



# Civic Space Scan

Across the world, citizens are calling for more openness, transparency, accountability, and integrity at all levels of government. They want their governments to be more responsive and are increasingly working with public sector institutions to achieve these aims. Robust civic space facilitates this collaboration.

## WHAT IS CIVIC SPACE?

Civic space is the set of legal, policy, institutional, and practical conditions necessary for non-governmental actors to access information, speak, associate, organise and participate in public life. It comes in many different shapes and forms, such as laws protecting freedom of speech, policies to promote civil society organisations, independent ombuds offices overseeing decisions of the executive, portals responding to freedom of information requests, and protection programmes for journalists and human rights defenders.



## WHY A CIVIC SPACE SCAN?

A Civic Space Scan is a qualitative assessment of the laws, policies, institutions, and practices that support civic space in OECD member and partner countries. Designed to protect fundamental freedoms and promote good practice, the scans are accessible studies that include tailored, timely, and actionable recommendations to help governments respond to evolving challenges and opportunities in their efforts to protect and protect civic space.

## AREAS OF INQUIRY



Civic Space Scans support national governments by assessing the enabling environment for civic participation in public governance and public life, focusing on four key areas:

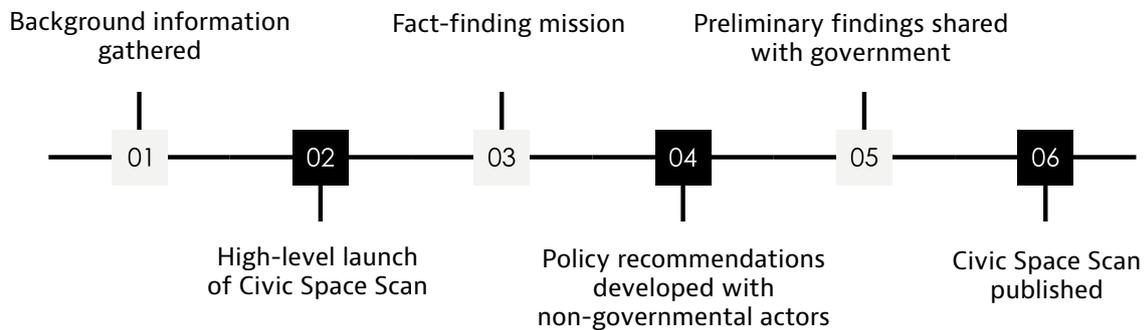
- Civic rights and freedoms (e.g. access to information; freedoms of expression, assembly, and association; the right to privacy; the state's duty to protect its citizens);
- Media and digital rights and freedoms;
- The enabling operational environment for Civil Society Organisations (CSO);
- Citizen/CSO participation (e.g. mechanisms used, innovations).

The scans link the protection of civic space to public sector reforms and cover key cross-cutting issues, such as inclusion, non-discrimination, civic literacy, and the impact of emergency laws, including those introduced to counter Covid-19. Carried out by a multi-disciplinary team, the scans provide an internationally comparative context and are based on a partnership with the requesting government. Peer reviewers from other OECD countries also take part, providing extra legitimacy for the findings.



## TIMELINE

Undertaken by the OECD Observatory of Civic Space, scans take between six and twelve months to conduct and involve the following steps:



## MOVING FROM RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACTION: OPTIONAL, SUPPLEMENTARY DELIBERATIVE PROCESS

In many countries, governments are increasingly turning to representative deliberative processes – such as citizens' assemblies, juries, and panels – to gather citizen recommendations on solving complex social problems. They convene randomly selected individuals representing a wide cross-section of society for at least one full day – and often much longer – to learn, weigh up different arguments, and develop collective policy recommendations.

As part of the Civic Space Scan, the OECD will support governments to establish a representative deliberative process on civic space, as a way to support national reform efforts. For such a collaboration to be fruitful, the following prerequisites apply:



Recommendations developed during a deliberation are rooted in rigorous evidence and deep citizen knowledge. They can assist governments to make hard choices.

Providing a representative group of citizens with the time and resources to develop informed proposals on complex issues gives these processes legitimacy and can enhance public trust in government. It can also help counter polarisation and misinformation.

The resulting recommendations will be incorporated into the Civic Space Scan report and widely disseminated by the Observatory of Civic Space.



The **OECD**  
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## Interested in a Civic Space Scan?