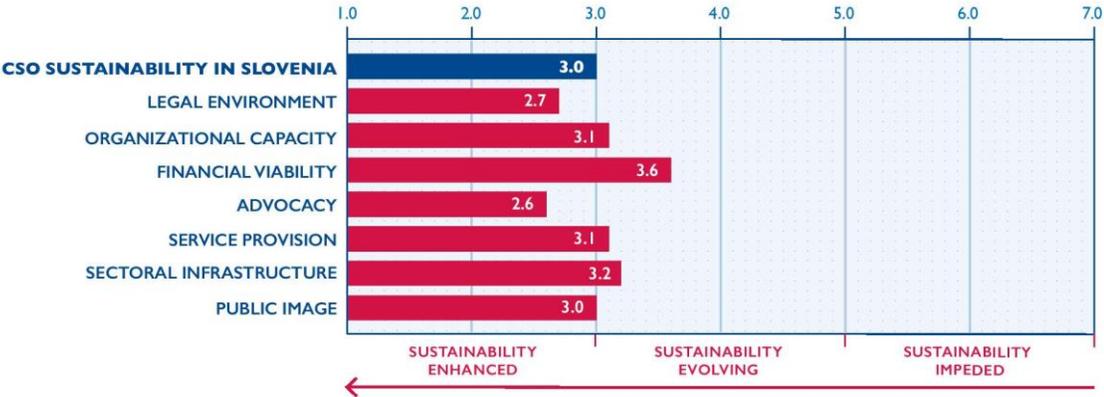


# SLOVENIA

**Capital:** Ljubljana  
**Population:** 2,102,126  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** \$34,500  
**Human Development Index:** Very High (0.896)  
**Freedom in the World:** Free (93/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 3.0<sup>1</sup>



2018 was an election year in Slovenia, with parliamentary elections in June and local elections in November. During the election period, CSOs were more present in the media and engaged actively in advocacy efforts. However, the focus on elections also slowed down the pace of legislative processes and decreased public funding for part of the year, which negatively impacted CSOs.

CSO sustainability in Slovenia improved slightly in 2018. The largest improvement was noted in the legal environment dimension, with smaller improvements recorded in financial viability, advocacy, service provision, sectoral infrastructure, and public image. Most significantly, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Act was adopted in March 2018, after being under development for several years. Financial viability grew, with significant increases in public funding and improvements in the procedures for awarding and distributing public funds. CSOs continued to innovate and expand the range of services they offer to their constituencies and to implement broad-based advocacy campaigns. The growth in partnerships between CSOs and other sectors contributed to the strengthening of the sectoral infrastructure. The sector’s public image improved slightly, as mainstream media coverage of CSOs and their activities continued to be widespread.

According to an analysis by the Center for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs (CNVOS), more than 27,750 CSOs were registered in Slovenia at the end of 2018. This number includes around 24,081 associations; 3,446 private institutes; and 253 foundations. While not all registered organizations are active, over 96 percent of all registered organizations submitted annual reports for 2017. There are 261 registered social enterprises in the country, although many more companies operate as social enterprises without registering as such.

<sup>1</sup> Scores for three of the seven dimensions of CSO sustainability—Organizational Capacity, Financial Viability, and Advocacy—were recalibrated in 2018 to better reflect the situation on the ground and to better align them with other scores in the region. This resulted in a 0.4 change in the overall CSO sustainability score, which would normally represent a dramatic change, while in reality CSO sustainability only improved slightly from the previous year.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 2.7



The legal environment governing the CSO sector improved significantly in 2018 with the adoption of the NGO Act in March. The law provides a clear definition of NGOs as nonprofit legal persons established by private persons and independent from the government, other public legal persons, political parties, for-profit persons, economic associations, and chambers. The Act also defines new legal bases of funding for NGOs. Most importantly, it establishes a Fund for the Development of NGOs, which will be financed through unallocated income tax designations. Since 2007, individual taxpayers have been able to allocate 0.5 percent of their income taxes to an organization with public benefit status (also known as a public benefit organization or PBO) of their choice. Not all individuals use this option, leaving around EUR 4.5 million in the budget, which will now go directly

to the new Fund. The Act also provides a legal definition of horizontal networks, regional hubs, and thematic networks, thereby acknowledging their importance. Finally, it obligates the government to regularly prepare strategies and define measures for the development of NGOs.

In addition, the Act improves the position of PBOs. First, it allows all legal forms of CSOs to acquire PBO status regardless of their programmatic focus. This replaces the previously discriminatory provision that allowed association to receive public benefit status regardless of their programmatic focus, while other forms of CSOs could only receive it if they worked on certain areas, in accordance with sector-specific legislation. It also significantly simplifies the reporting requirements for PBOs, by changing the reporting period from every year to every other year, and changes the focus of reports to accomplishments and goals achieved. It also stipulates that PBO status should be a criterion in public tenders for funding from the state budget, giving these organizations an advantage in such competitions.

Shortly after the NGO Act was adopted, the government also adopted the Development Strategy of Voluntary and Non-Governmental Organizations, which analyzes the state of development of NGOs and voluntary organizations and defines goals and measures for their future development.

The NGO Act does not affect the core legislation that regulates the registration of CSOs, which includes the Societies Act, Institutes Act, and Foundations Act. In practice, therefore, registration procedures remained the same for all types of CSOs in 2018. CSOs can complete the registration process in less than a month at a low cost, typically less than EUR 100. CSOs still cannot register online.

The government can only legally interfere in the registration or management of CSOs in a few cases, for example, if a CSO pursues profit or criminal activity, if an association does not submit annual reports for two years in a row, or if the board of a foundation does not fulfill its legal or statutory obligations. The law protects CSOs from being dissolved for political or arbitrary reasons. CSOs generally are able to express criticism of the government freely. However, there was one case of a state institution smearing the reputation of a CSO in 2018. In a report from July 2018, the Legal-Informational Center for NGOs (PIC), which works with migrants, claimed that the Slovenian police do not allow foreigners who enter the country illegally to submit asylum applications instead return them over the border in breach of international agreements. PIC also made calls to the police announcing in advance that particular individuals would be filing requests for asylum and requesting updates on these cases, thereby letting the authorities know that they were monitoring these cases. In response, the then-Minister of Internal Affairs publicly attacked PIC, saying that its activity is “absolutely unacceptable” and suggesting that it was acting illegally and interfering in the work of the police. Although this did not ultimately result in an investigation into the CSO, a major Slovenian newspaper published an article suggesting that CSOs working with migrants are performing illegal activity, which damaged their reputation and work promoting the interests of migrants.

In 2018, significant changes were made to the Social Entrepreneurship Act that simplify the process and requirements for CSOs to register as social enterprises. According to the new requirements, social enterprises

must now be 100 percent nonprofit and must only prove that their activity has a positive impact on society. The previous rules involved employment quotas and other quantitative conditions that were difficult to meet and detracted from more important questions about the quality and impact of social enterprises' activities.

CSOs were also affected in 2018 by the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a new European Union (EU) regulation on data protection and privacy. GDPR introduced some new administrative burdens that required CSOs to get new statements from their members and users regarding the processing of their personal data.

The tax treatment of CSOs is still relatively unfavorable. Individuals can allocate 0.5 percent of their income taxes to PBOs, trade unions, or political parties. The tax deduction rate for corporate donations is only 0.5 percent. CSOs can carry out economic activities like other legal entities, but this income is taxed at the corporate rate. CSOs do not pay taxes on donations or grants.

Intermediate support organizations (ISOs), including CNVOS, twelve regional CSO hubs, and PIC, continue to offer free legal aid to CSOs.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 3.1<sup>2</sup>

Organizational capacity did not change significantly in 2018.

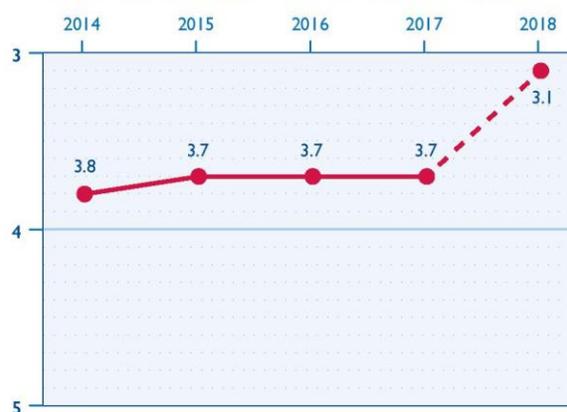
CSOs continued to have strong relationships with their local constituencies in 2018, as demonstrated by their ability to mobilize funds and volunteers to respond to local issues. Smaller CSOs keep track of their constituencies' needs by continuously working in close coordination with them, but rarely engage in more systematic analysis. As CSOs get bigger, their links with their constituencies often weaken. As a result, larger CSOs often need more time to identify and respond to emerging needs.

CSOs have clearly defined missions in their statutes, as required by law. Strategic planning, however, continues to be a relatively weak aspect of organizational development for Slovenian CSOs. Instead, most CSOs prioritize other issues, such as obtaining sufficient funds for their operations, often by adapting their services and activities to meet the requirements of public tenders. In 2018, the regional CSO hubs and CNVOS continued to implement organizational development programs for many CSOs, which, among other things, emphasize the importance of strategic planning.

CSOs continue to have management and governance structures in accordance with the laws regulating the establishment of CSOs. However, boards of directors play a limited role, generally meeting just once or a few times a year to confirm or reject annual programs and other documents prepared by executive directors or presidents.

The number of employees in the CSO sector continues to grow, with the most recent data indicating 7,569 full-time employees in 2016 and 7,811 in 2017, an increase of approximately 250. However, the percentage of the working population employed in the sector remained the same at 0.82 percent, which is relatively low in comparison to other countries. In May 2018, the Ministry of Administration published a tender for the development and professionalization of CSOs that provides EUR 2 million worth of employment subsidies for 100 new positions in the sector, twenty of which were subsidies for volunteer mentors. The subsidies provided EUR 20,000 per position, which covered a large share of the total costs, making this a more accessible program for

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN SLOVENIA



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<sup>2</sup> The Organizational Capacity score was recalibrated in 2018 to better reflect the situation on the ground and to better align it with other scores in the region. The score does not reflect an improvement in Organizational Capacity, which remained largely the same in 2018 as in 2017.

CSOs than previous subsidy programs that required CSOs to cover more than half of the costs of salaries. CSO staffing improved as a result of the subsidies, which started to be implemented in September 2018.

According to the Ministry of Public Administration's 2017 report on volunteering, 287,588 volunteers performed 9,282,195 hours of volunteer work in 1,499 registered voluntary organizations in 2017; in 2016, 307,262 volunteers provided 10,605,418 hours of volunteer work in 1,307 registered voluntary organizations. Despite an increase in the number of registered voluntary organizations, both the number of volunteers as well as the number of volunteer hours decreased. The number of volunteer hours per volunteer also dropped slightly. The report attributes this to reduced unemployment in the country. According to the Charities Aid Foundation's 2018 World Giving Index, 35 percent of respondents in Slovenia reported that they participated in voluntary action in 2017, a 3 percent increase from 2016.

In general, CSOs are well-equipped with information and communications technologies (ICT). The majority of CSOs continue to use social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, widely; many rely on these tools as their primary channel of communication.

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 3.6<sup>3</sup>



The financial viability of CSOs improved moderately in 2018. According to data collected by CNVOS, the sector's total income increased by 9 percent from 2016 to 2017, the highest rate of growth in the last ten years. Public funding of CSOs also increased significantly, by 9.5 percent, after growth of less than 1 percent over each of the last eight years. In 2018, ministries allocated EUR 99.9 million to CSOs, a significant increase from 2017, when they allocated EUR 85.3 million. Municipalities allocated EUR 115.4 million in 2018, slightly more than the EUR 112.3 million allocated in 2017. Public sources continue to be the largest source of funds for CSOs, accounting for 35.6 percent of total CSO income. While CSO funding sources have gradually become more diversified over the last few years, diversification has not yet reached a level that would ensure long-term

sustainability.

Procedures for awarding and distributing public funds have improved. On the national level, for example, prepayment has now become standard, while at the local level, some municipalities have simplified their regulations, and others have made changes to their calls for proposals that improve eligibility and selection criteria, introduce multi-year support, accept voluntary work as an in-kind contribution, and simplify application forms and reporting requirements.

The vast majority of public funding is focused on project and program funding without basic support for CSOs' ongoing operations, organizational development, or innovation. In addition, there are very few public calls available for advocacy activities at the national or local levels.

Slovenian CSOs do not face any legal limitations to accessing foreign funding; however, Slovenia is not a target country for many donors. Only a few foreign foundations, such as the Google Foundation and Open Society Fund, provide financial support to Slovenian CSOs, and the levels of funding are minimal and do not affect the sustainability of the sector as a whole.

Slovenian CSOs have access to funds that are distributed through the government budget, and also can apply for EU funds directly from EU institutions. However, no data is available about the total level of these funds.

<sup>3</sup> The Financial Viability score was recalibrated in 2018 to better reflect the situation on the ground and to better align it with other scores in the region. In addition to the recalibration, the score reflects a moderate improvement in 2018.

CSOs' capacities to raise funds are still quite limited, with most still relying on proposals to institutional donors to raise funds. However, there are a growing number of innovative fundraising practices. For example, Ana Monro, an organization that performs street art, organized a "friendraising" event called For Ana's New Shoes that was focused on building a community of supporters for their work; through this effort, the organization raised approximately EUR 2,500 in a single day. Humanitarček has established a web portal (<https://humanitarcek-portal.firebaseio.com>) where potential donors can see current actions that they can support; some are the direct wishes of the homeless people the organization serves, while others, such as Christmas dinner for the homeless, are more general.

While there is no precise data, it is estimated that CSOs earn approximately one third of their annual revenues from the sale of services and products. Many CSOs receive contracts from government bodies, other public institutions (such as schools), and local businesses. For example, the municipality of Ljubljana contracted the cultural association Prostorož, a CSO that does creative landscaping of public spaces, to improve the appearance and make use of a dormant construction site in the city, as well as three small concrete platforms along the river which no longer serve their original purposes.

As of the end of 2018, there were 261 social enterprises registered in the country, a slight increase from 257 at the end of 2017. In addition, many more organizations function as social enterprises without registering as such. In 2018, the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology published several calls for proposals supporting different aspects of social entrepreneurship, the most important being a call for mentoring schemes for social enterprises and another competition focused on the development of social entrepreneurship in Pomurje region.

According to the 2018 World Giving Index report, 35 percent of respondents in Slovenia reported that they donated to charities in 2017, an increase from 32 percent in 2016, but still lower than previous years (41 percent in 2015 and 38 percent in 2014). Donations tend to increase when there are specific causes or crises; donations for the ongoing operation of CSOs, which contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of humanitarian organizations, are less common.

After several years of annual growth in personal income tax designations, the total funds allocated through this mechanism remained fairly stable in 2017, the most recent year for which data is available, at approximately EUR 4.6 million. However, the number of individuals donating a share of their income tax to CSOs increased by 20,000 or 0.5 percent. After multiple years of relative stagnation, corporate donations increased from EUR 24.8 million in 2016 to EUR 26.8 million in 2017. However, incentives for corporate donations continue to be unfavorable, and less than 7 percent of corporate taxpayers apply for tax deductions for donations to CSOs.

CSOs' financial management systems did not change significantly in 2018. CSOs are subject to accounting requirements that vary according to the type and size of organization. All CSOs must submit annual reports approved by their boards to the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records (AJPES), and the vast majority of organizations submit these reports in a timely manner. With the exception of associations with annual incomes of over EUR 1 million, CSOs are not required to undergo audits. Some CSOs publish reports on their websites, but these rarely include clear descriptions of their activities or descriptions of how their finances relate to performed activities.

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## **ADVOCACY: 2.6<sup>4</sup>**

Advocacy improved slightly in 2018, mostly due to improvements in the consultations processes.

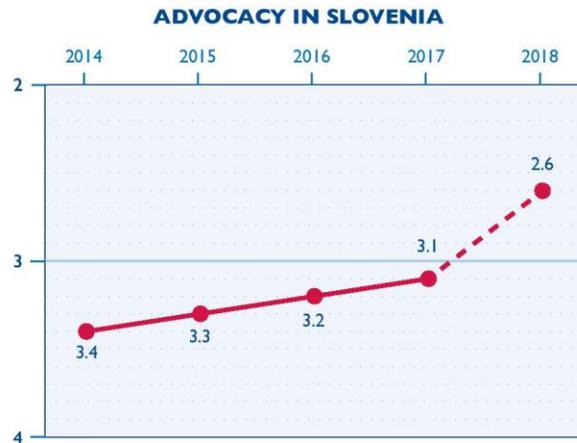
After the national elections, the government formed new consultative bodies, including a ten-member consultative body at the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, a five-member dialogue group at the Ministry of Culture, and various working bodies focused on preparing particular laws or regulations. Some of these bodies must be formed or include CSO representatives by law, but more are created through special decisions by the government or ministry, which shows the government's increased awareness of the importance of engaging in

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<sup>4</sup>The Advocacy score was recalibrated in 2018 to better reflect the situation on the ground and to better align it with other scores in the region. In addition to the recalibration, the score reflects a slight improvement in 2018.

dialogue with CSOs. While many of these groups have limited powers, they represent an important channel for CSOs' advocacy efforts.

Similar to the previous government, the new government continues to breach rules for public consultations. According to monitoring conducted by CNVOS, the new government breached the rules for public consultations 52 percent of the time (an improvement from 59 percent in 2017), either failing to organize consultations, providing inadequate deadlines, or not providing deadlines at all. In total, 438 draft laws were prepared in 2018; 383 (79 percent) of the drafts were presented for public comment, of which 172 (39 percent of all drafts) had consultations that were in compliance with the government's Resolution on Legislative Regulation.



Although still below the legal limit of thirty days, the average length of government consultations has increased by three days to twenty-one days over the last four years. The practice of early consultations, which allow CSOs to provide their input before or during the initial drafting of a law, continues to be rare. Most consultations are organized after a draft law is already prepared, which limits the public's scope of influence. In addition, there is still a lack of plain language summaries or analyses of draft laws, which limits public understanding of the solutions proposed and therefore hinders effective public consultations.

CSOs are gradually becoming more active participants in local decision-making processes. In October 2018, regional hubs implemented a project aimed at empowering CSOs to affect the legislative agenda at the local level during the local election campaigns. Regional hubs organized one-day workshops in which mayoral candidates and CSOs jointly discussed a number of topics important for their communities. Workshops were held in twelve municipalities and included approximately 127 CSOs and 110 candidates or representatives of political parties.

CSOs continued to implement broad-based advocacy campaigns in 2018. Many CSOs have direct lines of communication with decision makers and regularly engage in successful advocacy and lobbying activities. However, CSO advocacy continues to be hampered by CSOs' somewhat limited advocacy skills and a shortage of funds for advocacy activities. Most successful advocacy efforts at the national level are implemented by a small number of professional advocacy organizations or larger coalitions.

CSOs quickly form coalitions to respond to emerging issues. Towards the end of the year, CSOs formed a broad coalition to support an increase in the minimum wage and helped push the Minimum Wage Act through parliament. CSOs also formed a coalition to oppose the appointment of a Secretary of National Security known for his intolerant statements towards immigrants. Although CSOs' campaign and petition received broad media attention and the prime minister responded to the issues in a statement to the media, the appointment was still ultimately made.

CSOs also respond quickly when cross-sectoral issues arise. For example, before the national elections, a prominent member of the main opposition party said that he would increase the defense budget by cutting the EUR 300 million in budget funds "wasted" on CSOs each year. The director of CNVOS responded in an open letter, which CSOs widely promoted. In response, the opposition party stepped back and posted a number of tweets on the importance of CSOs, especially local groups.

CSO advocacy efforts, particularly when they are in favor of marginalized groups or the CSO sector, often meet with pushback from populist media and political parties. For example, when PIC demanded that the police process all asylum requests, a journalist writing for a reputable mainstream newspaper attacked it. This story was then picked up by many other media outlets, resulting in many attacks on CSOs working with migrants in media and on social media.

CSOs are aware of the importance of legal reforms affecting CSOs. Before the national elections, CSOs advocated for the inclusion of the Fund for the Development of NGOs into the NGO Act. Although CNVOS had been advocating for the Fund since 2014, the measure only gained traction in the lead-up to the elections. In another

example, cultural organizations were able to pressure the government to reject the inclusion of unfavorable amendments to their core law in the national strategy prepared by the Ministry of Culture in early 2018.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 3.1



CSO service provision improved moderately in 2018.

CSOs continue to provide services in a wide range of areas, including health and other basic social services, fire prevention, social assistance, culture, sports, emergency preparedness, environmental protection, and equal opportunities. For the most part, goods and services accurately reflect the needs and priorities of their constituencies. Many CSOs identify needs through direct contact with their users and constituencies, as well as through social media.

In 2018, CSOs continued to innovate and expand the range of services they offer to their constituencies. For example, CSOs offered new and expanded multi-year health programs, including prevention programs, and better access to services on the local level, including for

drug addicts. CSOs are also the main providers of social activation services—services intended to prevent or reduce the risk of poverty by employing, educating, re-qualifying, and otherwise empowering groups vulnerable to unemployment and poverty, including the long-term unemployed, recipients of social assistance, older people with professions that have become redundant, the disabled, and Roma people. Several CSOs have been granted funds by various ministries for projects piloting various activities in this area. For example, the project OrientAkcija promotes the social inclusion of women from the Albanian community in the region of Gorenjska by helping them build a social network through various activities, including sports and recreation, and teaching them various skills. CSOs also introduced some new services in the area of environmental protection, such as Green Consultancy, a hotline for questions related to environmental protection run by PIC.

In 2018, Ecologists without Borders again organized Clean Slovenia on World Cleanup Day. Clean Slovenia is focused on cleaning illegal dumpsites in Slovenia and raising awareness of the need to reduce waste. Over 28,000 people from 134 municipalities participated in this year's cleanup, making it one of the most successful campaigns implemented by environmental CSOs over the last decade. The effort also involved companies, municipalities, and schools.

Humanitas, a CSO working in the area of human rights and global development, received a GENE Global Education Innovation Award in 2018 for its Club of Teachers of Global Learning, which supports teachers trying to incorporate global issues into the standard school curriculum. Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children—Victims of Violence implemented two innovative campaigns in 2018. It collaborated with a Slovenian rapper who recorded a song about a young woman who was a victim of sexual violence, drawing significant attention to the issue. It also won a competition called Plaktivat for a poster addressing violence against women. The annual competition is sponsored by an advertising company, which then covers printing costs and provides advertising space for the winning poster all over the country. To enhance its support and diversify its activities, the Slovenian Paraplegic Association and Slovenian Beekeeper's Association opened an educational beehive accessible for people in wheelchairs, the first of its kind in Europe.

CSOs market their products to other CSOs, as well as the business and public sectors. CSOs usually do not conduct thorough market analyses and do not realize the potential of cost recovery, but an increasing number of CSOs, especially social enterprises, are making progress in this area. Many CSOs have on-line shops for their products. For example, the enterprise Bolje, d.o.o., co-founded by Association Ozara, which works in the area of mental health, has an online shop that sells candles and toolkits for making and decorating candles made of waste oil. The candles are made by people with long-term mental health issues.

The government actively recognizes the value of CSO service provision. A growing number of regulations and national and local strategies, including laws in the fields of culture, fire prevention, social assistance, and mental health, recognize the role of CSOs in offering services in the public interest. In addition, the government finances many CSO services. Furthermore, there are a growing number of cases of local governments working hand in hand with CSOs to revive their communities, for example by revitalizing old city centers or cultural monuments. For example, in the project Baza 20 in the municipality of Dolenjske toplice, local CSOs revitalized a monument from World War II, turning it into a vibrant tourist entry point for the exploration of the cultural and natural heritage of the area. The municipality and public institutes funded and implemented the project, but relied on CSOs to coordinate the preparation of the strategy and project activities.

## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 3.2

The infrastructure supporting the sector improved slightly in 2018, as partnerships between CSOs and other sectors are growing.

CSOs commonly form partnerships with public relations (PR) agencies that offer pro bono support and services. These partnerships are often initiated by the PR agencies. In some cases, CSOs partner with lawyers to engage in strategic litigation or offer pro bono legal aid to individuals. The humanitarian organization Friends of Youth Moste-Polje has a long-term partnership with national radio program Val 202 to promote the CSO's work. In addition, in 2018, Friends of Youth Moste-Polje formed a new partnership with the media company PRO PLUS, which owns several media outlets, including POP TV, the biggest commercial TV station in the country.

The partnership will jointly implement the initiative a Chain of Good People, which will support youth and families in poverty: the CSO offers support services to families and children, while the media partner produces promotional content, including ads, articles, and TV stories. Through Clean Slovenia, Ecologists without Borders fostered many partnerships with businesses, some of which have transformed into longer-term partnerships.

Intermediary support organizations (ISOs), including national umbrella networks, regional NGO centers, and a variety of thematic networks, continue to provide CSOs with legal, tax, advocacy, and accounting support, as well as consulting, information, technical support, and trainings in a variety of other areas, such as strategic planning, human resource management, fundraising, project management, lobbying, and PR. They cover all regions of the country and all areas of operation. Many ISOs rely on public funds and membership fees, but some also charge fees for their services. The European Social Fund provides financial support for CNVOS, the regional hubs, and four thematic networks.

ISOs address many needs of local CSOs, However, local CSOs could benefit from additional support in areas such as communications, public relations, and financial sustainability, in particular financial planning, funding diversification, and innovative fundraising. ISOs are still trying to find the proper balance between shorter trainings for larger numbers of CSOs and more focused mentoring programs that reach fewer organizations but have more long-term impact. CSOs also have access to a vast number of handbooks and manuals, both general ones applicable for all CSOs and tailor-made ones for specific types of organizations, such as youth organizations.

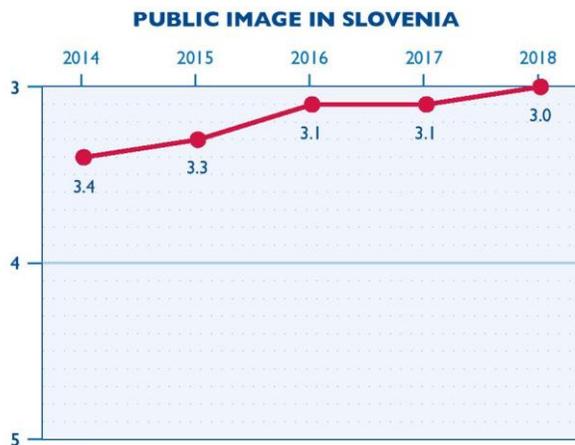
Many grantmaking organizations that were registered a decade ago still operate, but they generally do not re-grant funds anymore. The only local grantmaking in 2018 was that done in the scope of Community Led Local Development, a special financial mechanism of the European Cohesion Funds. Through this program, thirty-seven Local Action Groups (LAGs), consisting of municipalities, companies, CSOs, and individuals, re-granted funds to local organizations and partnerships to implement local projects.

There are approximately 200 thematic networks in Slovenia, including in the areas of culture, urban planning, environment, and voluntary work. There are also networks of pensioners' associations, alpine associations, firefighters' associations, disability organizations, and many others. The range of support and services for network



members varies significantly. CSOs share information with each other either through these thematic networks or informal coalitions, which are usually established around ad hoc initiatives or objectives. One organization usually serves as the coordinator of these informal coalitions, or coordination switches from one organization to another. In addition, there are some long-standing coalitions, such as the section of safe houses in the scope of the Social Chamber of Slovenia.

## PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.0



The public image of CSOs improved slightly in 2018. Mainstream media coverage of CSOs and their activities continued to be widespread in 2018. All forms of media—print, television, radio, and online media—continue to publish stories about CSOs.

CSOs working in certain areas, such as immigration, democratic rights, and the environment, are significantly more likely to receive negative media attention, mostly in populist media, but sometimes in the mainstream media as well. The public response on social media is more likely to be negative towards these CSOs as well. The most notable case of negative media coverage in 2018 was related to PIC. As described above, PIC claimed that the police do not allow foreigners who enter the country illegally to submit asylum applications and instead return

them to Croatia en masse. To prevent this, PIC made phone calls to the authorities to let them know in advance that certain individuals would apply for asylum and demanded to be notified about the procedure. In some cases, PIC threatened to report the police if they did not process the asylum requests. Even though the warnings to the authorities were completely legal, the Minister of Internal Affairs interpreted them as threats and questioned PIC's mission. This was followed by an article in the mainstream media questioning PIC's actions. The public also responded on social media by attacking CSOs involved in immigration issues. In addition, as mentioned above, an opposition politician started a debate during the elections about the unnecessary government spending for CSOs, which was picked up by the media, especially on social media.

Despite this, the public generally understands the role and value of civil society. However, when issues concerning CSOs are discussed publicly, certain types of organizations, including firefighters and organizations working with children, are generally able to garner decisive public support, while most others may be looked at with a degree of skepticism. To improve the public image of the CSO sector, Slovenia joined the European campaign No Day Without Us. In the scope of this campaign, CNVOS published a video showing people working in the sector and demonstrating their social impact. The reach and coverage of the video was among the highest in the EU.

Very few CSOs have employees focused on public and media relations; instead, these tasks are done by volunteers or other employees that lack expertise in this area. The average CSO relies on social media and its organizational website to promote its work but does so without a professionally prepared communications strategy. However, many advocacy organizations are making progress in this area. CNVOS and some regional hubs run support programs for CSOs to improve their PR and communication strategies.

National and local governments have varying levels of respect of CSOs. Some ministries and municipalities have good relations with CSOs, while others do not. In general, the national government cooperates with CSOs on both service provision and advocacy, while local governments rely on CSOs primarily for service provision. Authorities still often neglect to consult CSOs in decision making, especially early in the process. The business sector's perception of CSOs is also mainly positive. CSOs and businesses jointly tackle common challenges, as exemplified by the extensive cooperation between companies and CSOs in various cause marketing projects in 2018. For example, the insurance company Generali, Toyota Slovenija, and the Institute Vozim jointly implemented the project Heroes in Pajamas, which encourages parents and other adults to pick up young people after parties in the middle of the night in their pajamas, instead of taking the chance that young people drive while drunk. The project included a widespread media campaign funded by the companies involved, workshops, and the mobilization

of various Heroes in Pajamas who volunteer to pick up young people from parties, with campaign activities reaching over 12,800 people.

Measures prescribed by law guarantee a certain degree of transparency in the CSO sector. For example, all associations, which account for 90 percent of CSOs in the country, must publish their annual reports on the website of AJPES. However, these reports are often not reader-friendly and fail to make it clear to the public how money was actually spent, and therefore do little to increase public trust. Codes of conduct are not very common among Slovenian CSOs, although CSOs have adopted codes for some areas of work, including social assistance and organized voluntary work.

**Disclaimer:** *The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or FHI 360.*