

2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia

Overview The 2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia reports on the state of CSO sectors in 24 countries in the region, from the Baltics in the north to the Caucasus in the south, and the Visegrad countries in the west to Russia, which stretches east to the Pacific Ocean. It addresses both advances and setbacks in seven key components or “dimensions” of the sustainability of the civil society sector: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, sectoral infrastructure, and public image. The CSOSI is intended to be a useful source of information for local CSOs, governments, donors, academics, and others who want to better understand and monitor key aspects of sustainability in the CSO sector.

The CSOSI provides a comprehensive assessment of the capacity of civil society to serve as both a short-term partner in implementing development solutions and a long-term actor in ensuring that development outcomes are sustained. The CSOSI empowers local civil society actors to collectively assess not only the environments in which they operate, but also their own capacities to advocate, operate sustainably, and communicate with citizens. Allowing local civil society to self-identify their development challenges is the first step in promoting resiliency and long-term self-reliance.

The CSOSI is produced by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with FHI 360, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), and a local implementing partner in each participating country. A total of 72 countries across the globe were surveyed in various editions of the CSOSI in 2018.

Results In 2018, mass protests involving civil society were organized in a number of countries, including Armenia and Slovakia. Due to these efforts and others, eight countries reported improvements in their advocacy scores. Civil society in several countries, ranging from Russia and Belarus to Poland and Hungary continued to be polarized, with the government supporting and tolerating some organizations, while restricting or delegitimizing others. More frequent vilification of a segment of the sector, particularly those working on immigration issues, contributed to a deterioration in the public image scores in ten countries. Seven countries reported deterioration in their legal environment scores – one common reason is that unclear new regulations on money laundering, counter-terrorism, and data privacy are placing administrative burdens on CSOs. Lastly, although financial viability continues to be the weakest dimension of CSO sustainability in nearly every country, half of the countries covered in this edition of the CSOSI reported improvement in this dimension in 2018. These improvements, which were concentrated in the Southern Tier and Eurasia, were fueled by advances in public funding, foreign funding, individual philanthropy, tax designations, and social entrepreneurship.

The 2018 CSOSI regional reports can be found at <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/civil-society-organization-sustainability-index-reports>. Explore historical CSOSI data at <https://www.csosi.org>.

