

## **The Oriental Republic of Uruguay**

### **1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:**

The overall human rights situation in Uruguay remains positive and stable. Uruguay is reportedly the most democratic and transparent country in the region, with a legal framework ensuring effective protection of human rights and robust implementation of democratic principles. Human rights defenders, whether from international bodies or from civil society, enjoy good legal and political environment to operate. The CSO environment is well organised; nevertheless, a relevant constraint for these organisations is access to financing.

One of the most persistent human rights challenges for Uruguay is the high rate of domestic violence against women and gender inequalities in public institutions and private companies. Other deficiencies remain in the living conditions in detention centres, and the reintegration of prisoners, the rights of the child, discrimination against Afro-descendants, the LGBTI persons and migrants. In addition, efforts are required to preserve safe drinking water and to monitor land issues, the impact of climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened structural inequalities, especially affecting vulnerable sectors.

### **2. EU action - key focus areas:**

The human rights and democracy priorities for Uruguay include:

- Gender equality and women's rights: to combat all forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, to promote gender equality and combat discrimination and to increase women's economic empowerment and political participation;
- Rights of the child: to promote the protection of children from all forms of violence, abuse and neglect;
- The situation of persons deprived of liberty: to raise awareness about their poor living conditions and to encourage their economic and social reinsertion. To strengthen the capacity of CSOs working with persons deprived of liberty;
- Environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity: to promote the protection, access and use of natural resources, to support communities affected by environment and climate change and monitoring by NGOs. To promote citizens' awareness of environment and climate change issues, their participation and access to environmental justice.

### **3. EU bilateral political engagement:**

During 2021, the EU Delegation and the EU Member States represented in Uruguay engaged with and consulted CSO representatives, Government, and UN organisations to prepare the Team Europe 'Country Roadmap of EU engagement with Civil Society', as well as on the pre-programming exercise of cooperation funds for the 2021-2027 period, among others. The new roadmap contains stronger focus on the role of civil society in the areas of EU strategic interest like the Green Deal, digital transformation, and human rights.

The Head of EU Delegation accompanied by EU Member States' Ambassadors presented the EU priorities for Uruguay at a conference gathering CSOs, government, international organisations and media representatives; in the closure of this event, the winner of the fourth edition of the EU Human Rights Award in Uruguay was announced.

Successful activities to raise awareness on gender equality and women's rights were:

- i) Europe Day publication 'The EU and Uruguay: together for gender equality',
- ii) The initiative of the Stock Exchange 'Ring the Bell for Gender Equality',
- iii) The prize giving ceremony 'Talent has no gender'.

#### **4. EU financial engagement:**

The EU is financing the following projects in Uruguay:

- "Uruguay mira la trata" (EUR 450,000) studies trafficking in human beings;
- "Cooperación con equidad" (EUR 400,000) empowers the political participation and the socio-economic rights of women working in the cooperative sector;
- "Horizonte de libertades" (EUR 530,000) contributes to the social, economic, cultural and political integration of discriminated LGBTI persons, persons living with HIV+ and adolescents deprived from liberty;
- "Más Conocimiento, Más Participación, Más Derechos" (EUR 520,000) promotes the full exercise of children's and adolescents' rights;
- "Win-Win: gender equality is a good business" (EUR 1 million) promotes gender equality in the private sector. So far, more than 110 Uruguayan enterprises committed to implement women empowerment principles;
- "Fortalecer, Participar, Incidir" (EUR 400,000) strengthening the capacities of CSOs, networks and coalitions to formulate, execute and monitor public policies with a human rights approach;
- "InsPYraMe UE" (EUR 450,000) promoting economic rights of women/youth by fostering the creation/strengthening of SME in the framework of the future EU-Mercosur Association Agreement.

The focus of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in 2021 was gender-based violence with three projects approved for a total of EUR 1.2 million:

- i) "Autonomías colectivas contra la violencia de género" with a focus on support to victims;
- ii) "Enfrentamos las desigualdades y violencias" with focus on prevention;
- iii) "Por una convivencia en paz", multi-dimensional support to victims, education, vocational training, and social support.

Two new CSOs projects were awarded in 2021 for a total of EUR 1 million: "Nada crece a la Sombra" on socio-economic reintegration of women deprived from liberty and "Strengthen the role of the cooperative system" on promoting employment and income generation, fostering sustainable production and consumption to face climate change.

#### **5. Multilateral context:**

Uruguay is strongly committed to multilateralism, the principle of non-intervention, the respect of international law and the promotion and protection of human rights. Uruguay is a UN founding member and is one of the largest per capita contributors of forces globally to UN peacekeeping missions. It has established a National Peace Operations Training Institute, providing specialised peacekeeping training to Uruguayans and foreign students. Uruguay is committed to the Universal Periodic Review mechanism and has set up a voluntary dialogue with stakeholders due to meet on a yearly basis. It was member of the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021.

Uruguay is also a staunch supporter of the Inter-American Human Rights system. The Uruguayan lawyer Ricardo Pérez Manrique was elected President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2022-2023).