sustain long-term

<sup>14</sup>. [https://saeima.lv/files/Deklaracija\\_par\\_sadarb\\_pilson\\_sabiedr\\_2202.pdf](https://saeima.lv/files/Deklaracija_par_sadarb_pilson_sabiedr_2202.pdf)

<sup>15</sup>. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/355632-sabiedribas-lidzdalibas-kartiba-attistibas-planosanas-procesa>

<sup>16</sup>. Latvija var rīkot pašvaldību referendumus - LV portāls

engagement. In some cases, participation remain tokenistic: some government institutions collaborate with CSOs only to fulfill formal requirements, rather than genuinely incorporating their perspectives into policymaking. Moreover, while Latvia has legal

provisions for public access to information, CSOs report difficulties obtaining timely and comprehensive data, which affects their ability to participate effectively in decision-making.

## Civil society resilience

Latvia's civil society has demonstrated remarkable resilience despite financial constraints, political instability, external threats, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine. CSOs have continued to provide essential services, advocate for human rights, and foster democratic engagement. However, structural weaknesses, regional disparities, political pressure and limited institutional support remain obstacles to long-term resilience.

The financial instability of CSOs is a major obstacle to their resilience. The sector remains highly dependent on project-based funding, EU grants, and government support, which are often short-term and unpredictable. Many organisations lack long-term financial planning capabilities, making it difficult to sustain their activities beyond individual project cycles. Few CSOs have reported receiving donations, indicating a reliance on institutional funding rather than community-based

financial support. Lastly, smaller and regional CSOs struggle to access funding, as the majority of available resources are concentrated in Riga and a few larger cities.

Despite these challenges, Latvian civil society has developed innovative strategies to enhance resilience and ensure long-term sustainability. CSOs have formed alliances and coalitions to coordinate advocacy efforts, share resources, and provide mutual support. The Civic Alliance – Latvia and LAPAS have played key roles in providing training, capacity-building, and legal support to smaller organisations.

Public trust in civil society remains relatively high, particularly for organisations involved in crisis response and social services. However, mistrust towards advocacy organisations and HRDs has grown, fuelled in part by disinformation and negative political rhetoric.

## Recommendations

### **TARGETED RECOMMENDATION:**

→ **Recognise and implement structured civil dialogue as equal to social dialogue by the end of 2025.**

- Urgently appoint designated civil society advisers to facilitate structured dialogue with CSOs and develop joint action plans for policymaking.
- Improve the legal framework governing civil dialogue and ensure that participatory mechanisms are legally binding on decision-makers.
- Urgently develop and implement measures to combat misinformation and promote mutual support in crisis situations, ensuring a strong and cohesive society, including strengthening regional independent media.
- Urgently increase financial support for civil society by introducing new funding programmes to support volunteering and public interest activities and by increasing funding in existing programmes, particularly the NGO Fund.
- Immediately reform conflict of interest management procedures to reduce administrative burdens, while maintaining transparency, by the end of 2025.

## CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2025



### **About European Civic Forum**

European Civic Forum (ECF) is a pan-European network of nearly 100 associations and NGOs across 29 European countries. Founded in 2005 by our member organisations, we have spent nearly two decades working to protect civic space, enable civic participation and build civil dialogue for more equality, solidarity and democracy in Europe.

**civic-forum.eu**



### **About Civic Space Watch**

CivicSpace Watch is an online platform that gathers data and reports on developments in civic space at the national and EU level and analyses national and European trends in civic space. Powered by the European Civic Forum, it collects findings through regular contact and interviews with a strong network of members and partners on the ground, as well as ongoing media and social media monitoring.

**civicspacewatch.eu**



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