

Media of the Americas Call for the Defense of the Values of Professional Journalism in the Digital Ecosystem

The signatory entities, representing the media of the three Americas, exhort supranational organizations and the region's countries to put on the agenda and prioritize the vital issue of the value of journalistic content on digital platforms, ensuring conditions for **fair and reasonable remuneration**.

After years of research on the dominant position of global technology companies in the communication market, Australia issued on February 25 the Code of Negotiation of Digital Media and Platforms. It provides for compulsory arbitration mechanisms to ensure that these platforms - as essential facilities or Internet "access doors" - **pay the media for the use they make of their content and from which they obtain significant direct and indirect benefits**.

With the support of European media associations, the Commission and Parliament of the European Union are discussing a "Digital Markets Act" to prevent large digital platforms from abusing their market power. In the United States, the News Media Alliance, representing almost 2,000 media outlets, is working on obtaining authorization from Congress so that it will be possible to negotiate directly with the platforms.

These initiatives arise from the enormous changes in the last two decades when accessing the news. The media have more significant audiences than ever before. **However, intermediaries that account for more than 80% of the world's digital advertising now absorb the resources used to finance professional journalism**. Our contents, valued by the audience, are essential for the information of society and vital for the health of democracy, but **the sustainability of journalism is at risk**. The so-called "information deserts" (areas without local media) are replicated in small communities and spread to wider regions.

The path to achieving a balance -without there being actors who benefit at the expense of others- has been in the works for several years. One of the pioneers was the European Union, whose Parliament approved in 2019 the directive that obliges platforms to compensate the use of "intellectual rights" of editors in journalism. In addition, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, and Germany have already adapted their national laws to force digital platforms to negotiate within reasonable timeframes.

However, in all countries, efforts to make this right be effective face delays and differences in negotiating between the parties, which delay agreements and take away their proportionality. In some cases, these behaviors have already resulted in severe fines from the authorities.

The members of the journalism industry believe that **there must be**

coherent approaches at a global level to enforce a right that is based on copyright and antitrust regulations.

It is also essential to avoid abusive practices in the digital advertising market, where the platforms are both referees and prominent players. They are investigated and sanctioned when such practices occur to prevent a greater concentration of income and personal data use. Likewise, **the issue of algorithms deserves much attention as they determine the distribution of content throughout society**.

The renewed Declaration of Windhoek + 30, promoted by UNESCO, expresses concern about "the severe economic crisis that represents an existential threat to the media..." and states that "economic sustainability" is "a key prerequisite for their independence." It calls on governments to "guarantee (...) funding from public sources to the media." And asks digital companies to support journalism in various ways; for example, through "inclusive partnership" agreements and "financial measures".

Recent initiatives by companies such as Google and Facebook to pay media in some countries for content licenses are valuable. However, these programs do not constitute a proper and comprehensive response. The industry needs to be compensated for the disproportions and restore some balance to the ecosystem. Compensation should not be a unilateral decision by the platforms but rather be the agreed fruit of a universal, pre-existing and proportionate right for publishers.

Countries, organizations, media, and platforms must take steps in this regard. As stated in the IAPA Declaration of Salta (2018), "the actors of the digital ecosystem must achieve an adequate balance between freedom of expression, copyright, and intellectual property, as well as regarding the benefits that the contents can generate in that ecosystem. They must also avoid abusive practices that may impact on competition, innovation and the free flow of information." The International Broadcasting Association (AIR) has expressed similar concepts and media entities of the region.

We need to promote a healthy and balanced digital ecosystem, so the lack of transparency of the algorithms does not end up deciding what information is relevant to a person or a society and in which disinformation can be fought with professional and quality journalism. For this, sustainable news media are required to receive the value they generate to benefit the community.



Inter American Press Association (IAPA) - World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) - Iberoamerican Telecommunications Organization (OTI) - Grupo de Diarios América (GDA) - International Association of Broadcasting (IAB) - News Media Canada (NMC, Canadá) - News Media Alliance (NMA, USA) - Media AllianceMx (Mexico) - Honduran Media Association (AMC, Honduras) - Media Association of Jamaica (MAJ, Jamaica) - Dominican Society of Newspapers (SDD, Dominican Republic) - Information Media Association (AMI, Colombia) - Ecuadorian Association of Newspaper Editors (AEDEP, Ecuador) - Peruvian Press Council (CPP, Peru) - National Association of Newspapers (ANJ, Brazil) - National Press Association (ANP, Bolivia) - National Press Association (ANP, Chile) - Association of Argentine Journalistic Entities (ADEPA, Argentina)