

CZECH REPUBLIC

Key trends in 2023

- Lack of political leadership to institutionalise civic and stakeholder participation.
- Public funding still lacks multi-year funding, consistency in approaches by different public funders and streamlined co-financing and bureaucratic requirements.
- Consolidation of public finances led to unforeseen consequences for governance, addressing the needs of vulnerable people, and for the operating environment for CSOs.

Targeted recommendation:

- Ensure political support and institutional embedding of citizen and stakeholder participation in public decision-making, including through participatory mechanisms, capacity building, community practice and strengthen the overall literacy and culture of participation in the Czech administration and wider society.

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Summary

The civic space is rated as open in the Czech Republic. Public trust in the government is the lowest, mainly due to the dissatisfaction and criticism of domestic policy and social and economic issues. Civil society has called for strengthening of society's trust in public institutions and democracy by all available means, including by ensuring that policies are responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups and the wider centre of society and that they are effectively communicated to citizens by the political representation and public administration.

In its 2023 Rule of Law report, the European Commission recommended that the Czech government take steps to improve media ownership and media independence. The Czech Parliament approved the amendment to the media law which was a major step towards limiting politicians' media ownership. However, ownership of private media is still concentrated, and public media continues to face pressure and political influence.

Public funding for CSOs remains a challenge due to the absence of multi-annual funding, lengthy and bureaucratic grant awarding processes, strict co-financing requirements and diverse grant approaches. While funding allocated from the state budget to civil society activities remained the same, thematic fields such as sports associations received more funds while organisations advocating for rights, such as gender equality, faced a decrease in funding. CSOs are also challenged by the lack of funding for digitisation, which puts the sector at a disadvantage compared to other sectors.

There have been some good practices on civic and stakeholder participation across the Czech public administration in past years. However, the existing processes do not have sufficient impact, there is a lack of coordination, and good practices are not shared. A lack of a comprehensive vision of civil society participation remains.