

2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia

Overview The 2019 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 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 74 countries across the globe are surveyed in various regional editions of the CSOSI.

Results In 2019, before the world changed dramatically with the global spread of the novel coronavirus, the region saw many national elections and several dramatic political developments, with CSOs often at the center of these events. In Ukraine and Slovakia, political newcomers friendlier to civil society were elected to high office; in Poland and Hungary, CSOs coalesced against populist governments around elections; in Serbia and Montenegro, political deadlock hindered CSO advocacy; in Romania, the government’s impeachment led to a friendlier administration; and in Georgia, a Russian parliamentarian’s visit sparked anti-government protests, to provide but a few examples. Ten of the 24 countries’ advocacy scores improved as CSO advocacy strengthened in 2019, including improvements linked to changes in government, and more opportunities to interact with government for some CSOs. There were also modest gains in service provision, reflected in improved scores in seven countries, as government support increased, and social entrepreneurship grew more common. Financial viability scores improved in nine countries, as progress on government funding, tax designation mechanisms, and foreign funding continued in several countries (though the pandemic was to reverse much of this progress in 2020). Nevertheless, smear campaigns continued to target CSOs in several countries, deteriorating public image scores in five countries, often tied to polarization, and targeted at CSOs working on democracy and rights issues.

Resources The 2019 CSOSI regional reports can be found at FHI 360’s [resource page](#). Explore historical CSOSI data at <https://www.csosi.org>.

