Forwards or backwards?

The peace agreement signed in November 2016 between the government and the left-wing FARC guerrillas represented a milestone in Colombian history. During his second term of office, President Juan Manuel Santos pushed ahead with the demobilisation of the rebels, thereby helping democratic institutions and the country as a whole to achieve greater stability. From an economic point of view, however, things are not so good. Corruption, which is rampant throughout the country, must be fought more effectively and the poor infrastructure needs to be urgently developed. Access to education and medical care must be improved as well. Santos has not tackled the necessary tax reform, leaving his successor with a large package of difficult tasks. On June 17, two very distinct candidates, with left-wing Gustavo Petro and conservative hardliner Ivan Duque, will be competing against each other. In the election campaign, the peace process was the dominant theme, and if Duque won the elections, the painstakingly negotiated agreement, which he wants to improve to the detriment of the ex-guerrillas, could well fail. There are still almost 7 million internally displaced people in the country, and reconciliation and legal resolution of war crimes could still take years. Not an easy prospect for the future president.

Elections

Free and fair elections are held. In rural areas, however, there are still problems such as vote buying, voter intimidation and corruption. The institutions responsible for prosecuting and punishing breaches of the regulations are considered ineffective and subject to political influence.

Freedom of speech

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are guaranteed by the constitution, but enforcement is still inadequate. Violence, hostility and harassment against journalists and activists has diminished, but still constitute a problem. The government is also accused of exerting pressure on the media.

Civil rights protection

The peace agreement with the FARC has had a positive effect on the protection of civil rights in the country. The number of kidnappings and murders has declined sharply in recent years, but is still high by international standards. Other problems include rampant crime and poor prison conditions.

Social inclusion

Overall, social inclusion in Colombia is weak. Violence and discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation is common. There are no equal opportunities in education and employment, the regional differences are great. About one percent of the population owns 50% of the land.

Corruption prevention

Corruption is a persistent problem in Colombia. Despite the enactment of an anti-corruption law, corruption chronically undermines the effectiveness of the administration and the state. The monitoring agencies have neither the means nor the staff to combat corruption effectively.

Look up the detailed BTI 2018 country report on Colombia here:

www.bti-project.org/col