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.

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