

POWER

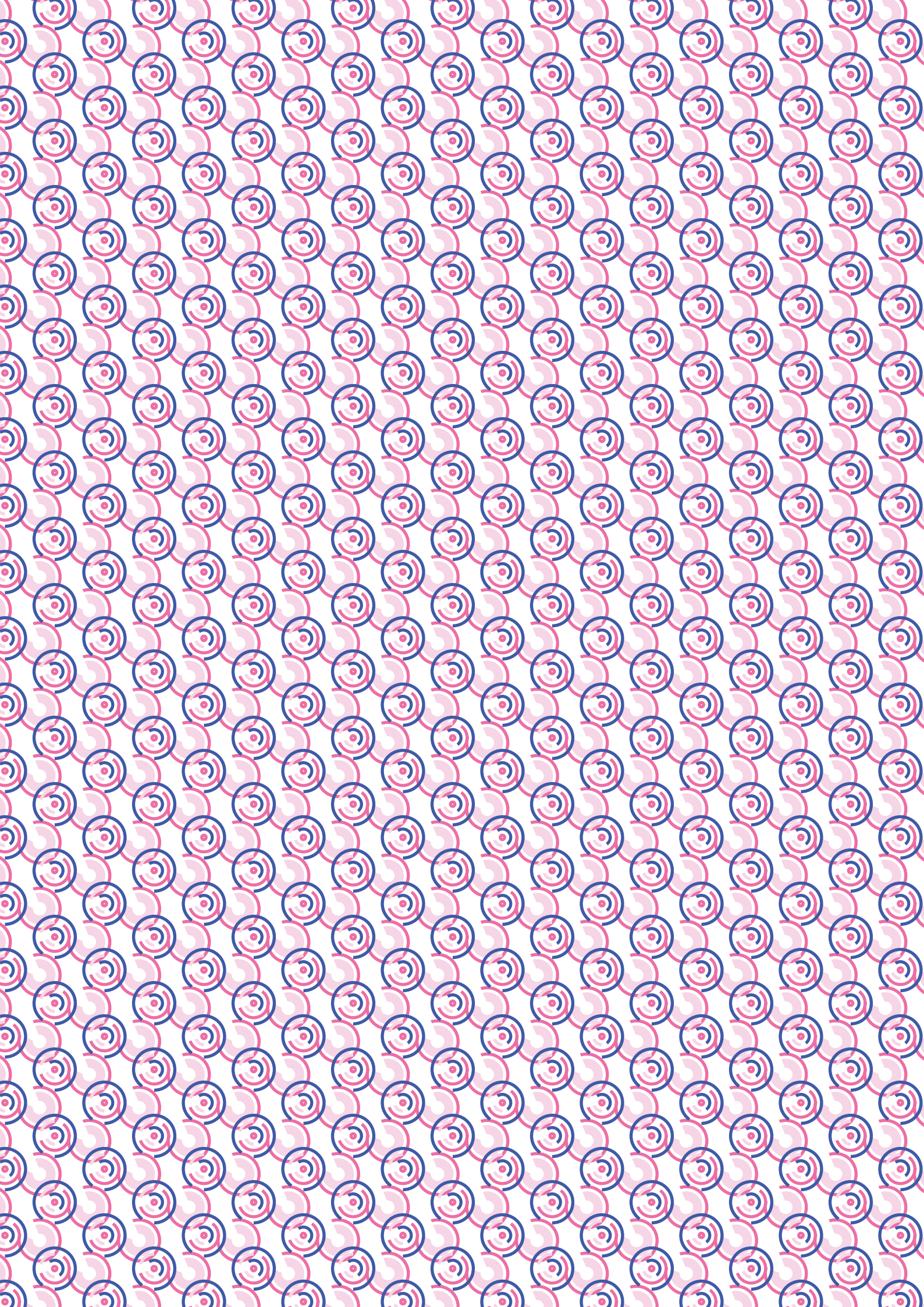
UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

COLLECTION OF ARTICLES FROM THE

2023   **T**CAMP

POLITICAL FINANCING, TECHNOLOGY, DATA AND ELECTIONS





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2023   CAMP

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This collection was prepared by TEDIC in partnership with the organization Semillas para la Democracia (Seeds for Democracy), within the framework of the project “Greater citizen control to combat the influence of organized crime and corruption in elections” (“Mayor control ciudadano para combatir la influencia del crimen organizado y la corrupción en elecciones”).

TEDIC is a Non-Governmental Organization founded in 2012, whose mission is the defense and promotion of human rights in the digital world. Among its main topics of interest are freedom of expression, privacy, access to knowledge and gender on the Internet.

Semillas para la Democracia is a non-profit civil association for the common good, created in October 2006. It seeks to help improve the quality of Paraguayan democracy by promoting citizen participation in matters of public interest and the responsible exercise of government.

The articles are the result of the Bootcamp described below. The opinions expressed and facts contained in this material are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of TEDIC and Semillas para la Democracia or the management of this media.

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Introduction

Since the CREER Project, whose objective is “Greater citizen control to combat the influence of organized crime and corruption in elections”, a close collaboration has been forged between Semillas para la Democracia and TEDIC to face the growing challenge of the impact of organized crime and corruption in Paraguay’s electoral processes. This initiative seeks to empower citizens and strengthen the country’s democratic structures, addressing the lack of capacity to oversee the electoral system and to demand solutions on behalf of an organized society aware of its rights.

TEDIC and Semillas para la Democracia have been two organizations that have worked tirelessly to promote electoral reforms, opening spaces for exchange and critical dialogue on the inherent weaknesses of the Paraguayan electoral system. This process has been instrumental in identifying and analyzing how elections in Paraguay can improve and contribute more effectively to democracy. Through these efforts, significant progress has been made, including the enactment of a new Political Party Financing Law and an electoral reform that, although it did not introduce profound changes in the system, it has incorporated innovations such as electronic voting or advances in the implementation of inclusive voting for people with disabilities.

However, the fight against corruption and the impact of organized crime, a scourge that permeates national politics and elections, continues to be a road full of obstacles. Despite legislative advances, the effective implementation of laws such as the Political Financing Law, the supervision of the internal democracy mechanisms of political parties, and compliance with equality, together with the adoption of new technologies to guarantee electoral integrity and transparency, are still pending challenges.

In response to these challenges, Bootcamps have been organized on “Political financing, technology and elections” and “Political financing, data and elections”. These initiatives, carried out during 2023, focused on strengthening citizen control to combat corruption and the influence of organized crime in elections, especially focused on political financing for the 2023 general elections and the growing phenomenon of the use of social media as a new space for political dispute, through technical assistance, training for journalists, academics, young people and women interested in this issue.

The Bootcamps provided training on the control of political financing, security for journalists, reporting tools, and how to build and expose cases as effective tools for citizen control. This practical methodology has proven to be crucial in providing participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to promote greater transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

Semillas and TEDIC’s collaboration in the CREER project reflects a shared commitment to upholding the rule of law and fostering a stronger and more resilient democracy in Paraguay. This joint work is laying the foundations for a future in which Paraguayan society can enjoy electoral processes free from the negative influence of organized crime and corruption and thus ensure the strengthening of its institutions and the country’s democratic system.

Marta Ferrara

Executive Director – Semillas para la Democracia

Eduardo Carrillo

Co-director TEDIC

FIRST EDITION: Political Financing, Technology & Elections

After 6 intense days of training, the Bootcamp on “Political Financing, Technology and Elections”, organized by TEDIC and Semillas para la Democracia, in alliance with media outlets such as Última Hora, El Nacional, El Independiente and Radio Libre, was successfully completed.

The purpose of the activity was to train journalists, civil society organizations and members of academia on relevant topics in preparation for the general elections to be held in Paraguay on April 30.

From April 10 to 15, 2023, participants had the opportunity to exchange experiences, knowledge, and tools for the production of journalistic pieces and articles of general interest on topics such as political financing, disinformation, the interference of organized crime in electoral matters, and the role of the Internet and new technologies in the aforementioned processes.

The panelists invited were national and international leaders in the field who shared their experiences and knowledge on the specific topics of each session.

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In a context of constant danger and threat to journalists and human rights defenders, it is important to begin to discuss the need for a comprehensive approach to security, where the digital environment appears as a scenario of instrumental importance to extend our exercise on the subject in a comprehensive manner.



In this regard, Paula Saucedo, Protection and Advocacy Officer of Artículo19 - Mexico and Central America, gave the last keynote presentation of the Bootcamp 2023 on Political Financing.

The talk, entitled “Security and narco-surveillance of journalists. The Mexican case” provided a better understanding on the implications of technology implemented by power groups, whether legal or de facto, to the detriment of fundamental civil liberties. It also provided information on recent examples in Mexico and Central America, such as the use of Pegasus surveillance software, and the risks involved in exercising freedom of expression in the face of the advance of organized crime.

After the closing of the *Bootcamp*, Paula accompanied visits to the editorial offices of Última Hora and El Independiente¹, in addition to participating in the Debate Panel: *Safety of journalists and human rights defenders in the face of digital threats*, organized with the support of Semillas para la Democracia, CODE-HUPY, Emancipa Magazine, Union of Journalists of Paraguay, Mujeres que Crean and Society of Communicators of Paraguay² and broadcasted live on YouTube and Facebook.

Read more about the issue at: https://www.tedic.org/cierre_bootcamp2023/

Below you will find all the articles resulting from this edition.

1 Access the program visit in El Independiente here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=celT5u12dZc&ab_channel=ONGTEDIC.

2 Full live webcast of the event can be accessed here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8Ls64gPYUI&t=3s&ab_channel=ONGTEDIC.

The TikTok phenomenon in politics: No electoral ban and no way to measure spending

Publication media: Latitud 25

Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/el-fenomeno-tiktok-en-politica-sin-veda-electoral-ni-formas-de-medir-el-gasto/>

The electoral ban in the past elections sought to balance the competition between political campaigns, but social networks are beyond their control. Among the most used apps, TikTok, gained preponderance among the political class that will be part of the next legislative period in the Senate. We document how the electoral ban was violated and we talk about transparency in the financing of the content produced for this platform.

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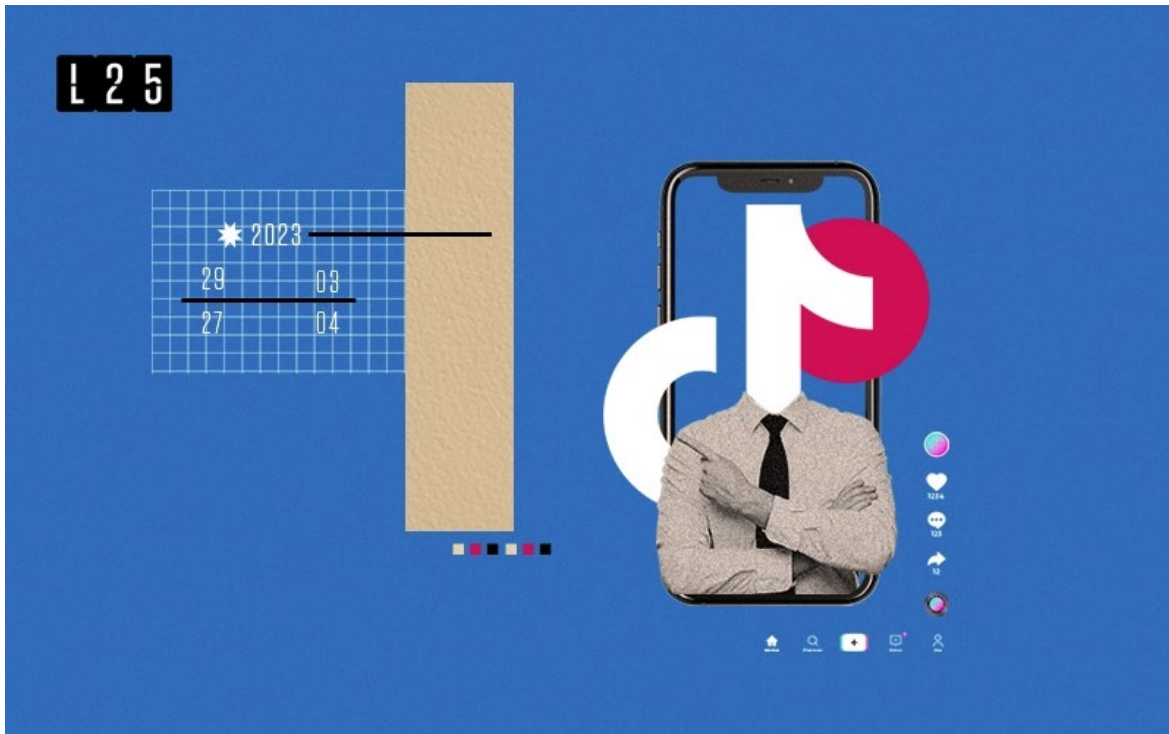
In Paraguay, elections were held on April 30 to elect those who will govern the country for the next five years. These elections had a series of novelties, among them, the implementation of the preferential vote as well as the use of electronic voting machines and the use, by the political class, of social media such as TikTok.

Regarding the preferential vote, this provision had an impact on the way in which candidates bidding for elective office conducted their political campaigns. For this occasion, each candidate had to make a greater effort to obtain more voters, according to Christian Ruiz Díaz, director of Political Financing of the Superior Court of Electoral Justice (TSJE).

In this context, there is an undeniable trend in the use of social media for political campaigns. In this trend, the social network TikTok has become a new scenario for electoral campaigns.

It should be clarified that this social network is not allowed to advertise political propaganda. However, it allows members of the political class to generate content related to their campaigns.

For this reason, we have analyzed some aspects of the accounts belonging to the people elected to the Senate for this new term. We also spoke with specialists in communication, politics, and human rights to address the different aspects of this topic.



The TikTok phenomenon; a double-edged tool

Natalia Suazo, a consultant in Argentine Politics: political scientist, specialist in politics and technology, director of Salto Agency and author of the book “Guerras de internet y los dueños de internet” (Internet wars and the owners of the Internet), made a brief analysis on the use of TikTok by politicians, within the framework of this material.

She stated that the network is currently growing, therefore, those who have an account on this social interaction platform do so with some strategy.

“And to have some kind of strategy is to analyze the need to be part of that conversation that is happening, to connect with that general public [...] and to put together content that is a little softer so that candidates can show themselves to be a little more human,” she said.

On the other hand, she warned that if you make a bad strategy or if you are on that network in an inappropriate way, you run the risk of experiencing a boomerang effect. In this case, a negative result can be obtained towards the reputation of the person who is campaigning.

Did the elected senators choose TikTok?

We conducted research specifically on the people elected to the Senate in Paraguay. The objective was to inform about their presence on TikTok, during their electoral campaigns (2022/2023). The parties' primary elections were held on December 18, 2022 and the general elections on April 30, 2023.

In this context, we searched for the profiles of the people elected to the Senate on the platform and recorded the number of followers and publications. We also counted the “likes” they had had since their account was activated. Out of 45 male and female legislators, 31 have an active TikTok account.

This represents a 69% participation in this platform. In the following graph we can see that the total distribution of seats by party is very similar to the distribution of elected senators who have a TikTok account by party.

With respect to the followers of each party, it is observed that the opposition parties had the highest number of followers. The Encuentro Nacional party was the leader in this category, as we can see in the following graph. However, the number of followers does not match the number of publications. When we analyzed each of the profiles of the people elected to the Upper House by parties, we can see that Cruzada Nacional and the ANR are positioned as those parties with the most publications.

In other words, members of Cruzada Nacional and the Colorado Party are the most active on their TikTok profiles. Other opposition parties had little or no presence in this social network.

Lack of network control affects free competition

Leonardo Gómez Berniga, coordinator of projects on Technopolitics and Democracy at TEDIC, spoke about the implications of social networks in the electoral period. He recalled that with the novelty of the Internet, there is a legal vacuum in the political context and clarified that there is no legal framework to foresee the violation of the electoral ban in social media, including TikTok.

He spoke of the importance of the TSJE eliminating loopholes for control. On this point, he emphasized that the electoral ban period is established to guarantee equal competition and avoid asymmetries at the time of the electoral contest.

In this regard, he indicated the aspects that threaten free competition. One of them is related to the fact that networks such as TikTok are not prohibited from publishing electoral content during the closed dates.

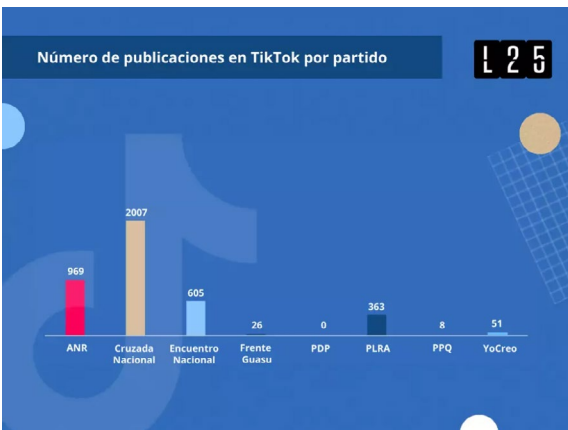
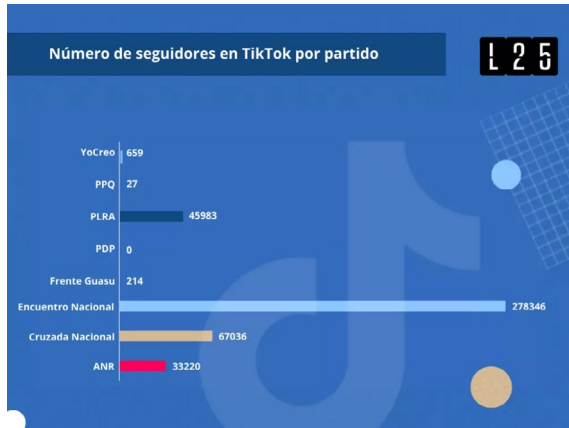
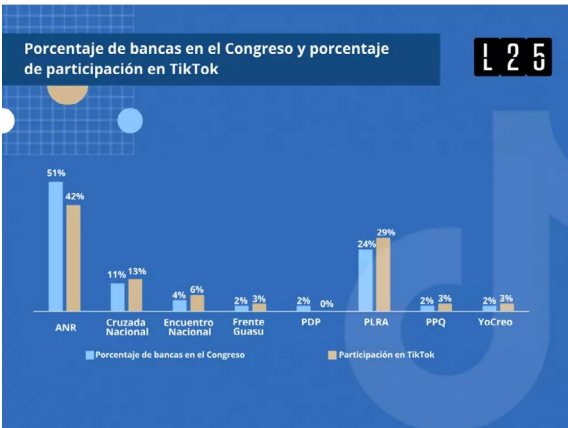
On the other hand, he also pointed out that TikTok's algorithms may be violating the electoral ban. In this regard, it should be noted that this platform of Chinese origin has a dynamic in which videos can continue to appear to the user, after some time of their publication and possibly in periods in which political material should not be viewed.

TSJE recognizes lack of updating

Christian Ruiz Díaz, director of political financing of the Superior Court of Electoral Justice (TSJE), acknowledged that the Electoral Code does not consider social networks.

He indicated that this regulation clearly defines what electoral propaganda is and this definition does not include social networks. "We cannot include something that is not foreseen, that is not written," he argued.

According to the regulation, "electoral propaganda is understood as the display on the streets and public spaces of billboards, graffiti and posters containing proposals of candidates or programs for elective office; radio or television spots with messages calling to vote for certain candidates or proposals; spaces in newspapers (dailies, magazines, weeklies) with proposals of candidates or government programs".



Algunos de los ejemplos de cómo utilizaron TikTok quienes entonces estaban haciendo su campaña política para ingresar al Senado

L 2 5

Juan Carlos Baruja
ANR

Zenaida Delgado
Cruzada Nacional

Ever Villalba
PLRA

Ruiz Diaz added that our Electoral Code dates to 1996 and he pointed out that at that time we did not even have Internet.

“So, we have a sea of publications at election time that you really have to anticipate. Of course, there are legal loopholes since, as I told you, the law is from ‘96, and this has evolved over the years. The Internet has appeared, we have social networks and the way of doing politics has also changed”, he remarked.

Candidates who did not comply with the electoral ban

Out of the 45 elected senators, 18 are first-time members of the National Congress. Of this total, 67% have an active account on TikTok. We searched their profiles for publications made outside the period allowed for advertising in mass media.

We found that for the general elections, 73% failed to comply with the ban. Likewise, with respect to the deadlines for primary party elections, 100% failed to comply with the election ban, mentioning their candidacy or list.

Social networks to be included in the electoral ban

In view of the legal loophole regarding the electoral ban on social networks, the director of political financing of the TSJE assured that they are working on including these platforms in the regulatory framework. In this regard, he mentions:

“We are going to present again a bill for a comprehensive reform of the Electoral Code. This is where we want to include social networks as mass media,” he said.

How is political financing controlled in social media?

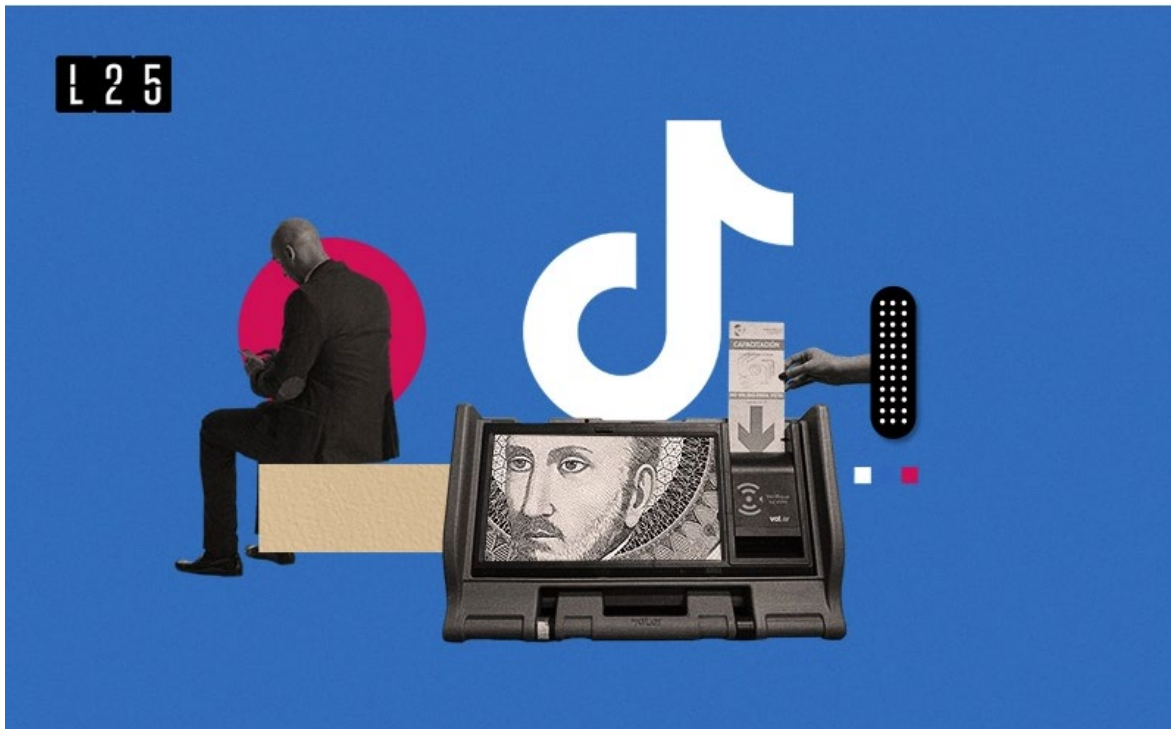
In relation to spending on social media, the director of the TSJE said that advertisements are controlled and that normally this advertising in Meta company, for example, is paid with the credit card of the political organization.

“Now, quantification is difficult, because in some cases, they simply state that they are promoting their personal pages,” he said.

However, the case of Meta, which includes Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp is different. Since TikTok is not part of this U.S. conglomerate and does not allow political advertising, what they do is ask for the bill for the communication service.

The political finance director recognizes that there are videos and communications that the candidate is obviously not going to do without help, but for that he or she hires a Community Manager, a professional who manages his or her digital community.

Ruiz Díaz mentioned in this regard: “We have added the receipts and invoices of how much the service is charged by those who manage the accounts,” he insisted.



Neither the expense nor the impact on TikTok can be quantified

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On a private level, we consulted with some communication agencies that worked on political campaigns, which included TikTok in their campaigns. These executives, who preferred to keep their identities confidential, pointed out that the communication packages are sold in combos or service packages and that they do not handle a price exclusively for TikTok.

In the public sphere, Cristian Ruiz Diaz of the TSJE, acknowledged that it is impossible to specify how much went to a social network such as TikTok.

“We can no longer calculate the amount, but simply the service. We only have the invoice for the payment made by the candidate to the CM. It is fine by me if they hire a CM, as long as they present the invoices and that the invoice is made within the electoral expense period (from January 31 to April 30)”, he explained.

Regarding the impact of communication on voting, consultant Natalia Suazo said that there is still no empirical evidence. She emphasized that research is needed to link the impact of TikTok on the image and popularity of people –who are in politics– to younger audiences.

Suazo mentions: “What we do know is that the way in which people search for information –including political information– which used to be developed mainly through Google, and also a little through other social media such as Facebook and, to a lesser extent, Twitter, is now also produced on TikTok”, she said.

She noted that indeed, younger generations use TikTok and Instagram to search for information about things that matter to them. So, yes, there is a construction at the political communication level, at the image level, but she asked: how can we measure the impact that TikTok has on voters?

A space where democracy must also be guaranteed

Gómez emphasized that today social media has an impact on the deepening of social situations, pointing out that: “We recently saw how TikTok had an important relevance for the monitoring of activities, allegations of electoral fraud”.

He also considered it important to make citizens understand, communicate and provide them with information so that they understand social media as a space where democratic guarantees must also be ensured.

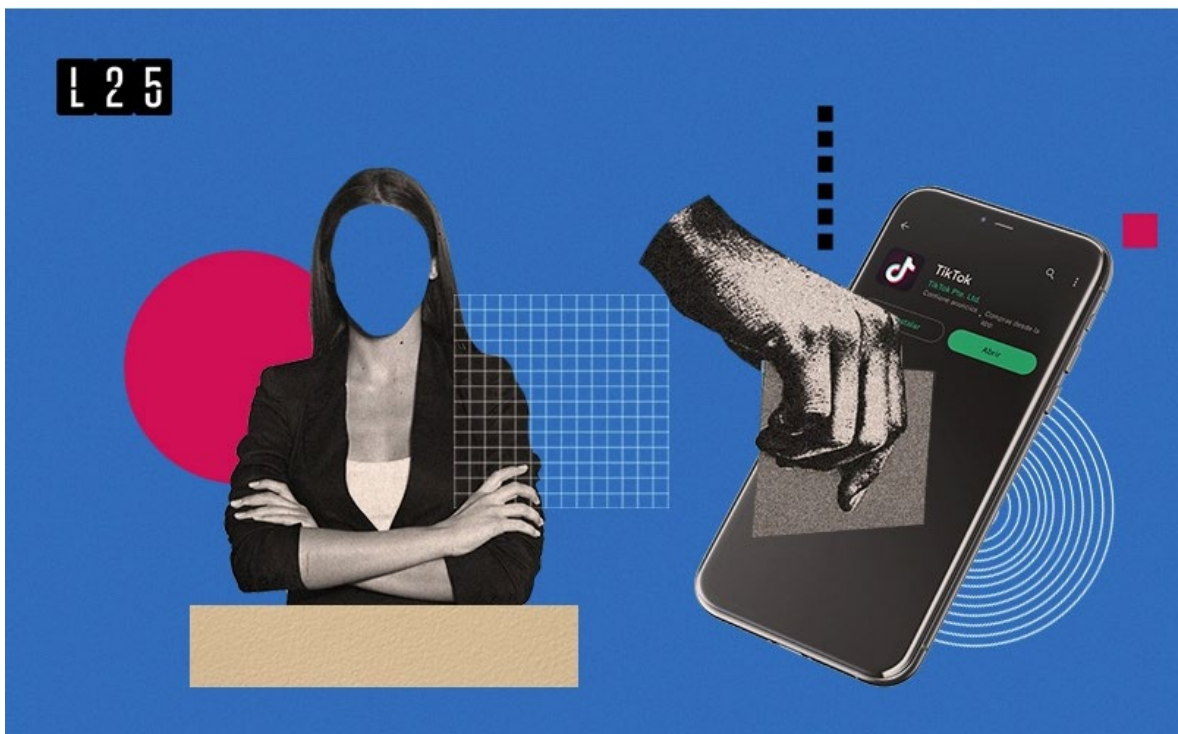
Therefore, he added, neither the electoral authority nor the Public Prosecutor’s Office, nor the Judiciary can ignore the relevance of having a framework for the protection of rights in social networks. This regulation must guarantee equality of electoral competition, transparency in the spending of electoral expenses and the prevention of possible violations to other rights that are seen through digital platforms.

Gómez believes that, at present, responses to sensitive problems are very slow and therefore hinder access to justice. In this regard, he mentions:

“So, it is not only a matter of saying, we have to guarantee the transparency of political propaganda, it is not only the transparency of spending, but it is also the access to justice and the protection of the democratic space.”

Finally, he concludes that: “The platforms must be governed under democratic rules, and it is the branches of the state who must enforce the guidelines and policies that will govern these spaces and not ignore them, make them invisible or disregard them”.

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In search of young votes: TikTok, a political tool used by Members of Congress during the electoral campaign

Publication media: El Nacional

Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/en-busca-de-votos-jovenes-tiktok-una-herramienta-politica-de-diputados-durante-las-campanas/>

TikTok is a social media platform for the generation and dissemination of short videos. This platform had been launched in 2016 under the name “Douyin”, but in 2018, it underwent a restructuring and started operating under its current name. TikTok is one of the most popular social networks in the world, thanks to its accurate and intelligent recommendation algorithm that offers content based on preferences.

This social network has become a vital space for studying social movements due to its focus on young people. According to academics at Columbia University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, TikTok promotes a form of political expression that tends to be more collective; a vital strategy to the success of social movements today. According to their analysis, the way to achieve this is by leveraging algorithms that help connect with young people, regardless of their sociopolitical views.

At present, male and female candidates cannot afford to be off TikTok. In the United States, this platform represented for the Pennsylvania Senate races -2022- what Facebook had meant in the Obama era. In Germany, the FDP party had a strong presence on TikTok in the run-up to elections. In the 2022 Colombian presidential election, Rodolfo Hernández surprised the country by making a great election and finishing in second place, after massive activations through TikTok. In Brazil, the platform has contributed to electoral chaos through rigged advertising.

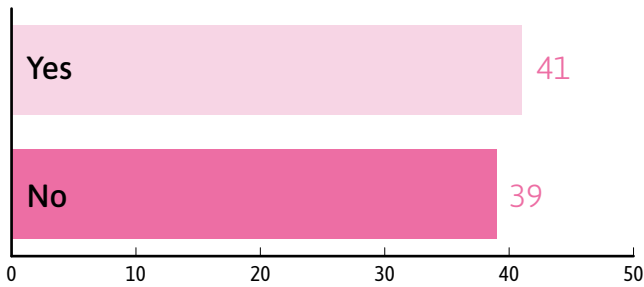


Figure 1: Do the elected members of Congress for the 2023-2028 term have a TikTok profile?

In Paraguay, intensive use of TikTok has recently taken off. Although the population prefers to use other social media such as Facebook and Instagram, the niche of this -relatively- new platform seems to be among young people. In this research, we have studied the relevance of this social network as a contribution to the content of the last presidential elections, specifically for the candidacies to the Chamber of Deputies.

As shown in Figure 1, more than half of the elected deputies have an active profile on TikTok. To better understand the scope of the platform in Paraguayan politics, the profiles of the elected legislators were explored. Likewise, it was found that Asunción, Alto Paraná and Central (Figure 2) are the areas of the country where the use of this social network is more prevalent and has contributed to increase visibility among a group of people who are more apathetic towards politics.

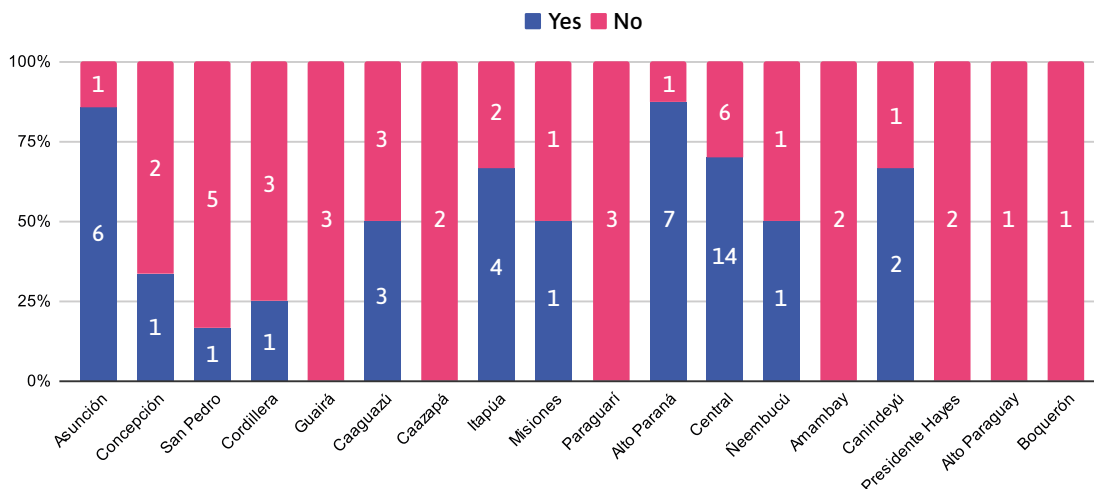


Figure 2: Presence in TikTok according to department of residence.

A loophole for monitoring and sanctioning noncompliance

A more detailed review of the profiles of the elected deputies revealed that thirteen people made publications between April 28 and 30. It is true that TikTok does not record the time when the publications were made, so it is difficult to determine whether the posts made on April 28 were made after 7:00 pm -the beginning of the electoral ban-. However, it is noted that six legislators made publications on April 29 and one on the day of the elections -April 30-.

Through this research -which included the profiles of the eighty elected deputies- it was possible to confirm that electoral propaganda had free rein on this social platform, despite the existing prohibitions. It is true that the current regulations do not contemplate social networks as a means of propaganda, which favors the debate on the need for an electoral reform and specifically regarding electoral campaigns and political financing, which incorporates the regulation of the use of social networks during the established periods and also contemplates the appropriate sanctions in case of non-compliance.

It involves an investment

This research included interviews with elected deputies who had a profile on the TikTok platform. In this regard, the people interviewed pointed out that the management of social networks necessarily implies an operating cost. The main destination of this investment is the creation of content aimed at generating interest among the younger population. The amount allocated to the management of social networks differs according to the profile of each of the legislators.

A legislator from Asunción, who has a strong political structure, indicated that he made monthly payments of PYG 4,000,000 to manage his account. He noted that despite making a low number of posts, he tried to generate different content and that voters recognized him thanks to them, highlighting the fact that his presence on TikTok helped him get greater visibility among younger voters. On the other hand, a Central department legislator indicated that the investment was for internet plans and a cell phone. In his case, he personally took over the management of his account, due to the ease of the platform. However, as the political campaign progressed, he had less time to generate content for TikTok, as his activities overlapped.

A key future tool for campaigns

Respondents indicated that TikTok will become a key tool in the upcoming political elections. One interviewee pointed out that in the future TikTok will become the most important means for the dissemination of partisan political proposals, above traditional media. However, he acknowledged that this time, he focused his campaign on other social networks, because he considered that TikTok's niche is teenagers who are not yet eligible to participate in the elections. Another interviewee pointed out that TikTok is important for reaching out to young people during election campaigns. He emphasized that this platform allows for the generation of more visibility and expects that in the future it will be more widely used in politics, due to lower operating costs.

TikTok, between an opportunity and a threat

This research has shown that the platform is emerging as an alternative for political campaigns. Regarding the Chamber of Deputies, more than 70% were elected for the first time and most of them chose to generate content on this social platform. TikTok has stood out for its popularity among the younger population, which is normally more reluctant to participate in elections. However, it should be considered that through this type of platform, electoral candidates may infringe the law without being subject to a penalty. It has also been verified that being present on this platform could, in some cases, demand a large sum of money, which could tilt the balance towards those candidacies with a political structure and greater economic capital.

Drug traffickers spend more on primary elections than on generals

Publication media: Última Hora

Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/vinculados-a-narcos-gastan-mas-en-las-internas-que-en-generales/>

The current legal scheme for the control of political financing, which seeks to avoid the entry of dirty money into political campaigns, continues to be a weak point in the electoral system, where it is observed that a greater flow of money is concentrated in the internal affairs of the large parties, especially in the Asociación Nacional Republicana (ANR), the Colorado Party.

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This can be clearly seen after an analysis of the sworn statements of elected and non-elected candidates, but who have in common, charges or criminal records of alleged links with members of organized crime, where several inconsistencies are observed, such as self-invoices and omission of data.

Considering that the primaries are where politicians, especially the Colorados, invest the most money, there is an urgent need to adjust the law to improve control, since details of invoicing, for example, are not required. It is also important to implement a real control of what is spent, since in most cases they declare less than what is seen in the propaganda in the media, social media, and public roads.

Example: We take, as a first example, the current Senator Erico Galeano, indicted by the Public Prosecutor's Office for several alleged crimes being investigated within the framework of Operativo A Ultranza or Operation At All Costs, which dismantled a cocaine trafficking network to Europe.

The former member of congress who had lost his parliamentary privileges from the Lower House, and then from the Upper House, declared to have spent in the party's primary elections almost PYG 70 million, while for the generals, he invested PYG 60 million.

In his Declaration of Related Economic Interest (DIEV), Galeano mentions five of his companies, DGS Transportes SA, Alpina SA, Mirage Sport Center SA, Distribuidora Alpina SA, Petranco SA. However, he did not mention others that do appear in his Affidavit of Assets and Income (DJBR) that he rectified in March of last year to the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic (CGR), such as Mega Crucero SA, Indupalma SA and Mercury Tabaco SA. His declared net worth was PYG 83,382 million.

The published statements of campaign income and expenses for the primary elections do not have detailed invoices, and only indicate, in the case of Galeano, that he spent PYG 69,849,500 (PYG 56,580,000 in advertising and PYG 13,269,500 in organization).

Declaraciones y datos de autoridades electas y candidatos señalados por supuestos vínculos con el narcotráfico

Nombre	Agrupación	Cargo electo	Empresas declaradas	Declaración interna	Reedición interna	Declaración generales	Reedición generales	Antecedentes	Bienes y Rentas
Erick Galeano Segovia	ARI - Honor Coleado	Senador Nacional (ex diputado por Central)	DGS Transportes SA, Alpina SA, Mizeg Sport Center SA, Distribuidora Alpina SA, Petrosin SA	G. 79 millones (Remuneraciones percibidas)	G. 89.849.500 (G. 54.588.000 en propaganda y G. 13.269.500 en organización)	G. 69 millones (Remuneraciones percibidas)	G. 69 millones (Pagado por propaganda a Sandra Segura)	Imputado por supuestos vínculos con narcotráfico investigado por el operativo A Última. Falta su declaración en el Senado.	En el 2022, recibió la DBM ante la CGR. Patrimonio Neto: G. 81.362 millones.
Freddy D'Ecclesiis	ARI - Actualmente es Honor Coleado, pero electo por el movimiento Fuerza Republicana.	Gobernador de San Pedro	Declaró no poseer	G. 126 millones (Salarios)	G. 101.816.932 (G. 71.168.522 en transporte, G. 18.900.000 en propaganda, G. 6.878.410 en organización, y G. 1.990.000 en salarios)	G. 25 millones (Salarios)	G. 25 millones (Presentó cinco facturas a su nombre para justificar los gastos declarados como propaganda y publicidad)	Cuenta con facturas procesadas y condenadas por narcotráfico. Fue señalado por el ex senador Arnaldo Giuzzio y por la ex diputada colombiana Perla de Vázquez de estar involucrado en el narcotráfico.	Cuenta con dos DBM presentadas ante la CGR. La primera del 2016 y la última del 2018, donde declara un patrimonio neto de G. 80.948 millones, y como parte a la empresa Decisión Import Export SRL.
Maria Cristina Villalba	ARI - Honor Coleado	Diputada por Carabobo	Declaró no poseer	G. 39 millones (Ahorros)	G. 28.322.500 (G. 15.495.000 en transporte, G. 12.827.500 en propaganda)	G. 29 millones (Ahorros)	G. 29 millones (Presentó una factura a su nombre en concepto de gastos por propaganda)	Apostada "la madre del norte", fue señalada por supuestos vínculos con narcotráfico. Intercedió a favor del ex intendente de Ypaba Víctor Herrera Acosta, condenado por el asesinato del periodista Pablo Medina.	Cuenta con dos DBM presentadas ante la CGR. La primera del 2017 y la última del 2018, donde declara un patrimonio neto de G. 5.127 millones y actividad ganadora 1000 unidades de ganado vacuno.
Liz Cristina Acosta Brito	ARI - Honor Coleado	Diputada por Alto Paraná	Declaró no poseer	G. 45 millones (Honorarios)	G. 45 millones (G. 25 millones en propaganda, 10 millones en transporte y G. 10 millones en organización)	G. 39 millones (Ahorros)	G. 39 millones (Pagados en propaganda a Siglo XXI, Mariela Gómez, Alda Espinola, Dieris La Joranda)	Fue procesada por tráfico de drogas en Brasil en 2003. Se encontró más de 300 gramos de cocaína en la casa de su pareja de entonces Juan Adriano, del Consado Verrocho. Fue absuelta por el beneficio legal de la duda.	Cuenta con cuatro DBM presentadas ante la CGR. La última es de este año, donde declara un patrimonio neto de G. 60 millones.
Luis Alberto Guillén Zárate	ARI - Honor Coleado	Fue candidato a diputado por Arsenauy	Declaró no poseer	G. 32 millones (Ahorros)	G. 25 millones (gastados en concepto de propaganda y publicidad)	G. 29 millones (Ahorros)	G. 0 (Declaró no haber tenido ingreso de campaña en su reedición)	Siendo concejal departamental de Arsenauy, en el 2020, fue abogado patrocinante de supuestos socios del capo nuevo Sergio De Arado Guerbano, alias Misolaco, del Primer Comando Capital (PCC).	Cuenta con tres DBM presentadas ante la CGR. La primera del 2019 y dos en el 2020, donde declara un patrimonio neto de G. 11.014 millones.
Bernardo Villalba Cardoso	ARI - Honor Coleado	Ex diputado por Concepción, fue precandidato a gobernador de Concepción	Declaró no poseer	G. 39 millones (Dineros en efectivo)	G. 39 millones (G. 25.539.000 en transporte y G. 4.500.000 gastos de organización)	No quedó como candidato	No quedó como candidato	Al igual que D'Ecclesiis, fue señalado por Giuzzio en el 2014 de tener vínculos con el narcotráfico. Fue abogado del capo nuevo Carlos "Capitán" Caballero, ex líder del Prato Comando Capital (PCC).	Tiene cuatro DBM presentadas a la CGR, la última es del año 2018, donde declara un patrimonio neto de G. 6.632 millones.
Victor Ramón Sandoval Oporto	ARI - Fuerza Republicana	Ex intendente de Berón, fue precandidato a concejal de Concepción	Declaró no poseer	G. 1.940.913 (Venta ocasional de bienes)	G. 0 (Declaró no haber tenido ingresos de campaña en su reedición)	No quedó como candidato	No quedó como candidato	En noviembre de 2022, el Ministerio Público fiscalizó una orden de captura en su contra por presuntamente estar involucrado en un caso de tráfico de cocaína detectada en Uruguay con destino a Rusia denominada Operación Conexión Moscú.	Cuenta con tres DBM presentadas ante la CGR. La última es del 2022, donde declara un patrimonio neto de G. 1.530 millones, valor de una propiedad en Villa Elías.

In his report of the general elections, it does appear that the expenditure of PYG 60 million in advertising was billed to him by a person named Sandra Patricia Segura Peña.

From Abdo's team to Cartes's team

Another controversial figure for having been accused on several occasions of having links with drug trafficking is the elected governor of San Pedro: Freddy D'Ecclesiis.

He used to be a member of Abdo's party in the Lower House and was elected governor this year by that faction, but last month, he announced that he was switching to Cartes's party.

In 2014, he was accused by the then senator Arnaldo Giuzzio, as well as by his own political ally and then congresswoman Perla de Vázquez, of being linked to drug trafficking.

In his Declaration of Related Economic Interest (DIEV), D'Ecclesiis claimed not to have any participation in any company, completely different to what he stated in his last Affidavit of Assets and Income (DJBR) filed in 2018, where he mentioned the company D'Ecclesiis Import Export SRL as part of his PYG 80,948 million patrimony.

For the party's primary elections, D'Ecclesiis declared to have PYG 126 million from his salary, and spent PYG 103,036,932 (PYG 73,168,522 in transportation, PYG 18,900,000 in advertising, PYG 6,978,410 in organization, and PYG 3,990,000 in rents).

For the generals, he only declared PYG 25 million, which he said he spent on propaganda and advertising. This expense was presented with supporting documents of five invoices in his name or "self-invoices".

Members of congress with a past

The name of the Colorado-Cartista congresswoman Cristina Villalba was mentioned again in March 2022 by the current senator, Celeste Amarilla, when she recalled her link with the convicted moral author of the murder of journalist Pablo Medina in 2014, as well as the 2015 audio, where drug trafficker Ezequiel de Souza stated that Villalba and her brother received bribes from drug traffickers.

Villalba was re-elected as legislator for her department, and like the above mentioned, she reported less expenditure in the generals than in the primaries.

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During the primaries she declared funds by PYG 30 million of her savings, and spent PYG 28,322,500 (PYG 15,495,000 in transportation, PYG 12,827,500 in advertising).

For the generals, her funds were already down to PYG 20 million of her savings, and in her expense statement, as did D'Ecclesiis, she submitted an invoice in her own name for the same amount of PYG 20 million.

Liz Cristina Acosta Brítez, deputy for Alto Paraná, who was involved in a judicial case linked to drug trafficking in Brazil in 2003, belongs to the same party as Cristina. At the time, she was the partner of João Adriano, alias Baixinho, of the Comando Vermelho. With him and his brothers, she was prosecuted and sentenced to three years for possession of more than 500 grams of cocaine. She was acquitted by the Court of Appeals by the legal benefit of the doubt.

Along the same lines as those mentioned above, she spent more on the primaries than on the generals, in total PYG 45 million from her salary. Of which she spent: PYG 25 million on advertising, 10 million in transportation and PYG 10 million in organization. While in the generals, she spent only PYG 30 million on advertising paid to Siglo XXI, Mariela Gómez, Aldo Espínola and La Jornada newspaper. In her statement to the Comptroller's Office, she claimed to have a net worth of PYG 60 million.

Controversial non-elected candidates

With the same amount of controversy, but without the achievement of having been elected, are other candidates who ran. Such is the case of Luis Alberto Guillén Zárate, a former candidate for congressman of Amambay, who, while he was a councilman of the Department of Amambay in 2020, was a sponsoring lawyer for alleged assassins of the drug lord Sergio De Arruda Quintiliano, alias Minotauro, of the Primer Comando Capital (PCC).

Like the others, Guillén spent more on the primaries than on the generals. In the primaries he prepared PYG 32 million of his savings, but in the end, he spent PYG 25 million in propaganda, while in the general elections he prepared PYG 20 million, but spent nothing, as declared. He has three DJBRs filed with the CGR, the first one in 2019 and two in 2020, where he declares a net worth of PYG 11,456 million.

Another one who was not elected was former congressman Bernardo Villalba, who ran in the primary election as candidate for governor of Concepción and lost. Like D'Ecclesiis, he was accused by Giuzzio in 2014 of having links to drug trafficking.

He was the lawyer of drug lord Carlos Capilo Caballero, a member of the Primer Comando Capital (PCC). In the primary elections he declared PYG 30 million, whose origin, he said, came from donations, and he spent it on: 1) PYG 25,500,000 in transportation and 2) PYG 4,500,000 in organization expenses.

The same or worse fate was suffered by Víctor Ramón Sanabria Oporto, former mayor of Belén, who was a pre-candidate for congressman for Concepción for the Fuerza Republicana party. In November 2022, the Public Prosecutor's Office issued an arrest warrant against him for allegedly being involved in a cocaine trafficking case detected in Uruguay destined for Russia called Operation Moscow Connection.

His political party issued a statement calling for him to turn himself in to the authorities. In the primaries he declared only PYG 3,940,935 as campaign funds, from the occasional sale of goods, which in the rendering of accounts he said he had not spent. He has three DJBRs filed with the CGR. The last one is for 2022, where he declares a net worth of PYG 1,550 million, value of a property in Villa Elisa.

Changes

The current political financing law and its application in the electoral processes are still far from serving as a real tool to control the real flow of money in the campaigns, much less its real origins.

The millions of dollars spent on advertising on public roads, social networks and the media are not shown in most of the campaign expense reports, and the sworn statements seem unrealistic when it comes to analyzing the numbers and data provided.

Although the new law gave way to initiate controls in the parties' primary elections, these are still very poor in terms of requirements. The published statements do not have details of billings made as part of campaign expenditures.

The importance of giving greater control to the primary elections is clearly seen in the greater volume of monetary investment in this electoral stage, especially in the large parties such as the ANR and the Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico (PLRA).

In the general elections' accountability report, the invoices do appear, however, at this point there are strange situations such as self-billings.

These elements and others should be analyzed by both the Electoral Justice and the Congress to improve the law.

Participation of women in politics

Publication media: NPY

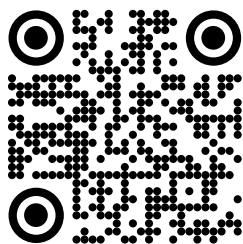
Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/participacion-de-mujeres-en-la-politica/>



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This video represents the collaborative effort and synergy between diverse disciplines, where academics, activists and media professionals joined forces to shed light on a highly relevant issue: the high-cost women face in running for office.

Specifically analyzing the campaign spending of the main female candidates in the Chamber of Deputies and Senators, this work stands out for its critical and analytical approach. This video was aired on NPY's noontime newscast and shared on the morning show of renowned journalist Carolina Arévalo.



SECOND EDITION: Political Finance, Data and Elections

The Bootcamp 2023 with the theme “Political Financing, Data and Elections”, a joint initiative of TEDIC and Semillas para la Democracia, marked a before and after in the field of political financing, data and elections in Paraguay. This event, held from October 16 to 22, 2023, brought together a diverse and committed group of journalists, academics, and members of civil society in Ciudad del Este, department of Alto Paraná, with the aim of strengthening democracy and enriching public debate in the country. It was the first time that an event of this magnitude was organized by TEDIC outside of the capital city.

The event program was designed to maximize interaction and learning, combining virtual classes, asynchronous sessions and intensive in person activities. On October 16 and 17, the virtual phase of the bootcamp provided participants with pre-recorded lessons by renowned experts in the field, such as Ana Claudia from Transparencia Electoral Brasil, Jazmín Acuña from El Surtidor, and Leonardo Gómez from TEDIC, who shared their knowledge and experiences on the challenges and opportunities in the field of political financing and the use of data in electoral contexts. These sessions were complemented with live question and answer sessions, where figures such as Sara Cerna interacted directly with attendees, further enriching the learning experience.

October 18 was dedicated to an asynchronous mode, allowing participants to digest the content at their own pace and preparing for the in-person phase of the event. This modality proved to be an effective bridge between theoretical learning and applied practice, setting the basis for more productive interaction during the in-person sessions.

The climax of the Bootcamp took place on October 21 and 22 in Ciudad del Este, where the participants, including more than 20 journalists and active members of civil society from various organizations such as Quantico Media, Reacción, El Puente, El Urbano, Última Hora, ABC Color, Citizen Comptroller’s Office of Ciudad del Este, Kuña Poty, Despertar Trans, Americana and UNIDA Universities, met in a framework of collaboration and intensive debate.

The October 21 event, entitled “Power Under the Magnifying Glass”, focused on transparency and the fight against impunity in electoral processes. Speakers such as Carlos Peris and Marta Ferrera addressed the problem of state neglect and the influence of drug trafficking in politics, while Ruth Benítez and Robert Irrazábal discussed the protection of journalists and the impact of social networks on elections.

October 22 was devoted to “Visualization and Teamwork,” with Andres Snitcofsky leading a presentation on how to use data visualization to tell complex stories effectively. The afternoon was reserved for group work, exploring open databases, and outlining research projects that would later be developed during the mentoring process, extending through the end of November.



The Bootcamp 2023 in Ciudad del Este was a transformative experience, which not only equipped participants with valuable tools and knowledge, but also fostered collaboration and the exchange of ideas. At the close of this event, participants took away not only lessons learned, but also the hope and commitment to work together to strengthen democracy in Paraguay.

Read more about the issue at: <https://www.tedic.org/cierre-del-bootcamp-2023cde/>

Below you will find all the articles resulting from this edition.

Electoral spending in Alto Paraná not reflected in reports to TSJE

Publication media: El Urbano

Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/gasto-electoral-en-alto-parana-no-se-ve-reflejado-en-informes-al-tsje/>

The mechanisms of accountability of the funds destined to electoral campaigns do not allow an efficient control of the resources. The accountability spreadsheets do not even include detailed items to record the origin of the funds. A brief contrast with reality allows us to conclude that the officially declared expenses do not reflect the campaign expenditures.

In the campaign expenditure and accountability reports on the Superior Court of Electoral Justice (TSJE) website, it can be seen that the main candidates for governorships reported very low expenditures. This is a far cry from the propaganda hype of the last general election.

When analyzing the campaign expenses of the candidates for the Governorship of Alto Paraná, we found that the accounting spreadsheets are not very detailed. Candidate funds are only reported as monetary and non-monetary without specifying their origins.

To cite a few candidacies, Víctor Oscar González Drákefor from the Liberal Party declared that he had PYG 100,000,000 and spent PYG 32,602,000; candidate Daniel Pereira Mujica (PMCDN) also declared funds of PYG 100,000,000 of which he allegedly spent PYG 23,519,999; Raúl Ignacio Rodríguez (CN) had PYG 55,000,000 and allegedly only spent PYG 25,000. Meanwhile, César Orlando Torres Arguello (ANR) declared that he had an expenditure of PYG 30,000,000, the same amount declared as the total funds available.

Candidacy	Declared (Guarani)	Spent (Guarani)
Oscar González	100.000.000	32.602.000
Daniel Pereira	100.000.000	23.519.999
Raúl Ignacio Rodríguez	55.000.000	25.000
César Orlando Torres Arguello	30.0000.000	30.000.000

Austerity in reporting and wasteful spending on campaigns

The display that most of the candidates showed in their respective campaigns is not reflected in the amounts reported.

In the case of Torres Arguello, from the Colorado Party, he carried out many events, with coverage by audiovisual equipment. Likewise, in their social media you can see edited, high quality materials that would have demanded significant sums of money.

While Oscar González Drákeford's campaign focused on caravans, rallies and even a free bingo with important prizes. He also resorted to audiovisual equipment, as can be seen in social media.

Likewise, Daniel Pereira Mujica had a large digital marketing team, as could be seen in the meetings he led. They offered musical concerts with national and local artists, and he also hired comedians from the country's capital.

Where does the money come from?

In the expense reports, none of the candidates stated that they received funds from third parties. That is, according to the official report, the most important candidacies for the Governorship of Alto Paraná did not receive any help in their various digital campaigns and rallies. As a contrast to the above table, a quick review of the library of Meta announcements yields not insignificant amounts compared to what was declared in the expenditure item in ONAFIP. Such numbers must be effectively accountable to the electoral authorities and are not currently effectively monitored by the electoral authority.

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Candidacy	Number of ads as of 04/10	Number of ads as of 04/30	Expenditure as of 04/10 (In Guarani)	Expenditure as of 04/30 (In Guarani)
Oscar González	101	135	7.679.812	13.213.467
Daniel Pereira	52	90	9.033.110	17.507.466
Raul Rodríguez	Datos no disponibles	Datos no disponibles	Datos no disponibles	Datos no disponibles
Landy Torres	19	27	1.730.463	2.827.676

Finally, there is also no record of whether or not the candidates received resources from their respective political parties. This makes it impossible to determine how much each candidate actually spends on his or her electoral campaign and how the monetary and non-monetary resources are effectively distributed in the interior of the country.

How many pizzas did it cost to become governor of Alto Paraná?

Publication media: El Puento

Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/cuantas-pizzas-costo-llegar-a-la-gobernacion-de-alto-parana/>

The only document presented to the Electoral Justice to justify the campaign expenses of the governor of Alto Paraná, César “Landy” Torres, was an invoice from a pizzeria in Ciudad del Este. The Colorado Party ally did not render in detail his expenses and did not include his shares in a private company in his sworn statement, in violation of Law No. 6,501 which regulates Political Financing.

The accountability of the electoral campaign of the governor of Alto Paraná, César Orlando Torres (ANR) presents several irregularities such as omissions of data and invoices. The current governor of Alto Paraná reported a sum of PYG 30 million as total expenditure, according to his income statement filed with the National System of Political Financing (SINAFIP).

“Landy” Torres did not comply with Law No. 6,501 “That regulates political financing” in force since 2020, which requires the reporting of campaign expenses and election day disbursements, which “must be justified with legal invoices duly stamped by the Undersecretary of State for Taxation, under the Ministry of Finance, and in full and effective force and effect”.

The only document presented by Torres to justify his expenses for PYG 30 million was an invoice in the name of Dorila Ramona Ortega. The governor also failed to detail in his report how much he spent on advertising and publicity, rental of premises, staff remuneration, transportation, and travel expenses. The amount spent on each of these items must be contemplated in the rendering of accounts, as required by the Electoral Justice.

However, the document published by the National Observatory of Political Financing (ONAFIP) does not detail how much he would have received as contribution for transportation, donations of goods or services received and/or used during his campaign.

When asked by El Puento about who Dorila Ramona Ortega is, the governor responded that he does not know the woman and blamed the accountant for the presentation of campaign expenditure documents.



JUSTICIA ELECTORAL
DECLARACIÓN DE INGRESOS Y GASTOS DE CAMPAÑA (DIGC)
SEGÚN LEY N° 6501/2020

"Descripción detallada de recursos monetarios y no monetarios disponibles al inicio de la campaña electoral, realizado por el candidato en forma particular, destinados a solventar los gastos electorales"

FORMULARIO I - V2

I. DATOS PERSONALES DEL/LA DECLARANTE

Apellido(s)	TORRES ARGUELLO
Nombre(s)	CESAR ORLANDO
C.I. N°	3726512
Nacionalidad	PARAGUAYA
Fecha de Nacimiento	07/12/1982
Estado Civil	CASADO/A SIN SEPARACION DE BIENES
Correo Electrónico	DATOS PROTEGIDOS
Teléfono Particular	DATOS PROTEGIDOS
Domicilio(Calle principal,transversal y Nro. de casa)	DATOS PROTEGIDOS
Barrio	DATOS PROTEGIDOS
Ciudad	SANTA RITA
Actividad económica principal	INGENIERO EN INFORMATICA
Lugar de trabajo	CALLE FULGENCIO R MORENO ENTRE ALEJO GARCIA Y ACOSTA NU
Dirección Laboral	CALLE FULGENCIO R MORENO ENTRE ALEJO GARCIA Y ACOSTA NU
Estado de la Presentación	DECLARACION JURADA INICIAL
RUC	3726512-1

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"We had a campaign manager assigned to us, who was in charge of managing all the resources. There is an accountant, and he or she was in charge of the rendering of accounts. Right now, I don't remember who the lady (owner of the invoice) was, but I can ask who it was," said the governor.

DIRECCIÓN NACIONAL DE INGRESOS TRIBUTARIOS
GERENCIA GENERAL DE IMPUESTOS INTERNOS
REGISTRO UNICO DE CONTRIBUYENTES-RUC

FECHA 06/12/2023
I: Usuario
Invitado

CONSTANCIA-PERSONA FISICA

Persona Fisica EIRL Condominio Sucesiones

1-DATOS GENERALES DEL CONTRIBUYENTE

RUC Actual Numero 1081537	DV 6	RUC Anterior CAOD6518809	
Primer Apellido CANTERO	Segundo Apellido ORTEGA	Apellido Casada *****	Nombres DORILA RAMONA
Razon o Denominacion Social / EIRL / Condominios / Sucesion (Nombre Fantasia - Persona Fisica) PIZZERIA RICO SABOR			
Correo Electronico *****			

2- DATOS DE INSCRIPCION

Fecha de Inscripcion 01/02/2020	Numero de Orden de Impresion *****	Fecha de Ultima Actualizacion 20/07/2023
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3- DATOS DE CONSTITUCION EIRL, CONDOMINIO O SUCESION

Inscripcion Registro Publico Numero *****	Pagina *****	Condominio o Sucesion *****	Tipo Documento
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The only invoice presented by the governor of Alto Paraná to justify his campaign expenses belongs to Mrs. Dorila Ramona Ortega, who appears in the SET with the corporate name: Pizzeria Rico Sabor. (Source: National Directorate of Tax Revenues - SET)

Ortega Cantero is registered with the Undersecretary of State for Taxation (SET) as a taxpayer under the corporate name of “Pizzeria Rico Sabor” with address at kilometer 7, Don Bosco neighborhood, Ciudad del Este. Her tax profile lists bakery, patisserie, and pastry as her main economic activity and retail food trade, restaurants, and barbecues as a secondary economic activity.

DESCRIPCIÓN		IMPORTE
1-PROPAGANDA Y PUBLICIDAD		0
2-ALQUILER DE LOCALES		0
3-REMUNERACIÓN DEL PERSONAL		0
4-GASTOS DE TRANSPORTE Y DESPLAZAMIENTO		0
5-CORRESPONDENCIA, FRANQUEO Y SERVICIO TELEGRÁFICOS, TELEFONICOS Y OTROS		0
6-GASTOS DE ORGANIZACIÓN Y FUNCIONAMIENTO		30.000.000
7- INTERESES DE CREDITOS OBTENIDOS PARA EL FINANCIAMIENTO DE LA CAMPAÑA		0
		TOTAL: 30.000.000

N°	ID	FECHA	TIPO DE COMPROB.	NUM. DE COMPROB.	PERSONA FÍSICA / JURÍDICA	C.IRUC	IMPORTE
1	77039	30/04/2023	FACTURA RECIBIDA	001-001-0000115	DORILA RAMONA CANTERO ORTEGA	1081537-6	30.000.000
							TOTAL: 30.000.000

Considering these data and the document submitted to SINAFIP, the only expenditure the governor had when he was a candidate would be on food and/or pizzas. That is to say, the costs of the logistics of the day of the general elections, the origin of its resources, advertising, signage, mobility, among other aspects that should be reported, were omitted. When asked about the source of financing for his campaign, Torres limited himself to answering that it was “his own resources”.

In the governor’s photographs published on social media, when he was still a candidate, we can see the magnitude of his campaign, which involved large rallies and mass meetings in several municipalities of Alto Paraná.

In April alone, 16 political events were published which took place in sports centers, luxurious halls, or social clubs. At these events they rented chairs, tables, sound equipment, set up banners, distributed stickers and in several of them served food and drinks for hundreds of people, either lunches or dinners. None of these costs nor the origin of the funds to pay for them were reported by the governor to the political finance control system.

Regarding the estimated costs for a campaign of this magnitude, for a department with the second largest number of voters in the country, the governor replied that the expenses were shared by all the candidates. “As a candidate for governor I was invited to meetings, but they were organized by some candidate for deputy or departmental councilor. Even in the primary elections, we had candidates for presidents of Seccional³ and members of the board of governors. Candidatures that had many actors and with this new electoral system everyone has the possibility of entering in a certain way, then each one fights for his or her space and finances according to their conditions. Unlike before with the closed party list ballot, only the first places had a chance or possibility of entering,” he alleged.

Does not declare shares of a private company

The governor of Alto Paraná, César Landy Torres, owns shares worth PYG 125 million in the company Electromatic Ingeniería S.A., according to his Affidavit of Assets and Income filed on August 26, 2023, on the occasion of his taking office.

However, his shares in the firm were not reported when he was a candidate, in his Declaration of Related Economic Interests (DIEV), another requirement of Law No. 6,501 on control of political financing. The DIEV is a detailed description of the participation or relationship that each candidate has with any company, society, or association, specifying the relationship or representation held.

When asked about this point, Torres stated that the company is inactive and that this would have been the reason why his accountant did not mention it in the assets statement. “That company has been inactive since 2014, when it had its last activity, when I took office as mayor, then it became inactive. It is a SA (limited liability company) that we opened with my brother, but we did not activate the company. Politics is also uncertain, when you start you don’t know if you are going to get in or not. Then, when I became mayor, I decided to focus on my function as mayor, so at that time the company became inactive, it has no activity since 2014. Maybe that’s why my accountant didn’t mention it,” he justified.

There is a lack of efficient control of political financing

A November 2021 report by the organization Semillas para la Democracia, which examines the implementation and application in Paraguay of articles of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, indicates that although Paraguay has made significant progress in the development of legal frameworks, there is a lack of efficient control of political financing.

It points out as one of the obstacles, that “the Political Financing Law does not allow the Superior Court of Electoral Justice to apply sanctions to those candidates who commit irregularities in the rendering of accounts”.

“The sanction provided for in the law is pecuniary and corresponds to a fine or removal from the electoral subsidy in relation to the degree of compliance. These costs are generally delegated to the political group, and this process does not prevent the candidate from continuing in the electoral race, even though he/she does not account for his/her campaign expenses”, the report mentions.

In their report, Semillas para la Democracia recommends “to legislatively promote the express prohibition of monetary contributions and the distribution of gifts in electoral campaigns, as well as the suspension of the party or candidate who incurs in infractions related to political financing”.

Santiago Peña's declarations show inconsistencies

Publication media: El Urbano

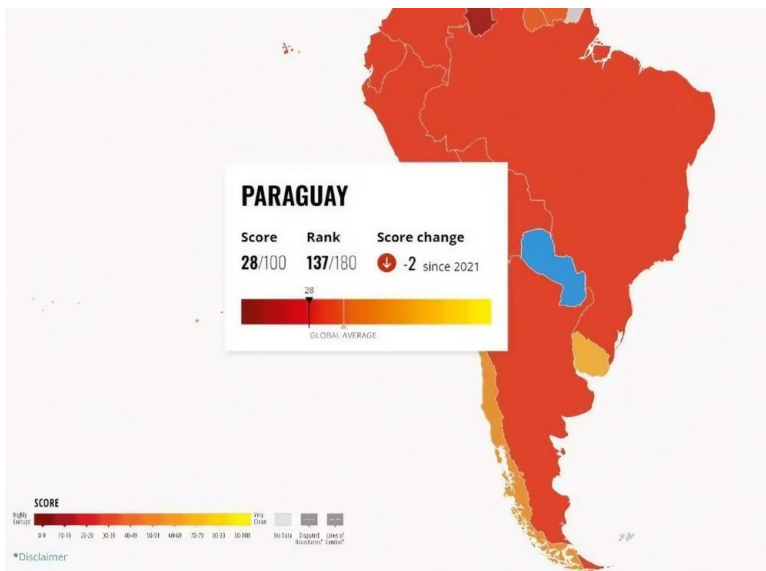
Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/declaraciones-juradas-de-santiago-pena-muestran-inconsistencias/>

President Santiago Peña, whose wealth has increased significantly, faces questions about discrepancies in his sworn statements. These issues arise at a time when Paraguay is struggling to improve its perception in terms of corruption. The situation highlights the importance of transparency in public administration, seen as essential to strengthen citizen confidence and the integrity of institutions.

Paraguay faces serious corruption challenges, marked by a drop in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

With a score of 28 points and dropping to 137th place out of 180 countries, it reflects a growing perception of corruption in the public sector by citizens.

Evaluation criteria includes bribery, embezzlement of public funds, and use of public office for personal gain.



Source: CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX - Transparency International

This context provides a relevant background for the investigation of the assets of the current president of Paraguay: Santiago Peña.

Taking as sources both the Declaration of Related Economic Interest (DIEV) filed between September 1 and 5, 2022, for the party's primary elections; in addition to the Affidavit of Assets and Income (DJBR) filed on September 1, 2023; the data reveal serious differences in what has been declared in just one year, in addition to an increase in assets that raises questions about the integrity of the public administration and potential inconsistencies in the official declarations.

While in his DIEV submitted in 2022 to the TSJE Peña declares shares, bonds, and deposits in a total of 6 companies, his DJBR of 2023 declares 11 more cases and does not mention two of the above.

As can be seen in the infographic below, Peña's declaration in the framework of the 2022 primary elections was much poorer than what he subsequently declared when he took office as President of the Republic this year.

This year's statement included a total of 15 companies where he holds shares, bonds, or certificates of deposit (CD).

Companies declared by Santiago Peña to the TSJE and the CGR

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DIEV submitted to TSJE (September 2022)	
Company	Relationship
Credicentro SAECA	Shareholder of 0.56%
Real Viviendas EAS	50% shareholder
CECON SAE	Bonds with different maturities
Tape Pora SA	4,367-day bonds
Enex Paraguay SA	2,548-day bonds
BASA Bank	Fixed term deposits
Sworn statement submitted to the CGR (September 2023)	
Company	Relationship
UENO Holding SAECA	Shares for PYG 6,144,000,000
Real Housing EAS	Shares for PYG 25,000,000
CECON SAE	Bonds for PYG 250,000,000
BASA Bank	Certificate of deposit (CD) of PYG 500,000,000
Estelar SAE	Bonds for PYG 485,000,000
Inferfisa Bank	Bonds for PYG 350,000,000
Inferfisa Bank	Certificate of deposit (CD) of PYG 1,000,000,000
Itti SAECA	Bonds for PYG 350,000,000
Mercoeste SAE	Relationship of PYG 395,000,000
PYFBLO1V5130	Bonds for PYG 200,000,000
Finexpar	Certificate of deposit (CD) of PYG 1,000,000,000
Financiera Paraguayo Japonesa	Certificate of deposit (CD) of PYG 500,000,000
Financiera FIC	Certificate of deposit (CD) of PYG 500,000,000
Financiera UENO	Certificate of deposit (CD) of PYG 2,400,000,000
Continental Bank	Certificate of deposit (CD) of PYG 650,000,000

Sources:

- ◆ Declaration of Related Economic Interest (DIEV) filed between September 1 and 5, 2022, for the party's primary elections.
- ◆ Affidavit of Assets and Income (DJBR) filed on September 1, 2023.

Peña's net worth evolution according to declarations



Photo: Isaac Fontana

Santiago Peña's economic trajectory, as evidenced in his sworn statements, shows a patrimonial evolution that, although significant, did not anticipate the surprising future increases.

In 2014, as Director of the Central Bank, he reported a net worth of PYG 914 million. Just one year later, in 2015, his personal fortune amounted to just over PYG 1,007 million. While this growth could be considered remarkable, it pales in comparison to the exponential leap observed in subsequent years.

The increase in the net worth of President Santiago Peña, from his departure as Minister of Finance until his recent inauguration as President, is a figure that attracts a lot of attention.

In 2017, Peña reported a net worth of PYG 1,351,955,763. Six years later, when he became president, his fortune reported to the CGR rose to PYG 23,024,303,342.

The percentages of growth in Santiago Peña's net worth, according to the sworn statements for the years indicated, are as follows:

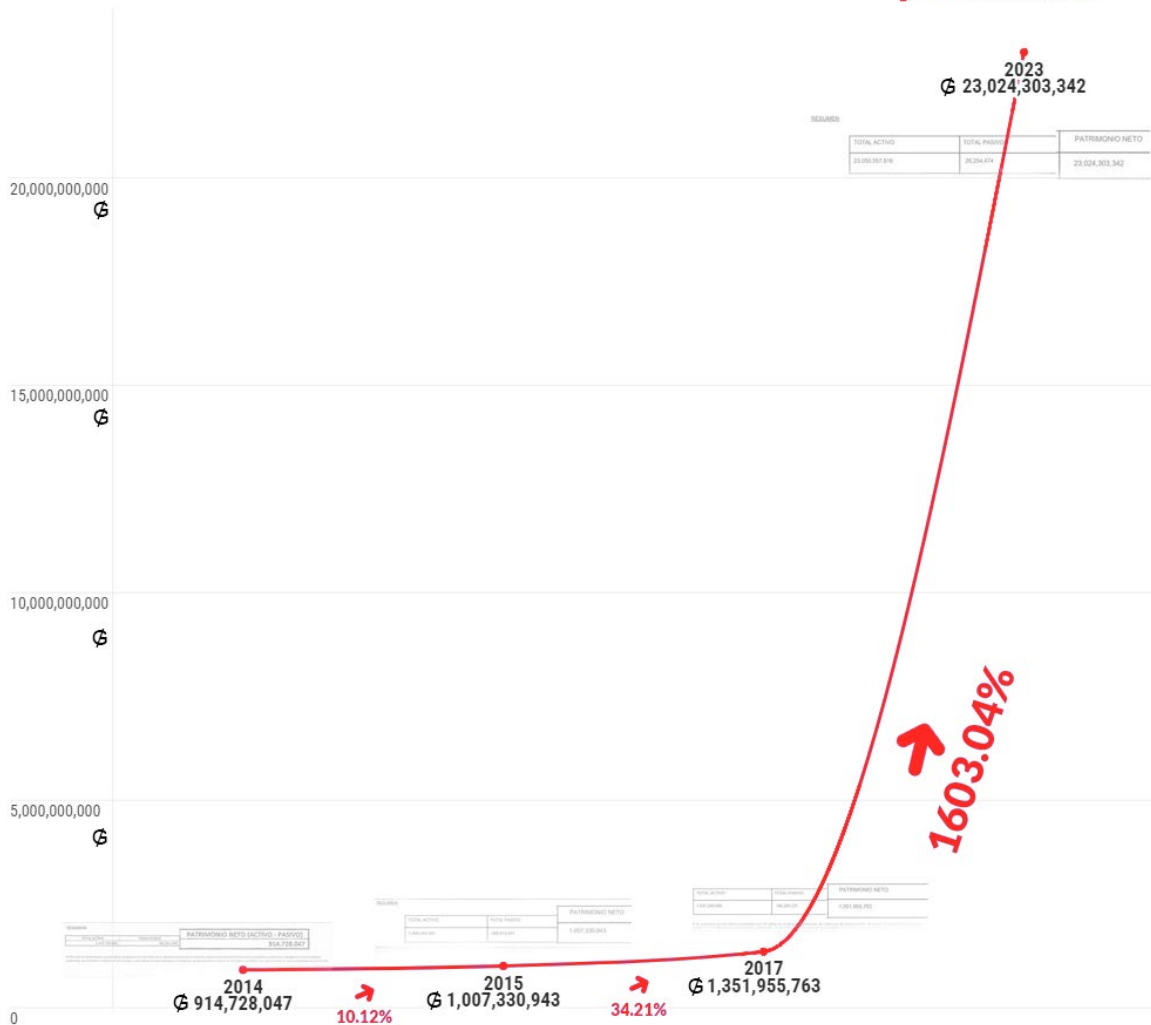
- From 2014 to 2015, his net assets grew by 10.12%.
- From 2015 to 2017, an increase of 34.21% was observed.
- Between 2017 and 2023, growth was significantly higher, reaching 1603.04%.
- Over the full period, from 2014 to 2023, the total increase was an impressive 2417.07%.

Patrimonio Neto de Santiago Peña entre 2014 y 2023

DATOS: CGR ■ PATRIMONIO NETO

EN EL PERIODO COMPLETO,
DESDE 2014 HASTA 2023:

↑ 2417.07%



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Discrepancies in declarations

An evaluation of President Santiago Peña's declarations reveals significant discrepancies that merit detailed consideration.

In the declaration submitted to the Superior Court of Electoral Justice (TSJE) in 2022, Peña identifies himself as a holder of financial assets, particularly bonds of Tape Pora SA and Enex Paraguay SA.

However, in the Affidavit of Assets and Income submitted to the Comptroller General of the Republic (CGR) in 2023, these participations are not mentioned.

On the other hand, there are numerous companies and shares that the President of the Republic did declare to the Comptroller General of the Republic but did not do so or did not appear in his declaration to the Electoral Justice, just a year before.

2. Personas Jurídicas en las que el candidato/a posea inversiones de renta fija

N°	Tipo de persona jurídica	RUC de la persona jurídica	Razón social	Dirección	Tipo de inversión	Plazo de la inversión
1	SOCIEDAD ANONIMA	80022117-6	CECON SAE	CERRO MORADO	BONOS DEL SECTOR PRIVADO	3640 Dias
2	SOCIEDAD ANONIMA	80022117-6	CECON SAE	CERRO MORADO	BONOS DEL SECTOR PRIVADO	3597 Dias
3	SOCIEDAD ANONIMA	80022117-6	CECON SAE	CERRO MORADO	BONOS DEL SECTOR PRIVADO	3773 Dias
4	SOCIEDAD ANONIMA	80022117-6	CECON SAE	CERRO MORADO	BONOS DEL SECTOR PRIVADO	2.184 Dias
5	PERSONAS JURIDICAS	80018781-4	TAPE PORA S.A.		BONOS DEL SECTOR PRIVADO	4.367 Dias
6	PERSONAS JURIDICAS	80040223-5	ENEX PARAGUAY S.A.		BONOS DEL SECTOR PRIVADO	2.548 Dias
7	PERSONAS FISICAS	80009515-4	BANCO BASA S.A		DEPOSITO A PLAZO FIJO	30 Dias
8	PERSONAS FISICAS	80009515-4	BANCO BASA S.A		DEPOSITO A PLAZO FIJO	2.190 Dias
9	PERSONAS FISICAS	80009515-4	BANCO BASA S.A		DEPOSITO A PLAZO FIJO	31 Dias

DECLARATION OF RELATED ECONOMIC INTERESTS (DIEV), year 2022. Source: TSJE

The ONAFIP tool, implemented by the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice (TSJE) of Paraguay, seeks to ensure transparency and allow public scrutiny of finances in politics. However, it is worrisome to note the great difference in the declarations presented by the President of the Republic himself before the Electoral Justice and, barely a year later, before the CGR.

On the other hand, it is also striking why the Electoral Justice did not publish the DIEVs of the candidates who ran for the general elections, while it did so for the primary elections' campaigns.

This lack of information constitutes a significant accountability gap and raises questions about the fulfillment of transparency obligations towards the Electoral Justice and, by extension, towards the Paraguayan citizens.

The gap in reporting challenges legal mandates for disclosure and transparency, and erodes confidence in electoral oversight mechanisms, underscoring the urgency for deep reform of the country's political finance legislation.

The integrity of political finance is an essential pillar for the health of any democracy. However, in Paraguay, the implementation of the Political Financing Law has revealed deficiencies that undermine this fundamental principle.

According to the director of Political Financing of the Superior Court of Electoral Justice (TSJE), Christian Ruiz Díaz, several adjustments are necessary to strengthen the control over campaign financing.

One of the most critical areas is the regulation of political parties' primaries. Under current regulations, if a political organization fails to comply with the law during the primary elections, the responsibility for imposing sanctions falls on the internal electoral body of the party. The established fines, which can amount up to PYG 25 million, are considered derisory and not proportional to the seriousness of the infraction.

Ruiz Díaz illustrates this problem by pointing out that a party with thousands of candidates could choose to deliberately ignore the law, pay a minimal fine and thereby avoid the consequences.

In the case of President Santiago Peña, the inconsistency of data reported to ONAFIP for the primary elections with what was later declared to the Comptroller's Office highlights this systemic problem. Light penalties do not deter infractions and, consequently, weaken the transparency and accountability that the law is intended to ensure.

The ANR's campaign expenses report shows inconsistencies

Publication media: Última Hora

Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/rendicion-de-cuentas-de-la-campana-de-la-anr-presenta-inconsistencias/>

Based on the reports of the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic, several irregularities can be observed in the accountability of the ANR after the 2023 elections.

The accountability of the Colorado Party for its campaign for the April 2023 general elections presents several inconsistencies. The report submitted to the Comptroller's Office does not have sufficient documentary support, especially with respect to rentals. A company appears with consecutive invoices without proof.

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After a documentary review of the reports of the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic, several irregularities in the rendering of accounts of the National Republican Association (ANR) with respect to the 2023 elections were noted.

Most notable is the unclear justification of rental expenses. The Colorado Party reported an expenditure amounting to PYG 4,231,074,550, presenting a series of invoices, but without attaching reports or contracts to support the expenses.

Among the 12 issuing companies, the supplier Dealer Brokers SA, located in Alto Paraná, stands out, which would go unnoticed if it were not for the peculiarity of issuing a total of 44 invoices with correlative numbering. The description indicates that they were made for "vehicle rental", issuing consecutive invoices ranging from PYG 9 million to PYG 63 million.

After consulting the Comptroller's Office, it has not yet been confirmed that the political group has presented the rental contract or other documentation supporting the transactions.

On October 27, 2023, the Comptroller's Office presented a detailed report on irregularities found in the rendering of accounts of political organizations regarding the last elections.

The reports with supporting documents were submitted within 60 days after the elections, as required by Law 6501/2020. All documents are available on the website of the National Observatory of Political Financing (ONAFIP).

THE COMPANY. Dealer Brokers SA is located in the Paravaria building, adjacent to the Paraná Country Club, in office 1 on the 6th floor. Until 2016, the firm had constant publications in social media and even in magazines, offering insurance, real estate, vehicle, and outsourced business services. Strikingly, it remained inactive for all these years, until May 2023, when content reappeared.

The company's declared shareholders before the Treasury's Legal Service Office are, Luis Adolfo López Gallinar, with 90% of the shares, and Fabiana Acosta Cardozo, with the remaining 10%.

The company's main shareholder, Luis López Gallinar, is also responsible for the Condominios Campos del Lago real estate project, also located at kilometers 8 and 9 of Ciudad del Este, according to a Mades report. Campos del Lago, a luxurious house owned by Uruguayan Federico Santoro Vassallo, currently in prison and suspected of being a key player in the criminal organization led by Sebastián Marset, was recently seized. The house, which is in the hands of Senabico, is in the name of Fausta Rodríguez Florentín. A company belonging to Dario Messer's scheme, which was raided years ago, also operated in the Paranaquia building.

WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS. Among the companies for which the ANR did not present proof of legal entity is Las Niñas SA, which was raided in 2017 by the Economic Crimes and Anticorruption Unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office, in the framework of an alleged mega-evasion of USD 54 million in the cities of Pedro Juan Caballero and Asunción. Fake and cloned invoices were found in the operation.

Another of the companies is Agroganadera Aguaray SA, denounced by Indert in 2013 for appropriating 2,491 hectares of public land, valued at USD 15 million. The company, owned by Brazilians Evaldo Emilio de Araújo and João Geralde, was linked to suspicious practices that allowed them to accumulate more than 30,558 hectares. Another company declared is VLW SA, from Mato Grosso, Brazil, which obtained an environmental license to clear 78,549 hectares in Puerto Casado.

These cases are added to other cases of cattle ranches that collaborated with the campaign and were linked to cases of tax evasion and even with shareholders related to the government.

In the recent audit, the Comptroller's Office also observed several inconsistencies in the rendering of accounts of income and expenditures of the ANR's campaign expenses related to the general elections.

It mentions, for example, that donations of PYG 585 million did not have proof of legal entity, issued by SET, and that the donations form of PYG 1,546 million was not correctly filled, making it impossible to get to the source of the money.

Another inconsistency observed indicates that invoices submitted for more than PYG 531 million describe an economic activity that did not match what was declared in the SET. In addition, invoices for PYG 6,898 million did not meet the requirements. The list of inconsistencies observed by the Comptroller's Office also mentions the presentation of legal receipts, whose invoice numbers do not correspond with the SET stamp numbers, as well as invoices for the payment of consulting and training services, among others, without attaching any details.



N°	Proveedor	Servicio Prestado	Factura N°	Importe G
10	LUBRISTORE S.A.	Alquiler de vehículos para el día de las elecciones	001-001-0000691	230.000.000
11	Teodoro Villaiba Aquino	Servicio de alquiler de taxis para traslados de electores	001-001-0000424	20.000.000
12	Juan Carlos Benítez Vega	Alquiler de Salón	001-004-0000230	5.000.000
13			001-004-0000231	3.000.000.000
14	AB Dulce Hogar	Alquiler de Tablet para las Elecciones Generales	001-004-0001467	15.000.000
15	Steil Turismo S.R.L.	Servicio de Transporte y Turismo	001-005-0000930	131.244.550
16	DEALER BROKERS S.A.	Alquiler de vehículo	001-001-0000603	9.000.000
17			001-001-0000604	9.000.000
18			001-001-0000605	9.000.000
19			001-001-0000606	18.000.000
20			001-001-0000607	22.500.000
21			001-001-0000608	27.000.000
22			001-001-0000609	9.000.000
23			001-001-0000610	18.000.000
24			001-001-0000611	9.000.000
25			001-001-0000612	9.000.000
26			001-001-0000613	18.000.000
27			001-001-0000614	9.000.000
28			001-001-0000615	9.000.000
29			001-001-0000616	9.000.000
30			001-001-0000617	9.000.000
31			001-001-0000618	9.000.000
32			001-001-0000621	18.000.000
33			001-001-0000622	9.000.000
34			001-001-0000623	9.000.000
35			001-001-0000624	9.000.000
36			001-001-0000625	9.000.000
37			001-001-0000626	9.000.000
38			001-001-0000627	9.000.000
39			001-001-0000628	9.000.000
40			001-001-0000629	9.000.000
41			001-001-0000630	9.000.000
42			001-001-0000631	9.000.000
43			001-001-0000632	9.000.000
44			001-001-0000633	4.500.000
45			001-001-0000634	9.000.000
46			001-001-0000635	13.500.000
47			001-001-0000636	13.500.000
48	001-001-0000637	18.000.000		

Electoral investment

The ANR in its rendering of accounts indicates that they spent almost PYG 28 billion in the April 2023 Colorado Party election campaign, this apart from the PYG 5,573 million of expenses disbursed by the candidates themselves. In addition, the expenses of the candidates themselves should be added, totaling PYG 33,327,899,476.

Apart from all the documents and invoices submitted as part of the party's accountability, the ANR informed the Superior Court of Electoral Justice (TSJE) that each of the elected authorities has also complied with the submission of proof of their respective campaign expenses. The report further mentions that List 1 had income in donations and party contributions of PYG 1,607 million, in addition to bank loans.

Alto Paraná councilors declare derisory campaign expenses, omit DATA, and ignore the law

Publication media: Quantico Media

Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/concejales-de-alto-parana-declaran-gastos-irrisorios-en-su-campana-omiten-datos-y-pasan-por-encima-de-la-ley/>

Without review or sanctions, departmental councilmen of Alto Paraná incurred in several irregularities both in their election campaign expense reports and in their declarations to the Comptroller's Office. Three of them reported minimal amounts with obvious omissions such as transportation or food. Meanwhile, no sanctions were applied.

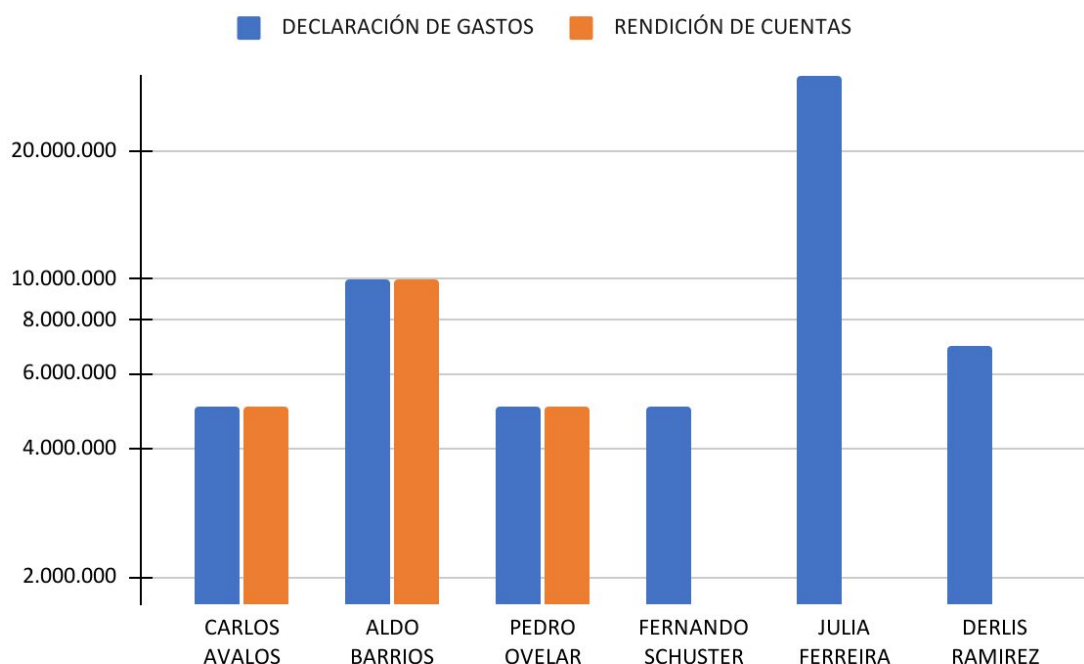
Despite the electoral legislation, a group of departmental councilmen of Alto Paraná, elected on April 30, decided to ignore the law and submit campaign expense statements with a series of irregularities.

When contrasting the Declarations of Income and Campaign Expenses presented before the TSJE and the Affidavits of Assets and Income presented before the Comptroller General of the Republic (CGR), it is observed that some of the candidates under investigation have a high net worth. When comparing with their sworn statements, these are not consistent, since the reported campaign expenses are minimal.

According to the National Observatory of Political Financing (ONAFIP), these authorities declared that they only spent money on propaganda and advertising. There is no data such as disbursements of food for operators, transportation and travel, organization, and operation. Nor in rent of premises for their headquarters, wages to personnel, among others.

Candidates are obliged to declare their campaign income and expenditures, according to Law 6501/20 on political financing, which aims to exercise control to avoid money laundering or the infiltration of organized crime resources in the electoral process. Another irregularity that emerges from the analysis of the documents of the six councilmen under investigation is the notorious case of the member of the Colorado party Fernando Schuster and the Liberal party member Julia Ferreira, who did not submit their sworn statements to the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice (TSJE).

The electoral law provides that for general elections, the penalty for omissions must be imposed by the TSJE on the party, subtracting proportionally from the total amount of the electoral subsidy to which they are entitled.



Graph 1. Data from the Superior Court of Electoral Justice collected through ONAFIP.

The declarations of Carlos Antonio Ávalos Gómez (ANR), Aldo David Barrios Gómez (Conciencia Ciudadana), Pedro Adán Ovelar Viñales (ANR), Fernando Schuster Salinas (ANR), Julia Graciela Ferreira (Concertación Nacional) y Derlis Ramírez Pérez (Cruzada Nacional), who were the six most voted candidates were analyzed for this research.

A cross-check between ONAFIP data and the Affidavit of Assets and Income of the Comptroller's Office revealed inconsistencies in the display of net worth, income, and expenses, as shown in Table 1.

2023 Departamental Councilors with the highest number of votes	Net assets (Comptroller's Office)	Affidavit of expenses (ONAFIP)	Accountability (ONAFIP)
Carlos Ávalos (ANR)	848.500.000	5.000.000	5.000.000
Aldo Barrios (Yo Creo)	Not available	10.000.000	10.000.000
Pedro Ovelar (ANR)	700.000.000	5.000.000	5.000.000
Fernando Schuster (ANR)	742.796.506	5.000.000	Not available
Julia Ferreira (PLRA)	166.211.000	30.000.000	Not available
Derlis Ramírez (Cruzada)	Not available	7.000.000	1.720.000

Table 1. Data collected through ONAFIP and the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic.

In his affidavit, Councilman Carlos Ávalos shows a net worth of PYG 848,500,000. However, he only reported PYG 5 million as campaign expenditure, with advertising as the only expense. In the same way, Fernando Schuster detailed that he has a net worth of PYG 742,796,506 and also spent only PYG 5 million but did not disclose how the money was used.

For his part, the Colorado party member, Pedro Adán Ovelar Viñales, presented in 2023 a copy of his affidavit of income and expenses from 2018. At that time, he had a net worth of PYG 1,668,629,678, which is currently reduced to PYG 700,000,000. No affidavits were filed from 2019 to 2022.

Similarly, Julia Graciela Ferreira indicated in her affidavit of income and expenses for 2022 a net worth of PYG 166,211,000 and stated that she spent on her election campaign PYG 30 million but did not provide detailed accounts.

Aldo Barrios and Derlis Ramírez did not submit their affidavits of income and expenses to the Comptroller's Office. Barrios stated that he spent PYG 10 million and paid in full. Ramírez declared PYG 7 million, but accounted for only PYG 1,720,000, with respect to expenses during his campaign.

Analyzing Law 6501/18 on Political Financing, it does not provide for sanctions for candidates who fail to comply with the obligation to submit the rendering of their campaign income and expenses, and it does not mention the analysis of the consistency in the expenses according to the public office they aspire to, as in this case the Departmental Board.

As could be observed in the research, the electoral system still has several shortcomings in terms of control and sanction. The irregularities were not reported by the institutions even though almost a year has passed since the campaign, and the councilors have already been in office for four months. Likewise, public data are not presented in easily accessible and comprehensible formats, and there are large information gaps in these areas. Several organizations and political leaders have questioned these shortcomings, which affect transparency and trust in government. Finally, it is visible that the institutions do not comply with the minimum conditions and there are political sectors that do not comply with the law due to the lack of greater control and penalization.

CHAOs: Increase in electoral propaganda in social media

Publication media: Quantico Media

Available at: <https://bootcamp.tedic.org/descontrol-aumento-de-la-propaganda-electoral-en-redes/>

In the last general elections, social platforms on the Internet displaced traditional media in terms of investment amounts, by violating the electoral propaganda period since the law does not correctly regulate the platforms. In other words, the law only indicates that all advertising must be reported, but there are no specifications, such as the presentation of receipts with the total amount invested, the broadcasting periods, segmentations, among others. This affects the level of accountability of propaganda expenditures, according to a monitoring of campaign accountability and Meta's reports on the two main candidates for the Presidency of the Republic in the last general elections in Paraguay.

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The image displays a collection of screenshots from Meta's Ad Bookstore, showcasing political advertisements for two candidates: Efraín Alegre and Santiago Peña. The ads are presented in a grid-like format, with each ad featuring a video thumbnail and a text description. The text descriptions include campaign messages and hashtags. A sidebar on the right side of the image provides performance metrics for the ads, such as estimated audience size, amount spent, and impressions. The ads are sponsored by various entities, including 'Comunicad' and 'PRANA SA'.

Source: Meta Ad Bookstore Report.

Presidential candidates’ accountabilities in the general elections of 2023, Santiago Peña and Efraín Alegre, available at the National Observatory of Political Financing (ONAFIP), do not coincide with other available data, such as the transparency portal from META and other monitoring reports on electoral expenditures. There is a difference of PYG 900 million in Peña’s expenses and PYG 449 million in Alegre’s expenses that were not reported, with ads on social media with the highest amounts spent by the candidates.

Incomplete statements?

In the accounts rendered by Santiago Peña and Efraín Alegre to the Superior Court of Electoral Justice (TSJE), available at ONAFIP, it is possible to see the expenses incurred by both during the 2023 electoral campaigns. In the case of Santiago Peña, according to his report, he mentions that he had an expense of PYG 308 million in Advertising and Publicity as can be seen in the following document:

RESUMEN DE GASTOS ELECTORALES	
DESCRIPCIÓN	IMPORTE
1-PROPAGANDA Y PUBLICIDAD	308.718.400
2-ALQUILER DE LOCALES	9.219.250
3-REMUNERACIÓN DEL PERSONAL	0
4-GASTOS DE TRANSPORTE Y DESPLAZAMIENTO	15.920.434
5-CORRESPONDENCIA, FRANQUEO Y SERVICIO TELEGRAFICOS, TELEFONICOS Y OTROS	0
6-GASTOS DE ORGANIZACIÓN Y FUNCIONAMIENTO	152.274.962
7-INTERESES DE CREDITOS OBTENIDOS PARA EL FINANCIAMIENTO DE LA CAMPAÑA	0
TOTAL: 486.133.046	

Source: National Observatory of Political Financing (ONAFIP). Date accessed: 2023.11.12

These values do not include social media expenses. In the research “Disputando el espacio digital: Paraguay y las elecciones generales 2023 en redes sociales” (Disputing the digital space: Paraguay and the 2023 general elections in social media⁴), a little more than PYG 709 million was spent in social media advertising alone, and around PYG 511 million in traditional advertising such as television and radio, for a total of PYG 1,220 million.

Santiago Peña	
Social media ads	709.717.334
Traditional media ads	511.224.000
Estimated total	1.220.941.334

Source: Own elaboration with data from the research “Disputando el espacio digital: Paraguay y las elecciones generales 2023 en redes sociales” (Disputing the digital space: Paraguay and the 2023 general elections in social media) and the report by Semillas para la Democracia. Date accessed: 2023.12.01

4 Research conducted by Leonardo Gómez, lawyer, and coordinator of projects on technopolitics and democracy at TEDIC, with research on electoral issues, social media, technopolitics, democracy and public policies.

On the other hand, Alegre chose not to declare his expenses, indicating PYG 0 investment in advertising and publicity.



RESUMEN DE GASTOS ELECTORALES	
DESCRIPCION	IMPORTE
1-PROPAGANDA Y PUBLICIDAD	0
2-ALQUILER DE LOCALES	0
3-REMUNERACION DEL PERSONAL	1.000.000
4-GASTOS DE TRANSPORTE Y DESPLAZAMIENTO	6.970.500
5-CORRESPONDENCIA, FRANQUEO Y SERVICIO TELEGRAFICOS, TELEFONICOS Y OTROS	0
6-GASTOS DE ORGANIZACION Y FUNCIONAMIENTO	13.846.726
7-INTERESES DE CREDITOS OBTENIDOS PARA EL FINANCIAMIENTO DE LA CAMPAÑA	0
TOTAL:	21.837.726

Source: National Observatory of Political Financing (ONAFIP). Date accessed: 2023.11.12

This is clearly not correct. According to the aforementioned study, there is evidence of an expenditure of PYG 173 million in social media advertising and close to PYG 275 million in traditional media such as radio and television, according to a report by the organization Semillas para la Democracia, which monitors this type of expenditure, being PYG 449 million spent on Alegre’s electoral propaganda.

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Efraín Alegre	
Social media ads	173.973.975
Traditional media ads	275.438.000
Estimated total	449.411.975

Source: Own elaboration with data from the research “Disputando el espacio digital: Paraguay y las elecciones generales 2023 en redes sociales” (Disputing the digital space: Paraguay and the 2023 general elections in social media) and the report by Semillas para la Democracia. Date accessed: 2023.12.01

In general, the study shows that investment in traditional media fell by 30% in relation to the 2018 general elections, while a large volume of money was concentrated in social media, a space that so far is not regulated and where the propaganda periods established by law and the TSJE’s electoral schedule are violated.

Paraguay and the regulations governing advertising in the electoral framework

It is important to mention that the Electoral Code has undergone a series of amendments, being the last one in accordance with Law No. 6501/2020, which requires candidates to file Declarations of Campaign Income and Expenses, Declarations of Related Economic Interests and Rendering of Accounts for participation in Primary elections and General and/or Municipal Elections.



Amendments to the Electoral Code over the years in Political Financing. Source: Justicia Electoral - Financiamiento Político, <https://tsje.gov.py/financiamiento-politico-en-paraguay.html>, accessed on 05-01-2024.

This law only mentions the submission of financial reports of expenses. In the case of failure to make the declarations, the only sanction for candidates is “the suspension of all contributions, subsidies or grants from the State” for an estimated period. Although this sanction exists, there are still cases such as that of Efraín Alegre in whose statement he indicates PYG 0 in electoral advertising expenses, even though open data portals indicate the contrary, suggesting that the weight of this sanction does not seem to be enough to fully comply with the declarations.

In addition, thinking about the detail required in the declarations of expenses and regarding advertising on social media platforms, Law No. 6501/2020 on Political Financing incorporates in its Art. 7, clause e, considers social media advertising as an electoral expense. However, as stated above, several doubts arise regarding the control capacity of the Superior Court of Electoral Justice (TSJE) in this area.

In search of a Comprehensive Electoral Law: International Experiences in Argentina, BRAZIL, and Mexico

Considering the data above, it seems important to show concrete examples of control mechanisms of electoral advertising in Latin America, taking Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico as examples, in order to make a contrast with the dynamics of our country in the electoral framework, and with regard to spending on social media.

In Argentina, Law No. 26,215 on Financing of Political Parties (within the amendments under Law No. 27,504) provides for a registry of channels and platforms for broadcasting in elections. Which means that from the very beginning, party representatives are required to register the official account data (in social media and other media) of the candidates or groupings before the National Electoral Chamber (CNE). When political groups and parties must submit financial reports with the expenses incurred, they must specify the amount allocated to advertising in social media with receipts that prove such investment and that are associated to the declared accounts.

On the other hand, Mexico has several legislations (laws, agreements, regulations and manuals) among them, the Audit Regulation (RF) that controls advertising on the Internet (all media including web pages) and, following Argentina's guidelines, Mexico's laws coincide with several factors such as the submission of receipts from companies contracted for the elaboration/exhibition of advertising, the unit cost of each advertisement considering the added tax and even the sample of content in such advertisement.

Finally, Brazil has a recent regulation regarding advertising and monitoring on networks, being Law No. 12,034/2009 (amending Laws No. 9,096, of September 19, 1995 - Political Parties Law 9,504, of September 30, 1997, which establishes rules for elections, and 4,737, of July 15, 1965 - Electoral Code) where the possibility of contracting paid advertisements on the Internet for electoral propaganda purposes was implemented. However, it establishes a series of rules, for example, that the advertisement or promotion must be identified, and with the condition that it be contracted exclusively by parties, coalitions, candidates, and their representatives.

The comparative analysis shows the difference in the laws developed in different Latin American countries. The ambiguities in the formulation and application, observing the course of the last elections held in Paraguay, translates into non-compliance with the regulations. It is necessary to create and strengthen those laws or bills that regulate electoral propaganda, to improve the capacity to supervise and sanction certain actions in a comprehensive manner.

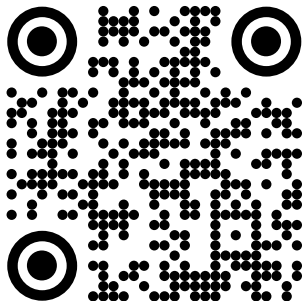
We also concluded with the need to strengthen or create community organizations to monitor electoral expenses. Promoting these organizations encourages citizen participation in the electoral process, reducing the risk of fraud, and contributing to informed and engaged citizens, as well as ensuring that the voice of the community is heard and reflected in decision making. In other words, by strengthening community organizations in electoral control, an integral, participatory, and fair democracy is promoted.

Finally, the information regarding expenditures made by the various candidates for the elections must be available to all citizens with user-friendly instruments in order to be able to generate a complete follow-up. Hence, it is necessary to have an updated database for the accurate monitoring of the information provided by the candidates, also considering the unstable socio-political context in which our country currently finds itself.

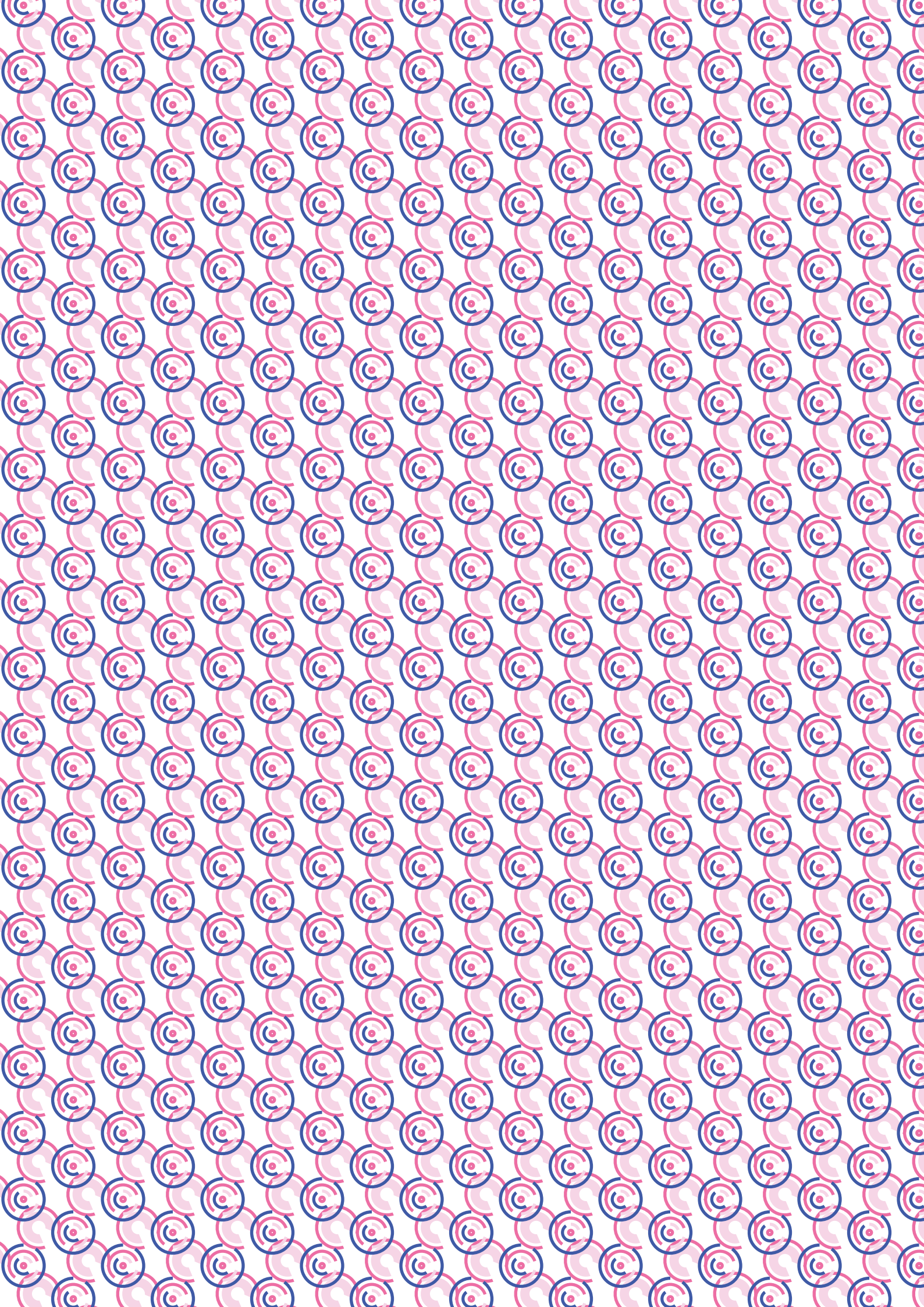
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