INTRO

In 2023, five countries will be part of the renewal process of its membership at the Community of Democracies: Argentina, Estonia, Guatemala, Norway and the United Kingdom.

From the Civil Society Pillar's Secretariat, we had prepared some basic fact sheets for each of the countries, as an input for the preparation of the Civil Society participation in the process. The Focal Points of each country should review the first version of this document and comment, edit and change it as much as they feel the need it. This document will be the initial base for the civil society reports on each country.

The information included in each fact sheet contains data from Freedom House, the Monitor Civicus, Transparency International, and Amnesty International. And an initial note from the focal point regarding the renewal.

Up to now, the focal points of four of the five countries have expressed their decision regarding the renewal process: Estonia, Argentina, the UK and Norway had decided to support the renewal but Guatemala's is recommending not to renew its government.

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Argentina



The Civil Society Pillar recommends that the country be renewed.

Category:

- Narrowed civic space. According to the Civicus Monitor.
- Free. According to the freedom House ranking *Freedom in the World*, Argentina has a total score and status of **84/100**

Argentina is a vibrant representative democracy with competitive elections, lively media and sectors of civil society, and unrestricted public debate. Economic instability, corruption in the government and the judiciary, and drug-related violence are among the country's most serious challenges.

- Political rights: **35/40**
- Civil liberties: **49/60**

Electoral Process: The October 2019 elections were considered free and fair by national and international observers. **Score:** 4/4

Political Pluralism and Participation: Argentina has competitive political parties that operate without undue obstacles. **Score** 4/4

Civil Liberties: The law guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits official censorship. There is a robust and lively media environment. However, on the one hand, media ownership is concentrated in large conglomerates that often favor one political group, and on the other side, state advertising allocation tends to favor pro-government media groups. MOreover, High-level authorities, including President Fernández, have used hostile rhetoric against independent journalists and media. The political crisis fueled by economic difficulties and polarization has created a challenging context for improvements in human rights.

Religious Freedom and Expression: Freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed and enforced in practice. The population is largely Roman Catholic, but public education is secular, and religious minorities express their beliefs freely. **Score** 4/4

Global Internet Freedom: Argentina's Internet environment remained free during the coverage period, as users generally experienced unrestricted access to online content and were able to freely participate in social media. **Score 71/100**

Regarding corruption issues according to Transparency International: score of **38/100** The global ranking that measures corruption throughout the world determined that Argentina is more corrupt than last year, and that it ranks 96 out of 180 nations

According to Amnesty International:

- **Rights of indigenous peoples:** Indigenous peoples continued to encounter serious difficulties in accessing collective rights to land. The executive branch issued the extension of Emergency Law 26,160, which ordered the suspension of evictions of indigenous communities. However, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs made little progress in the survey of indigenous territories provided for in the law itself, which had only reached 43% at the end of the year.

According to Human Rights Watch:

- **Judicial and Prosecutorial Independence:** The Fernández administration and its allies introduced several judicial reforms that could undermine the independence of courts and prosecutors. Moreover, High-level authorities have used hostile rhetoric against judges and prosecutors undermining the independence of courts and prosecutors.

Estonia



The Civil Society Pillar recommends that the country be renewed.

Category:

- Open civic space. According to the Civicus Monitor
- Free. According to freedom House ranking *Freedom in the World*, Estonia has a total score of **94/100**

Estonia's democratic institutions are generally strong and both political rights and civil liberties are widely respected. However, more than 5 percent of the population remains stateless and cannot participate in national elections.

- Political rights: **38/40**

- Civil liberties**: 56/60**

Electoral Process: The prime minister, who serves as head of government, is appointed by the president and approved by parliament. After the 2019 parliamentary elections, then-Prime Minister Jüri Ratas of the Center Party was re-elected for a second term as head of a coalition government made up of the centrist-populist Center Party, the far-right EKRE and the conservative Isamaa party. **Score:** 4/4

Political Pluralism and Participation: Political parties in Estonia are freely organized and operate, and the political landscape remains open and competitive. **Score:** 4/4

Civil Liberties: The government generally respects the freedom of the press. However, judges have increasingly used the criminal procedure code to restrict media coverage in various cases of public interest, particularly those involving corruption. Public and private television and radio stations broadcast freely, and there are a number of independent newspapers. **Score** 4/4.

Religious Freedom and Expression: Religious freedom is respected in law and in practice. In 2020 and 2021, public gatherings, including religious services, were periodically restricted to contain the spread of COVID-19. **Score** 4/4

Global Internet Freedom: Internet freedom is generally strong in Estonia, an established democracy and a European Union (EU) member state widely known for its pioneering

approach to e-government. Protections for user rights are strong, and the Estonian government places few limits on online content; however, several Russian websites were blocked during the coverage period. **Score: 93/100**

Regarding corruption issues according to Transparency International: Result of **74/100** and Ranking of **13/180.**

According to Amnesty International:

- **Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights**
  A survey by the Estonian Center for Human Rights documented a significant change in attitudes towards LGBTI people, with 64% of the population supporting the 2016 Civil Union Law, which allowed same-sex couples to register unions. However, at the end of the year, this law had not yet been applied and the only way to enforce the rights guaranteed in it was through legal proceedings. In September, the Supreme Court declared the Immigration Law unconstitutional, insofar as it did not allow the granting of residence permits to same-sex couples registered in civil unions.

Guatemala



The Civil Society Pillar recommends that the country is not renewed.

An apparent effort by the Giammattei government to undermine the rule of law and avoid accountability for widespread corruption has led to serious violations of civic space, backsliding Guatemalan democracy.

The government interference hindered the work of those independent bodies that work investigating corruption and fighting impunity by prosecuting and trialling emblematic cases of serious human rights violations linked to Guatemala's internal armed conflict. In 2021, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights followed with special attention the exercise of human rights and the weakening of judicial independence in the country noting the worsening of the situation. In July 2021, the Attorney General removed the country's lead anti-corruption prosecutor, Juan Francisco Sandoval, from his position as head of the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity (FECI). The authorities justified the removal citing "constant misdeed and frequent abuses of institutions". The Office did not respect the internal disciplinary process mandated by the law.

In May 2022, Giammattei reappointed to another four years attorney general Consuelo Porras. Porras has overseen the dismantling of anti-corruption efforts bringing arbitral proceedings which have targeted journalists, prosecutors and judges, specially the justice operators who contributed to the work of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) between 2007 and 2019. From April 2021 to October 2022, the systematic repression and criminalisation forced at least 24 prosecutors and judges who worked against corruption and impunity into exile. Many resigned due to persecution, were fired without proper disciplinary processes, or faced criminalisation and arbitrary detention in 2022.

In July 2022, the current chief of the Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutors Against Impunity (FECI), judges and important allies of the Giammattei government were listed in the US Department State Corrupt and Undemocratic Actors report. Additionally, the European Union, the European Parliament and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have expressed their deep concern over the deteriorating human rights situation and the undermining of the fight against corruption. In 2022, the IACHR included Guatemala in the chapter of its annual report reserved for states with grave, massive or systematic violation of human rights and serious attacks to democratic institutions.

The situation of the press has also been permeated by these efforts to undermine democracy. On 29th July 2022, journalist José Rubén Zamora, president and founder of newspaper elPeriódico, which has uncovered corruption incidentes, was arrested by police as part of an investigation into alleged blackmail, money laundering and influence peddling. Furthermore, independent journalists have denounced that one of the main strategies of public holders to intimidate the press is using judicial harassment. There are cases where government officials have used anti-gender-based violence law to harass journalists by claiming psychological violence against them or their female relatives. The targets are the independent journalists and outlets that report on corruption, nepotism and the impact of transnational extractive companies on local companies and other cases where these officials are named.

On the other hand, civil society organisations have warned of abuses against human rights defenders and social leaders in the last five years that have escalated under the Giammattei government. According to UDEFEGUA, in the current administration, they have registered 2260 attacks against HRDs where women human rights defenders, land and environmental defenders have been among those most often targeted, along with those working on peace and justice.

Finally, in 2022, civil society warned about the debate and approval of restrictive legislation. For instance, on 4th August, Guatemala's Congress approved a new Cybercrimes Law. This legislation has considerable definition gaps that leave room for interpretation that could be used to censor some satirical images or to criminalise journalistic investigations. Also, Congress held debates and approved on its first debate the bill 6076 or the "Law for the Strengthening of the Public Security Forces and Guatemalan Army". According to civil society, this law would enable the use of force in demonstrations without clear justification and would intend to let violent acts of the army and members of the police against citizens go unpunished. Although this bill was shelved, it is known that other initiatives such as bill 6155 or "law on the rational and legitimate use of force" are also a threat to freedom of peaceful assembly since they serve to repress or restrict peaceful protests.

Category:

- Obstructed civic space. According to the Civicus Monitor. Currently on the watch list due to "Serious civic space violations (…) as the government moves to undermine the rule of law and reverse anti-corruption efforts of recent years". In this link more information can be found. Is the second time Guatemala is on the Watch List, the first one was in September 2018.

- Partly Free. According to the freedom House ranking *Freedom in the World*, Guatemala has a total score of **51/100**

Although Guatemala holds periodic elections that are generally free, organized crime and corruption seriously affect the functioning of the government. Criminal violence and extortion schemes are serious problems, and victims have few recourse to justice. Journalists, activists, and public officials who take on crime, corruption, and other sensitive issues are at risk of attack.

- Political rights: **21/40**

- Civil liberties**: 30/ 60**

Electoral Process: The constitution stipulates a presidential term of four years and prohibits re-election. In the August 2019 runoff, Alejandro Giammattei of the Vamos party won 58 percent of the vote, defeating former first lady Sandra Torres of the center-left National Unity for Hope (UNE) party. While the results were considered credible, election observers for the Organization of American States (OAS) noted irregularities that included riots, ballot burning, voter intimidation, and acts of violence. Giammattei took over in January 2020. **Score 2/4**

Political Pluralism and Participation: Political groups and organizations generally operate without encountering legal restrictions. However, new groups sometimes face bureaucratic delays from the TSE when they try to register. **Score 3/4**

Civil Liberties: Although the constitution protects freedom of expression, journalists censor themselves when they cover sensitive topics such as drug trafficking, corruption, organized crime and human rights violations. Media workers are routinely threatened by public officials, illegal actors, the police and those affiliated with companies operating on indigenous lands. Physical attacks against journalists occur regularly. Throughout 2021, the Guatemalan College of Journalists recorded 135 attacks and threats against journalists. At least one journalist was killed during the year; in July, activist and journalist Frank Stalyn Ramazzini was assassinated in Guatemala City. **Score** 2/4

Religious freedom and expression: The constitution guarantees religious freedom and people are free to practice and express their religious faith or not. **Score 4/4**

Regarding corruption issues according to Transparency International: Score **24/100** and ranking of **150/180.**

According to Amnesty International:

- **Defenders of Human Rights and Excessive use of force.**
  Between January and November, the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala (UDEFEGUA) registered 839 attacks against people who defended human rights. Guatemala again presented the fourth highest rate in the world of homicides per capita of defenders of land and the environment; according to the NGO Global Witness, in 2020 13 people had died violently.

  However, Guatemala had not yet ratified by the end of the year the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), which included provisions for the protection of environmental human rights defenders.

Norway



The Civil Society Pillar recommends that the country be renewed (TBC).

Category:

- Open civic space. According to the Civicus Monitor.
- Free. According to the freedom House ranking *Freedom in the World*, Norway has a score of **100/100**

Norway is one of the strongest democracies in the world. Elections are free and fair, and power rotates regularly between the parties. Civil liberties are respected, and independent media and civil society actors hold the government to account. Discrimination against Roma and other marginalized groups remains a problem.

- Political rights: **40/40**
- Civil liberties: **60/60**

Electoral process: National elections were held in September 2021; the following month, Labor Party leader Jonas Gahr Støre was appointed prime minister after the Labor Party and the Center Party agreed to form a governing coalition.

Political Pluralism and Participation: A variety of political parties operate freely in Norway. **Score: 4/4**

Civil Liberties: Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed and is generally respected in practice. Norwegians have access to news and commentary from a wide variety of independent media. In 2017, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that the Norwegian government could not force journalists to reveal their sources, even if the source had come forward independently. In August 2020, the Norwegian Journalists Association, the Verdens Gang newspaper and the Norwegian Publishers Association sued the Attorney General for denying access to documents in a case. **Score 4/4**

Religious Freedom and Expression: Freedom of religion is protected by the constitution and is generally upheld in practice. However, religiously motivated hate crimes do occur. In 2020, the government launched an action plan to combat anti-Muslim discrimination and hatred, which includes requirements for police to record anti-Muslim crimes separately. **Score 4/4**

Regarding corruption issues according to Transparency International: score of **85/100** and ranking of **4/180**

According to Amnesty International:

- **Rights of refugees and migrants.** The new government, elected in September, kept to its promised annual resettlement quota of accepting 3,000 refugees. However, he also announced that he would consider the possibility of using the "room for manoeuvre" that current legislation gave him to "refer" asylum seekers to so-called "safe countries" outside Europe if they had arrived in Norway through of said countries. This meant that it could deprive asylum seekers of their right to seek and receive asylum in Norway, which would seriously set back national refugee protection practice.

United Kingdom



The Civil Society Pillar recommends that the country be renewed (TBC)

Categories:

- Narrowed civic space. According to the Civicus Monitor. The UK was in the watch list in September 2021, due to "a rapid decline in civic space (…) with the right to freedom of peaceful assembly repeatedly targeted". In this link more information is available.
- Free. According to the Freedom House Ranking *Freedom in the World*, the United Kingdom has a score of 93/100

The United Kingdom (UK), which includes the constituent countries of England, Scotland and Wales along with the territory of Northern Ireland, is a stable democracy that holds regular free elections and is home to a vibrant media sector. While the government enforces strong protections for political rights and civil liberties, recent years have seen concerns about increased government surveillance of residents, as well as rising Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment.

- Political rights **39/40**
- Civil Liberties: **54/60**

Electoral process: Executive power rests with the prime minister and the cabinet, which must have the support of the House of Commons. The leader of the majority party or coalition usually becomes prime minister and appoints the cabinet. Early general elections were held in December 2019, in which a government with a conservative majority, led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, was elected. The monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, has a ceremonial role as head of state. **Score: 4/4**

Political Pluralism and Participation: The parties do not face undue restrictions on registration or operation. The Conservative and Labor parties have dominated politics for decades, though other parties regularly win seats. **Score 4/4**

Civil Liberties: Freedom of the press is legally protected. The media environment is lively and competitive, taking views that span the political spectrum. The publicly owned British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which relies on dedicated license fees for most of its funding, is editorially independent and competitive with its commercial counterparts. **Score 4/4**

Religious Freedom and Expression: Freedom of religion is protected by law and practice. A 2006 law prohibits incitement to religious hatred, with a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. However, minority groups, particularly Muslims, continue to report discrimination, harassment and occasional assaults. In October 2021, the Home Office recorded 124,091 hate crimes in England and Wales during the 2020-21 reporting period, an increase of 9% over the 2019-20 reporting period. **Score 4/4**

Global Internet Freedom: The Internet remained free for users in the United Kingdom (UK), with widespread availability and few major restrictions on access or content. However, following the lead of its European counterparts, the government restricted access to two Russian-backed media outlets and asked platform operators to restrict access to their content. Policymakers have also proposed or passed new or revised legislation that seeks to further regulate online platforms and Internet Service Providers (ISPs). **Score 79/100**

Regarding corruption issues according to Transparency International: Score **78/100** and ranking of **11/180**

According to Amnesty International:

- **Freedom of Assembly:** In June, the tax authorities decided not to bring charges against those who had participated in the Black Lives Matter protests in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry in June 2020. The Northern Ireland Police Service also took steps to return the amount of the 72 fines imposed on these people for failing to comply with the restrictions due to COVID-19.

References:

- Freedom House

Freedom in the World is an annual global report on political rights and civil liberties, made up of numerical ratings and descriptive text for each country and a select group of territories.

Freedom in the World is produced each year by a team of internal and external analysts and expert advisers from the academic, expert, and human rights communities. The 2022 edition involved 128 analysts and close to 50 advisers. Analysts, who prepare the draft reports and scores, use a wide variety of sources, including newspaper articles, academic analysis, non-governmental organization reports, individual professional contacts, and field research. Analysts rate countries and territories based on conditions and events within their borders during the coverage period. The analysts' proposed scores are discussed and defended in a series of review meetings, organized by region, and attended by Freedom House staff and a panel of expert advisors. The final product represents the consensus of Freedom House analysts, outside advisors and staff, who are responsible for final decisions.

Scores: A country or territory receives 0 to 4 points for each of the 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators, which take the form of questions; a score of 0 represents the lowest degree of freedom and 4 the highest degree of freedom. The questions on political rights are grouped into three subcategories: Electoral process (3 questions), Political pluralism and participation (4) and functioning of government (3). The questions on civil liberties are grouped into four subcategories: Freedom of expression and beliefs (4 questions), Associative and organizational rights (3), Rule of law (4) and Personal autonomy and individual rights (4). The political rights section also contains an additional discretionary question that addresses forced demographic change. For the discretionary question, a score from 1 to 4 may be subtracted, as appropriate (the worse the situation, the more points may be subtracted).

Free, Partly Free, Not Free Status: The combination of the total score awarded for political rights and the total score awarded for civil liberties, after being equally weighted, determines the status of Free, Partly Free or Not Free

The Freedom in the World status of a country or territory depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0 to 40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0 to 60.

A country or territory's total political rights score may be less than zero (between -1 and -4) if it receives most or all zeros for each of the 10 political rights questions and receives a negative score large enough for the discretionary issue of political rights.

Global Internet Freedom:

Free: 70-100
Partly Free: 40-69
Not Free: 0-39

- Index and Rankings of Transparency International

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is the most widely used global corruption ranking in the world. Measures the perception of corruption in the public sector of each country, according to experts and businessmen. The CPI ranks 180 countries and territories around the world based on their perceived levels of corruption in the public sector. Results are given on a scale from 0 (very corrupt) to 100 (very clean). The score for each country is a combination of at least 3 data sources drawn from 13 different corruption surveys and assessments. These data sources are collected by a variety of reputable institutions, including the World Bank and the World Economic Forum.

- Amnesty International

The different experts carry out rigorous and verified research on human rights violations committed by governments and other actors around the world. This analysis makes it possible to influence governments, companies and decision makers and pressure them to do their duty. With respective petitions, letters and protests, activists from all over the world are pressing for action by the people and institutions that can promote change.

https://freedomhouse.org/country/argentina/freedom-world/2022

https://www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/paises/pais/show/argentina/

https://freedomhouse.org/country/estonia/freedom-world/2022

https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/est

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