

## CSO Meter Regional Overview 2020

### Developments in civil society environment in the Eastern Partnership countries<sup>1</sup>

The 2020 CSO Meter Regional Overview tracks the developments related to the civil society environment in the Eastern Partnership countries. You may read the full report at <https://csometer.info/> and follow the latest news from the region in Twitter at [#csometer](#).

### Trends

2020 has brought unprecedented challenges for civil society in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. Political turbulence and the COVID-19 pandemic are the two key factors that have significantly impacted the region. The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of digitalization in ensuring CSOs have the possibility for online reporting and registration or participation in public consultations through online platforms.

### Quick comparison of civil society sector basic data

Country	Fee	Timeline for registration	Total no. of CSOs	CSOs per 10,000 inhabitants <sup>2</sup>
Armenia	17.5 EUR	Up to 10/15 days	6,129	20.7
Azerbaijan	5 EUR	Several years	More than 4,500	4.5
Belarus	4/45/89 EUR	1 day/1 month	More than 3,300	3.5
Georgia	25/51 EUR	1 day/same day	29,072	78
Moldova	Free <sup>3</sup>	15 days	10,942 <sup>4</sup>	31
Ukraine	Free	3-15 days/1 day	110,000	26

<sup>1</sup>The CSO Meter 2020 Regional overview is developed by the ECNL Stichting and its partners Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center Armenia; MG Consulting LLC; Civil Society Institute (CSI); Promo-LEX Association; and the Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research (UCIPR).

<sup>2</sup>We have calculated the number of CSOs per 10,000 inhabitants based on data provided by ECNL's partners and on World Bank population information.

<sup>3</sup>As of 27 August 2020.

<sup>4</sup>As of 2 November 2020.

## Assessment of the developments

When developing the 2020 country updates ECNL's partners assessed whether the situation under each area (the 10 areas are indicated in the table below) improved, deteriorated or did not face substantial changes as compared to the previous report. Separately, they also assessed the overall civil society environment. The only country that recorded slight improvement in the overall civil society environment was Moldova. Belarus is the country where the situation has worsened dramatically with deterioration in eight out of ten areas.

Country	Moldova	Georgia	Belarus	Ukraine	Azerbaijan	Armenia
Overall CSO Environment	↑	↔	↓	↓	↔	↓

The area with the most deterioration (among all EaP countries) is freedom of assembly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. State support has been the area where countries noted the most improvements. Apart from Belarus, the positive developments slightly outnumber the negative ones in the other five countries, despite the challenging circumstances. Each of the partners in the 5 countries (excluding Belarus) assessed 10 areas per country, which amounts to a total of 50 assessed areas. Out of these, 11 areas were assessed as improved, 8 areas as deteriorated, while the remaining 31 areas show no change.

Country/ Areas	Freedom of association	Equal treatment	Access to funding	Freedom of peaceful assembly	Right to participation	Freedom of expression	Right to privacy	State duty to protect	State support	State-CSO cooperation
Moldova	↑	↑	↔	↓	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
Georgia	↔	↔	↔	↔	↑	↔	↔	↔	↑	↑
Belarus	↓	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↔	↓
Ukraine	↑	↔	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	↔	↑	↔
Azerbaijan	↔	↔	↑	↓	↑	↔	↔	↔	↑	↔
Armenia	↔	↔	↔	↓	↓	↔	↔	↑	↔	↔

## Key developments and priorities

### MOLDOVA

**Key Development:** The new Law on Non-commercial Organizations offers protection against state interference in the internal affairs of CSOs, elimination of the registration fee, etc. <sup>5</sup>

**Priority for 2021:** Improve the transparency of and public participation in decision-making.

### ARMENIA

**Key Development:** Reporting requirements were introduced for all CSOs but key negative elements were removed (such as disclosure of all donors of public organisations, names of staff, volunteers, and other affiliated persons which benefitted from organisation's resources).<sup>6</sup>

**Priority for 2021:** Improve CSO financial sustainability through supporting philanthropy and economic activity and ensure meaningful public participation in the decision-making.

### UKRAINE

**Key Development:** The State Agency for Development of Youth and Civil Society was discontinued but a new civil society strategy is being developed.<sup>7</sup>

**Priority for 2021:** Improve the financial sustainability by developing social entrepreneurship, social contracting and increasing the amount of available state funding for CSOs.

### AZERBAIJAN

**Key Development:** The President signed the new Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan which contains several positive measures for CSOs.

**Priority for 2021:** Improve the access to foreign funding for CSOs.

### GEORGIA

**Key Development:** The Concept on State Support for CSO Development was re-introduced in Parliament.

**Priority for 2021:** Allow the possibility for local authorities to provide grants to CSOs.

### BELARUS

**Key Development:** Laws and regulations have worsened the conditions for peaceful assemblies, for obtaining foreign funding, and introduced mandatory financial reporting for CSOs.

**Priority for 2021:** Release of political prisoners and stop all forms of repression and discrimination against protesters.

<sup>5</sup><https://csometer.info/moldova-new-progressive-law-on-non-commercial-organisations/>

<sup>6</sup><https://csometer.info/armenian-parliament-adopts-amendments-to-cso-legislation/>

<sup>7</sup><https://ecnl.org/news/ukraine-develops-2021-2025-strategy-promote-civil-society-development>