

Latin America

Engaging with the judiciary to end impunity

Background

Latin America's media landscape is freer and more plural than in previous decades. However, the region still faces challenges to the protection of freedom of expression, access to information and journalists' safety. Insecurity and self-censorship by the media have risen since 2012 according to UNESCO's *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Global Report 2017/2018*. Despite the lack of open armed conflicts, the region registers the second highest number of journalists' killings, with high impunity rates, as well as an increasing number of non-fatal physical attacks. The region experiences a positive trend towards the strengthening of freedom of information and expression through legal frameworks, but more work needs to be done to ensure their effective implementation and alignment with international standards, particularly in regard to internet.

What we are doing

Providing policy advice and capacity reinforcement for judges, prosecutors and judicial operators.

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What we could further do with your support

- Further strengthen the network of 10,000 judicial operators, which already received training and tools on Freedom of Expression. More support is required to respond to the needs of the sub-regions of Latin America.
- Reinforce policy advice for countries which are undertaking regulatory reforms.
- Support regional associations of investigative journalists through the creation of new tools that increase their investigative reporting capacity and their safety.

Key Achievements

- **10,000 judicial operators** trained in the last 6 years.
- New partnerships established and existing ones strengthened to expand the reach of the **"Judges Initiative"**.
- Stronger **investigative journalism** capacities of journalists through the development of new tools and training spaces.
- **Media regulators** more connected and informed about freedom of expression standards thanks to the reinforcement of the regional network.

Actions in Latin America fall under the following output of the Multi-Donor Programme's (MPD):

Output 4:

Policy advice and reinforcement of duty bearers' capacities



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“It’s a revolutionary movement, in the best sense, and we need to persist in providing this kind of training and support. To consolidate democracy, the judiciary is key. Judges often have the last word.”

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Edison Lanza

*Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of
the Organization of American States*

Strengthening the role of judiciaries in protecting freedom of expression in Latin America

Since 2013, UNESCO and its partners have been facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation to train members of judicial systems on issues related to freedom of expression, public access to information, and safety of journalists.

In Latin America, this line of work has been undertaken in collaboration with Supreme Courts, associations of judiciary operators, the Ibero-American Judicial Summit, the Ibero-American Network of Judicial Schools, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas.

These efforts have reached more than 10,000 judicial operators in 21 countries from the Ibero-American region, particularly through an online training platform co-sponsored by the Ibero-American Judicial Summit, an official forum of chief justices from Spain, Portugal, Andorra and Latin America, and the Ibero-American Network for Schools of Judges, a coordinating group of 17 post-graduate judicial education institutions in 21 countries in the region.

Other resources were produced, such as a toolkit with detailed explanations of key legal principles and law case studies in three interconnected areas: freedom of expression, access to information and the protection of journalists. The toolkit offers guides for judicial operators to facilitate dialogue between them and the media, while emphasizing their role in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

Additionally, a database of jurisprudence was developed in partnership with Columbia University in New York. With the objective to foster regional capacity building and cooperation between judges in regional and national courts, the database collects key rulings from several countries, including 16 countries in Latin America. Further discussions on the judiciary

and its role in online freedom of expression were facilitated at the international level in the context of the Internet Governance Forum.

UNESCO believes that judicial operators play a key role in a system based on checks and balances. Through their work, they help consolidate it and reassure citizens that the principles of accountability, security for all, access to justice and transparency in the law-making process remain valid and lawful. Subsequently, the judiciary’s performance and management come to serve as an indicator of society’s stability and of the capacity of the state to endorse good governance and promote inclusive growth. That is why the Organization, together with many important allies, has developed this initiative, which has become a global programme with an outstanding outreach.

Read more about our work, visit:

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