

# EU ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD

## 2018 COUNTRY UPDATES

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## Republic of Ecuador

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** In 2018, Ecuador has continued the positive developments initiated after President Lenín Moreno took office in May 2017. This includes improvements in relation to civil society and the media inter alia through reforms to the controversial Communication Law. Attacks on the press decreased by 52% during 2018, according to annual report from the local civil society organisation Fundamedios.

The administration has shown signs of openness to work on the improvement of the human rights situation, including with international partners (e.g. through UN resolutions), as well as good will gestures towards indigenous populations. After her visit, UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Tauli-Corpuz welcomed the new Government's commitments and its initiative to establish a continuing dialogue with indigenous peoples, albeit underlining that concrete actions are required. However, the extractive activities and exploitation of natural resources, had led to infringement of the rights of indigenous peoples. UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, David Kaye, and his par from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, Edison Lanza, also visited Ecuador. Another positive development was the adoption in January 2018 of a new law aimed at reducing the high number of femicides in the country.

Negative repercussions of the peace process in Colombia (i.e. clashes with armed groups at the Northern border, influx of Venezuelan migrants) are additional factors complicating the human rights situation. Remaining challenges for the country include the situation of discrimination and violence against women and children, which has yet to significantly improve since the new legislation, as well as conditions in detention.

### **2. EU action - key focus areas:**

- Promoting the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders;
- encouraging and giving visibility to the civil society's participation in public policies;
- safeguarding freedom of expression;
- ensuring better protection of minorities and vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, migrants, women and children;
- access to an independent and effective justice/Justice and Rule of Law.

**3. EU bilateral political engagement:** There are ongoing discussions between the EU and Ecuador on establishing a regular bilateral dialogue addressing issues related to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as proposed by the EU in November 2017.

The EU-Ecuador Trade Agreement which entered into provisional application on 1 January 2017 contains an essential clause on the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a chapter on sustainable development and labour and environmental rights.

The EU Delegation in Ecuador continuously monitors the national human rights situation. Ad hoc meetings are held with government counterparts, human rights defenders and civil society organisations.

The EU Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society, adopted in 2014, was updated in 2017 with three new priorities for the period of 2018-2020. It continues to attract considerable interest from civil society organisations, which are actively participating in its implementation. The roadmap and the work done by the EU and civil society organisations in Ecuador have been held as a good example to inspire the EU's work on civil society worldwide.

**4. EU financial engagement:** The EU Delegation in Ecuador is currently managing 28 contracts funded by 4 EU development cooperation thematic lines, including support to local authorities, civil society organizations and human rights defenders, totalling almost 20 million Euros. The EU Delegation is also managing 9 contracts funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), totalling almost 4 million Euros.

**5. Multilateral context:** Ecuador was a member of the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the period of 2016-2018, and underwent a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2017. Out of the 182 recommendations, Ecuador accepted 159.

Ecuador has been at the forefront of the HRC's initiative to establish an Intergovernmental Working Group to elaborate an international legally binding instrument on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

Ecuador also signed the Escazu Agreement, which contains legally binding norms for the protection of environment-related human rights defenders.

In 2018 the Ecuadorian government was involved in work on UN resolutions on human rights issues, including voting in favour of some EU sponsored and supported resolutions.

## Republic of Paraguay

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** Paraguay generally has a good formal basis for the protection of human rights. In recent years, the legal framework for access to information and transparency in the management of public affairs has been improved. However, the implementation of the national plan for human rights is lagging behind, thereby limiting the necessary institutional strengthening. This concerns, for instance, the right to education, where reforms never reach public schools or universities. Human rights concerns include, in particular, child and forced labour, violence and discrimination against women (despite new legislation), against indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; as well as trafficking in persons. There is a worrying increase of influence of some conservative and religious movements, which goes against the defence of human rights of some of the most vulnerable groups. Widespread corruption and the weak functioning of the justice system, including poor conditions in prisons and pre-trial detention, continue to be a concern. The protection of the rights of the indigenous minority also needs to be