

How has the private sector reacted to the international standard against transnational bribery? Evidence from corporate anticorruption compliance programs in Argentina

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Abstract In the last 20 years, the risks of bribing foreign public officials have greatly increased for multinational companies based in OECD countries and those listed on their stock markets. Generally, these risks can be mitigated through corporate compliance programs. Such compliance programs are directed at reducing bribery and other unethical behavior in the private sector. This paper assesses how the international standard against transnational bribery has impacted anticorruption compliance programs in Argentina. It first traces the origins and logics behind corporate anticorruption compliance. It later describes the international standard against transnational bribery and, in the light of information collected through 16 in-depth interviews and a survey conducted among 70 companies based in Argentina, it assesses how corporate anticorruption programs work in this country. After distinguishing between “paper”, “cheap-talk” ideal-type programs and sound, truly committed ideal-type policies, it suggests that anticorruption compliance in Argentina is placed closer to the former than the latter, and it offers possible reasons for such findings.

Introduction

For the last 20 years, reducing corruption has been an increasing concern on the international agenda. Corruption is no longer considered an “internal affair” protected by the principle of sovereignty and has become a reason for international scrutiny.¹

¹[9, p. XIII and accompanying notes].

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