

Civic Space Guardian

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About CSG

CSG is a tool designed by **Directorio Legislativo (DL)** to monitor, in real time, regulations that stand to have an impact on civic space in Latin America and the Caribbean. CSG tracks regulations issued by national governments concerning freedom of expression, freedom of association, access to public information and taxes or bureaucratic requirements for civil society organizations.

CSG aims to give civil society organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean early warning of any regulatory development that could impact on civic space either for better or worse. It seeks to empower social organizations to make informed decisions and to advocate both in support of regulations that benefit civic space and against proposals that would curtail it.

CSG is designed as a resource with three distinct features:

- **Regulatory tracking:** CSG looks at the regulatory aspect, meaning it focuses on laws, bills, decrees and other legislative proposals emanating from the executive powers that may affect civic space.
- **Early warning:** CSG seeks to alert civil society organizations as early as possible of regulations that governments in Latin America and the Caribbean may pass and enforce.
- **Enhancing advocacy:** CSG looks to strengthen the capacity of response and influence of civil society organizations in the region with a tool allowing for informed and timely decision-making.

CSG's perspective on civic space

For the purpose of this tool, civic space is regarded as the set of political, institutional and legal conditions necessary for citizens and civil society organizations to exercise and claim their rights of association, collective action, peaceful assembly, expression and access to public information.

Civic space is, from this standpoint, that which enables all members of society to engage in identifying and managing common issues, leading to improvements in daily lives. Thus, it goes beyond civic rights: it is a cornerstone on which free and open societies are built. In the words of Civicus, “when civic space is open, citizens and civil society organisations are able to organise, participate and communicate, claim their rights and influence the political and social structures around them, without hindrance”.

Civic space encompasses a cluster of interdependent rights. These definitions are based on the instruments of the international human rights framework and take into account those used by leading organizations worldwide in the defense of civic space.

Freedom of expression - the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, in print or through cultural and artistic expression ([American Convention on Human Rights](#) ACHR-Pact of San José, art.13).

Freedom of peaceful assembly - includes the right to participate in non-violent gatherings for a variety of purposes, including enabling public participation and critical engagement by civil society, and the expression of diverse, minority and unpopular opinions. It can thus be exercised by individuals and groups, trade unions, political parties, religious groups and others ([Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly](#)).

Freedom of association - encompasses the right of individuals to associate with others to promote, exercise and protect their interests of a political, economic, religious, social, cultural, labour or other nature, including the creation of political parties, non-governmental, religious, trade union and other organizations ([American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man](#), ACHR and [San Salvador Protocol](#)).

Citizen participation - the right of every citizen to take part in the conduct of public affairs on an equal basis and without unreasonable restrictions, either directly, through dialogue with their chosen representatives or through the ability to organize themselves ([International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), art. 25, and UN Human Rights Council [General Comment](#)).

Access to public information - the right of access to all information and documents related to the management of public affairs regardless of the status of the concerned person and the purpose for obtaining the required information ([Inter-American Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression](#), [Recommendation of the OECD](#) Council on Open Government).

About Directorio Legislativo (DL)

Directorio Legislativo (DL) is an independent, non-profit organization working to strengthen democracy and make law- and policy-making in Latin America more transparent, representative and participatory. We achieve this by improving access to public information, and through the creation of spaces for legislators and politicians to engage and be influenced by outside specialists, civil society and the public at large. Since its founding in 2008, DL has acquired significant expertise in analyzing - and in anticipating - proposed new policies, laws and regulations within or affecting Latin America.

On the back of this experience, and thanks to a team of expert analysts in political science, communication, economics and law, Directorio Legislativo is uniquely placed to offer reliable, accurate and timely information to actors wishing to influence and respond to proposed new laws and public policies.