

“OECD Civic Space Scan of Finland: taking stock and looking ahead”

Draft Workshop agenda

23 January 2026, House of the Estates, Helsinki

Overview and objectives

In June 2021, the OECD published the [Civic Space Scan of Finland](#), the first of its kind. The report assessed and provided recommendations to the government across four key dimensions of civic space: civic freedoms and rights, media freedoms and digital rights, the enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs), and civic participation in policy and decision making.

Following the Scan’s publication, the Finnish government took action and announced the establishment of a cross-government working group to assess which of the recommendations could be pursued, both through existing projects and novel approaches and initiatives. One of the concrete steps taken by the government included [the Citizens’ Panel on the Freedom of Expression](#), an example of democratic innovation which allowed citizens to exchange, deliberate and support the government in developing measures to protect people against hate speech.

Since the publication of the Scan, democratic societies across the OECD have been faced with increasingly complex and interconnected global issues. While Finland recognises the importance of protecting and promoting civic space and fostering conditions that enable meaningful civil society participation in public life, no government is immune to the growing global pressures in this field. Even where legal frameworks are robust, implementation gaps remain and low citizen trust in public administration persists. [OECD data](#) further shows that meaningful engagement with government, enabled through a protected civic space, remains one of the key drivers of trust in for citizens.

These trends underline the need for sustained and concerted efforts of actors across the public sector to ensure a thriving civic space. Recognising this, and five years after the publication of the Scan, the OECD and Finland’s Ministries of Finance and Justice are collaborating again through an interactive, multi-stakeholder workshop to take stock of the implementation of the Scan’s recommendations and identify challenges and opportunities for Finland to further protect and promote civic space in the future.

Focusing on priority areas identified by Finland, it will provide public officials and relevant non-governmental actors with a space to exchange, identify lessons learned and explore relevant reform opportunities based on OECD standards and good practices.

The workshop will take place at the House of the Estates (Snellmanninkatu 9-11, 00170 Helsinki) and will be held in English.

Draft Agenda

Part 1: Taking stock of the progress since the 2021 OECD Civic Space Scan of Finland

09:00-09:10	Welcome remarks and round of introductions			
09:10-09:30	Setting the scene: Where Finland stands 5 years after the Civic Space Scan and key global trends			
09:30-11:30	The four dimensions			
	Dimension 1: Civic Freedoms and Rights	Dimension 2: Media Freedoms and Digital Rights	Dimension 3: Enabling Environment for CSOs	Dimension 4: Civic Participation in Policy and Decision Making
	Small Coffee Break during session			
11:30-13:00	Lunch Break			

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. It is made up of 38 Member countries, a Secretariat in Paris, and a committee, drawn from experts from government and other fields, for each work area covered by the Organisation. The OECD provides a forum in which governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems. It collaborates with governments to understand what drives economic, social and environmental change, and measures productivity and global flows of trade and investment.

The OECD's Open Governance Unit

The OECD's Open Governance Unit works with governments at all levels to make open government a defining feature of how public institutions function. By promoting transparency, integrity, accountability, and citizen participation, the OECD helps countries strengthen democratic practices, improve policy outcomes, and rebuild public trust. For nearly two decades, the OECD has transformed open government from a broad aspiration into a concrete and actionable agenda — one anchored in the 2017 OECD Recommendation on Open Government, informed by comparative data and analysis, and enriched by practical country reviews, peer learning, and global standard setting. Today, this work supports countries in embedding openness across all sectors and levels of government, protecting civic space, and fostering innovative forms of citizen participation that make decision-making more inclusive, responsive, and effective.

The OECD Observatory on Civic Space

The OECD defines civic space^[1] as the set of legal, policy, institutional and practical conditions non-governmental actors need to access information, express themselves, associate, organise and participate in public life. A protected civic space encourages a diversity of voices to engage in democratic processes, strengthening both the quality and inclusiveness of the public's involvement. Anchored in the [*OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government*](#) and the [*OECD Luxembourg Declaration on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy*](#), the OECD has developed a broad spectrum of actionable guidance on the protection and promotion of civic space to foster meaningful public participation in decision-making. Relevant publications and tools include the flagship report [*The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*](#) and the [*Practical Guide for Policymakers on Protecting and Promoting Civic Space*](#).

This analytical work is underpinned by the **OECD's global civic space database**, covering data from 52 countries (33 members, 19 non-members), collected from governments through the 2020 Survey on Open Government. Moreover, the OECD hosts the **Civic Space Network for Public Officials** (an informal sub-group of the OECD Working Party on Open Government) to foster knowledge-sharing and peer-learning among policymakers. The Network, which was established in June 2024, brings together policymakers from across OECD members and non-member countries to exchange experiences, share good practices, and tackle common challenges in protecting and promoting civic space.
