



The OECD  
Observatory  
of Civic Space



# Civic Space Scan of Portugal: Towards a User-Driven, Human Rights-Based Approach to Public Service Design and Delivery

Across the world, citizens are calling for more openness, transparency, integrity, accountability and participation 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.

Beginning in June 2021, the OECD's Observatory of Civic Space commenced a **Civic Space Scan of Portugal** to assess how protected civic spaces—including those based on fundamental human rights such as freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly—can contribute to more inclusive and responsive public service design and delivery.

## 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.

**Protected civic spaces come in many different shapes and forms**, both online and offline, such as laws protecting freedom of speech, independent oversight mechanisms overseeing government decisions, portals responding to freedom of information requests, autonomous and independent news organisations, protection programmes for human rights defenders, policies to promote civil society organisations (CSOs), and online fora to provide feedback on public services.



## What is a Civic Space Scan?

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

- Civic freedoms and rights;
- Media and digital freedoms and rights;
- The enabling operational environment for CSOs;
- Citizen and CSO participation.

Cross-cutting issues such as inclusion, non-discrimination and the impact of COVID-19 are also examined in detail.

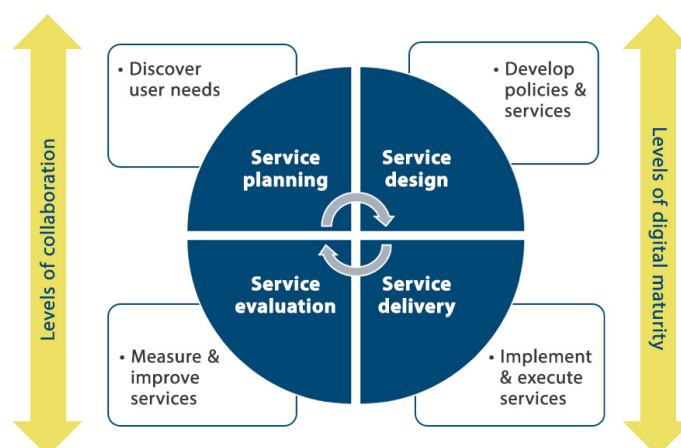
The Scan is based on a partnership with the Portuguese Administrative Modernization Agency (AMA) and will involve peer reviewers from other OECD countries to provide cross-country perspectives and good practices to inform the findings. The Scan will also provide concrete and actionable recommendations for the Government of Portugal on how to strengthen its civic space.



## How can civic space support public service reforms?



As the first of its kind, the Scan will apply a novel framework to understand how protected civic spaces can reinforce public services. By having in place a protected enabling environment for citizens, civil society, and other non-governmental actors to engage in the services delivery cycle, governments can ensure greater inclusion, empowerment, and equity in how services are planned, designed, executed, and evaluated with benefits for the whole of society.



### Please share your views with the OECD!

A multi-disciplinary team from the Observatory of Civic Space is collecting data for the Scan through surveys, desk research and formal interviews to analyse the unique Portuguese context and we are keen to hear from you! We are committed to engaging with a diverse range of non-governmental actors representing the widest possible mix of sectors, sizes, areas of expertise and regions of Portugal. Information may be included anonymously, if requested.

#### HOW AND WHY SHOULD YOU GET INVOLVED?

This is your chance to influence the OECD's recommendations for the Government of Portugal on its service reforms. There are several ways to get involved: through interviews, round table discussions, a [public consultation](#), surveys of service users, and by sending us research and data.

If you are interested in participating, please get in touch by 30 November 2021. Participation can be in Portuguese or in English. You can also help us by spreading the word among your CSO colleagues and partners.

[oe.cd/civic-space](https://oe.cd/civic-space)



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