

Confronting False News & Misinformation in the Run-Up to 2022 Elections * Appendix *****

Technical Assistance to EU Delegation to Colombia

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1. Relevant Activities of EU Member States

Media4Democracy held discussions with the EU Member States Germany, Sweden, Spain and the Netherlands which were recommended by the EU Delegation for their leading role in the human rights and freedom of expression arena, with the aim of understanding their priorities and actions related to the central topics of this report. A selection of relevant activities is highlighted below as an indication of opportunities for synergies with the EU Delegation and to support effective planning by the EU Delegation and EU Member States for the electoral period and beyond.

German development cooperation projects in recent years have focused on three main areas: peacebuilding / crisis prevention; environmental policy and conservation; and sustainable economic development.

The embassy in Colombia locally manages a small fund with annual calls for one-year human rights project proposals and expects to fund two to five such projects in upcoming years. In the peacebuilding and crisis prevention area, they have collaborated with the Defendamos la Vida campaign (however not including support to threatened media workers) and have a project with the newspaper *El Espectador* to organise discussions and events on transitional topics. The embassy has also organised some training sessions for Colombian journalists in Germany.

Embassy officials stressed their concern about the polarisation of political discourse and the need to foster better dialogue across political divides as well as the importance of improving media diversity. They are seeking a broader range of media partners and noted the need to make accurate reporting which counters misinformation more accessible to more Colombians via television, radio and social media. They would welcome increased coordination with the EU Delegation and other Member States on joint projects in this area and already have plans for co-funding projects with Switzerland and the UK.

Sweden's main goal in its development cooperation strategy for Colombia 2016-2020 is to provide support to the peace process and the implementation of the Peace Agreements. Key areas of cooperation have been: peace and human security; reintegration of former guerrillas into society; promoting youth leadership; training police to handle domestic violence; protecting human rights defenders; and peace funds for climate and the environment.

The embassy currently has two projects underway with civil society organisations that are directly related to support for journalists, the media and disinformation:

- Support to the organisation Insight Crime, which carries out independent journalistic investigations in Central America and Colombia; and
- Support to MOE, which has developed a Media Monitoring Observatory from which they address issues such as fake news and hate speech in different media during electoral periods. (See section 3.4).

It has also supported media literacy efforts aimed at school children and teenagers using the Swedish Institute's 'Fake versus Fact' tool kit and with trainings in rural areas implemented by FLIP.

Embassy staff noted that Human Rights and Democracy are central to the Swedish Foreign Ministry's cooperation strategy for the coming years. The embassy would therefore welcome recommendations from Media4Democracy which would support this in media- and election-related fields for implementation in the second half of 2021.

Spain and Colombia have now embarked on a new framework for development cooperation (Marco de Asociación País, MAP) for the period 2020-2024. The main areas of cooperation include: support to migrant and returned populations; productive projects for victims of the conflict; and strengthening the system for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition. Likewise, there is support for projects and programmes on gender-based violence, rural development, access to fair markets for youth, cultural exchanges and access to drinking water. The departments prioritised for these projects are: Nariño, Chocó, Cauca, Antioquia, Valle del Cauca, Bolívar, Santander and La Guajira.

Spanish Embassy representatives told Media4Democracy that they have not had a particular focus on the media sector as a whole, but that freedom of expression and information issues have been an important element of the work carried out on human rights with community radios acting in rural and conflict affected areas. This work has been part of support for participation in local level governance, in line with the objective of Sustainable Development Goal 16 to 'build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'.

Continuing work with community radios, local authorities and civil society organisations will be a key factor in the pursuit of this goal. In this context, the embassy has organized training for journalists in the provinces in partnership with FLIP. Embassy officials stressed the need for greater coordination with other EU Member States and with the EU Delegation on efforts to support freedom of expression. These would include working with central government, departmental and municipal authorities and civil society. Joint European programming would also be welcome.

The **Netherlands** contributes in several areas to the development and human rights agenda in Colombia by supporting: the EU Fund for Peace; processes that facilitate access to land titles; the system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition; and humanitarian demining. It also currently provides technical, financial and political support to the peace process with the ELN as a member of the group of countries providing support, accompaniment and cooperation (Grupo de Países de Apoyo, Acompañamiento y Cooperación GPAAC).

The embassy in Colombia has a major focus on human rights, where freedom of expression has been seen as a priority. It supports the work of FLIP, in particular projects related to the mapping

of the so-called information deserts in Colombia (*Cartografías de la Información*, see section 5.1) and the promotion of media diversity through the monitoring of public advertising (*pauta oficial*). They also support alternative web-based media outlets such as La Liga Contra el Silencio and have organised trainings for journalists in the provinces. A new project under development is the provision of funds to cover legal fees for journalists facing defamatory and other lawsuits due to their coverage of public interest cases. They have provided relocation to journalists at risk and support community radios.

The Dutch Embassy expressed keen interest in seeing Media4Democracy's recommendations for election-focused activities to support freedom of expression, improve factual media coverage of political affairs, including efforts to increase the capacity of community radios to provide such information to remote and vulnerable sections of Colombian society. The embassy implements freedom of expression and media projects on a yearly basis; timely recommendations for implementation in the second half of 2021 would be welcome. Dutch representatives in Bogotá and Brussels have stressed the need for reinforcing Team Europe joint projects to support freedom of expression and the media.

An interesting project not directly related to media carried out by Dutch organisations in Colombia is the promotion of dialogue between young congressmen and congresswomen from different political parties on relevant emerging issues. This could provide an opening for cross-party collaboration on mitigating misleading partisan narratives.

2. Key Partners

Media4Democracy has identified the organisations listed below as a high-quality pool of partners for effective future programming and/or advocacy engagements by the EU Delegation and EU Member States.

Established partners

These organisations are working or have worked with the EU Delegation and/or EU Member States, either as direct partners or indirectly.

MOE (Misión de Observación Electoral)

<https://moe.org.co/>

MOE is a platform of civil society organisations in Colombia promoting citizens' exercise of their civic and political rights. MOE promotes civil society's participation in democratic processes; monitoring and electoral observation; research and legal proposals about electoral processes.

Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP)

<https://www.flip.org.co>

FLIP supports journalists at risk, provides legal advice, research and training activities for promoting freedom of expression online and offline. FLIP promotes access to information activities and defence against censorship on the internet.

Fundación Karisma

<https://web.karisma.org.co/>

This foundation works in several areas such as: democratisation of knowledge and culture, civic participation, digital inclusion and technological appropriation. It also houses K+Lab, focused on digital security and privacy in support of journalists and human right defenders.

Transparencia Colombia

<https://transparenciacolombia.org.co/>

Transparencia-Colombia promotes activities against corruption in the public and private sector, electoral campaigns' accountability, access to public information and civic participation against corruption.

Linterna Verde

<https://linternaverde.co/en/>

Linterna Verde provides advice to civil society organisations relating to online interactions, training, research and internet publications.

Colombiacheck

<https://colombiacheck.com/>

Colombiacheck is a project of *Consejo de Redacción* which includes over a hundred investigative journalists in Colombia. This open and collaborative digital platform publishes articles based on fact-checking.

La Silla Vacía

<https://lasillavacia.com/>

La Silla Vacía is an interactive news media outlet focusing on Colombian politics and current affairs. It promotes investigative journalism and the inclusion of a diversity of voices from across the country.

El Poder de Elegir

<https://chicaspoderosas.org/elpoderdeelegir-2/>

El Poder de Elegir is a project linked to the Chicas Poderosas Colombia initiative, which has focused on monitoring and fact-checking political information which circulated on WhatsApp during the Colombian 2018 presidential elections.

Colnodo

<https://www.colnodo.apc.org/>

Colnodo, established in 1994, provides electronic communication systems to organisations working for development in Colombia. Colnodo prioritises issues such as democracy and human rights, women's empowerment, digital inclusion and ICT for development.

Colombia Diversa

<https://colombiadiversa.org/>

Colombia Diversa is a non-governmental organisation working in Colombia since 2004. This organisation promotes an egalitarian society and the human rights of lesbians, gays, trans and bisexual people in Colombia.

Fundación Colombia 2050

<https://fundacioncolombia2050.org/fundacioncolombia2050/>

This foundation was created by a group of Colombian citizens to promote democratic spaces for greater civic and political participation. It implements educational, social, and economic projects for the development of Colombia.

Red Colombiana de Periodistas con Visión de Género

<http://www.redperiodistasgenero.org/>

This network was established in 2007 in Colombia with the aim of promoting a more visible role for women in the media and promoting women's human rights and inclusive language. It offers training to journalists and communication students.

RESANDER (Red Cooperativa de Medios de Comunicación Comunitarios de Santander)

<https://www.resander.com/>

RESANDER is a network of community radio stations promoting the values of cooperative organisations and providing capacity-building for business models, quality management skills and community empowerment.

La Liga contra el Silencio

<https://ligacontraelsilencio.com/>

This initiative, launched in 2016 with the support of the Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP), includes a group of media outlets, journalists and free-lancers whose reports overcome censorship pressures and reach places with limited access to media.

KienyKe

<https://www.kienyke.com/>

This media outlet publishes news from Colombia and around the world. Since 2010, it has organised “*El Festival de los Sentidos*” which includes conferences and debates about technological and digital developments and challenges for digital journalism.

Other Potential Partners in Colombia

De Justicia

<https://www.dejusticia.org/>

Founded in 2005, this research and advocacy organisation focuses on strengthening the rule of law and promoting social justice and human rights in Colombia and the Global South. It publishes studies, fact-based policy proposals and implements capacity-building programmes.

AMARC-Colombia

<https://www.facebook.com/AsociacionMundialdeRadiosComunitariasALC/>

Association of Community Radio Stations for promoting the development, training, and sustainability of community media. It belongs to the World Network of Community Radio Stations.

Red de Emisoras Comunitarias del Magdalena Medio (AREDMAG)

<https://www.facebook.com/people/Red-de-Emisoras-Comunitarias-del-Magdalena-Medio-AREDMAG/100054350358024/>

Network of community radio stations that has been working in some of the areas of Colombia where communities have been most badly affected by the civil war and violence.

Other Potential Partners outside Colombia

Chequeado

<https://chequeado.com/>

Chequeado is a project supported by Fundación La Voz Pública. It is a digital platform based in Argentina and focuses on fact-checking public discourse, promoting access to information and data and fighting against disinformation.

First Draft

<https://firstdraftnews.org/>

First Draft was established as a non-profit coalition in 2015 and expanded in 2016 to become an international partner network of newsrooms, universities, platforms and civil society organisations. It focuses on social monitoring, verification and reporting disinformation.

EU DisinfoLab

<https://www.disinfo.eu/>

EU DisinfoLab is an independent nongovernmental organisation focused on researching and tackling sophisticated disinformation campaigns targeting the European Union, its Member States, core institutions and core values.

Digital Forensic Lab

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/programs/digital-forensic-research-lab/>

The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab) focuses on the study of disinformation by exposing falsehoods and fake news, documenting human rights abuses, and building digital resilience worldwide. They also launched the initiative <https://www.digitalsherlocks.org/>.

3. Key Informants

1. Carlos Lauría (Open Society Foundations)
2. Pedro Vaca (Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression – InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights IACHR)
3. Carolina Botero (Fundación Karisma)
4. Jonathan Block (Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa FLIP)
5. Carlos Cortés (La Silla Vacía / Linterna Verde)
6. Viviana Ordoñez (IFEX- Latin America)
7. Pablo Medina (Consejo de Redacción / Colombia Check)
8. Diana Salinas (Cuestión Pública)
9. Andrea Cancino (Universidad del Norte)
10. Adriana Bernal (Kienyke)
11. José Luis Peñarredonda (Centro Latinoamericano de Investigación Periodística CLIP)
12. Diego Rubiano (Misión de Observación Electoral MOE)
13. Alejandra Barrios (Misión de Observación Electoral MOE)
14. Juan Carlos Galindo (Fundación Colombia 2050)

15. Fernando Tibaduiza (Red Cooperativa de Medios de Comunicación Comunitarios de Santander RESANDER)
16. Ivonne Pico (Red Cooperativa de Medios de Comunicación Comunitarios de Santander RESANDER)
17. José Luis Muñoz (Red Cooperativa de Medios de Comunicación Comunitarios de Santander RESANDER)
18. Nicolás Farfán Namém (Registrador Delegado en lo Electoral de la Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil de Colombia)
19. Luis Felipe Murcia (Oficina de Asuntos Internacionales de la Registraduría Nacional)
20. Felipe Sánchez Iregui (Jefe de la Oficina de Prensa y Comunicaciones de la Registraduría Nacional)
21. Ludis Emilse Campo (Directora General de la Registraduría Nacional)
22. Hernán Penagos (Magistrado del Consejo Nacional Electoral CNE de Colombia)