

**PANAMA**  
**SWOT ANALYSIS**

<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	We see resistance from institutions to the revision of Criminal Code Article 185, which establishes crimes against honor, weakens the freedom of the press and the freedom of expression of media and journalists, as it is the means used by various powerful players to harass them judicially. Lawsuits claiming monetary reparations set no limit amounts and can stay many years in court and cause the media's financial weakening and self-censorship by journalists.
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Panama has a Transparency and Public Information Access Act in force since 2002, as well as a public government data policy instituted in 2017. Two multi-sector agencies, the National Commission for Open Government Panama and the Open Data Working Group, are responsible for formulating and promoting action plans to boost greater transparency, accountability and citizen participation in public affairs. Strengthening actions in favor of transparency and access to public information could contribute to the quality of information that the media provide to their audiences.
<b>STRENGTHS</b>	In Panama there are no statutes or standards aimed at state control of the media. Numerous private print, radio and digital media outlets, as well as a wide network of public media outlets, are run in the country. The practice of journalism is not restricted. Membership of a professional association is not required; it is not mandatory and professionals are free to join or not the different existing trade associations. A college degree is not required to exercise the profession.
<b>THREATS</b>	National Transparency and Public Information Access Authority is an independent agency, but its director is directly appointed by the Executive, so their performance can be compromised. Freedom of expression and press in the cyberspace is absolute, but disinformation campaigns orchestrated by undetermined agents who leverage digital networks to push their agendas are becoming ever-more frequent.

