

# CSO METER

## ASSESSING THE CIVIL SOCIETY ENVIRONMENT IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES



Monitoring Progress, Empowering Action

In 2019 ECNL and local partners\* carried out the pilot monitoring of the civil society environment in the six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries covering the period of 2017/2018 and some key developments in 2019. As a result we prepared the first ever CSO Meter Regional Report. You may read the full report and the country reports at <https://csometer.info/> and follow the latest news from the region in Twitter at [#csometer](https://twitter.com/csometer).

### CSO sector in the region

-   Highest number of registered CSOs per 10.000 inhabitants: **GEORGIA (64)**
-   Lowest number of registered CSOs per 10.000 inhabitants: **BELARUS (3); AZERBAIJAN (4)**
-  Most common legal forms: **association and foundation**  
**Other legal forms:** private establishments/ institutions (Belarus and Moldova), civic unions, charitable institutions charitable societies (Ukraine), non-entrepreneurial legal entity ('NELE', Georgia)
-   Lowest registration fee: **UKRAINE (free of charge)**
-   Highest registration fee: **MOLDOVA (for foundations - EUR 135)**
-  Shortest registration period: within 1 day – **BELARUS (for establishments), GEORGIA (NELE), UKRAINE (charitable organisations)**
-  Longest registration period: can take up to several years (**AZERBAIJAN**)

\*Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center (Armenia); MG Consulting LLC (Azerbaijan); the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs in collaboration with the Legal Transformation Center (Belarus); the Civil Society Institute (Georgia); Promo-Lex Association (Moldova); and the Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research (Ukraine). The process was supported by the European Union. For more information on the CSO Meter, see the CSO Meter website <https://csometer.info/> and a Briefer from ECNL <http://ecnl.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CSO-Meter-briefing-paper-new-final.pdf>.



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## CSO Meter pilot monitoring in numbers

### Outcome of pilot monitoring

Recommendations

273

Most recommendations per country: **BELARUS**

72

Most recommendations per area: **STATE SUPPORT**

47

Areas with most recommendations per country:

**Armenia**

**RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION**

9

**Azerbaijan**

**FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION,  
ACCESS TO FUNDING,  
STATE SUPPORT**

6

**Moldova**

**STATE SUPPORT**

8

### An inclusive process

562

responses to online surveys

54

interviews

19

focus group meetings with 188 CSO representatives

54

Advisory Board members overseeing the process

**Belarus**

**STATE SUPPORT,**

13

**FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION**

12

**Georgia**

**RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION**

7

**Ukraine**

**STATE SUPPORT**

6

## General trends and conclusions

It is important to guarantee fundamental freedoms in order to ensure enabling environment for civil society. The findings of the CSO Meter on the 6 countries in the Eastern Partnership region show that:



CSOs in the region face challenges to their ability to access diverse sources of funding and sustain their activities.



CSOs receiving foreign funding are regularly victims of stigmatization and attacks including by state authorities.



The internet is increasingly used and has both positive (e.g. online reporting, fundraising, platform for consultation) and negative effects (e.g. smear campaigns, disinformation) in the region.



New measures aimed to counter the financing of terrorism continue to be adopted and have far/reaching effects on the daily operation of CSOs.



In all countries in the region there are examples of positive developments with regard to the civil society environment.

## Selected issues of concern

### FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

-  The only country that prohibits unregistered associations: **BELARUS**;
-  The biggest challenges for registering a CSO: **AZERBAIJAN** and **BELARUS**;
-  Limitations for foreigners as founders: **AZERBAIJAN, BELARUS** and **MOLDOVA**.
-  **BELARUS** – decriminalization of engagement with unregistered organizations

### ACCESS TO FUNDING

Restrictions on access to funding exist in **BELARUS** and **AZERBAIJAN**:

-  **BELARUS** is the only country in the region where economic activities are not allowed;
-  Limitations on foreign funding (e.g. registration of grants);
-  Limitations of the objectives for which foreign funding can be received: **BELARUS**.
-  Prohibition of anonymous donations: **AZERBAIJAN**.
-  **ARMENIA** – economic activity allowed
-  **AZERBAIJAN** – grant registration simplified

### FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

-  Spontaneous and simultaneous assemblies are not protected: **AZERBAIJAN** and **BELARUS**;
-  The only country requiring authorisation: **BELARUS** (there is a 10-day notification for holding assemblies but only in designated places).
-  **CHISINAU, MOLDOVA** - online notification for assemblies

### EQUAL TREATMENT

-  CSOs are not treated equitably with business entities in 5 out of 6 countries (except for **GEORGIA**);
-  The registration procedure is significantly longer for CSOs than for business entities (e.g. **MOLDOVA**) or the registration fee for CSOs is higher (e.g. **ARMENIA**).
-  CSOs face less audits compared to businesses (**ARMENIA**) or pay smaller fees (**MOLDOVA**).

### CSO SUSTAINABILITY

-  State support is insufficient in the region;
-  Lack of incentives for philanthropy: only **UKRAINE** provides tax benefits for individual donors
-  **MOLDOVA** has introduced the 2 % mechanism through which individual taxpayers can designate 2 % of their income tax to a CSO or a religious organization.