

Mr. ANDRES LOPEZ VELASCO



PROFILE

Colombian chemist with a master's degree in science from the National University of Colombia. He has more than 16 years of experience in drug policy in the public, private, and academic sectors in different States. His experience includes expertise on different regulatory models of controlled substances worldwide, as well as on drug control treaties, synthetic drugs, new psychoactive substances, and the medical, scientific, and industrial use of cannabis.

He was General Director of the National Narcotics Fund of the Ministry of Health¹ (2016-2019), advisor to the Direction of Drug Policy of the Ministry of Justice and Law (2013-2016) and Regulatory Policy Manager of the German Company Clever Leaves (2019-2023), dedicated to medical cannabis.

During his time at the Ministry of Justice, he developed expertise in synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances, contributing to the training of thousands of officials and the strengthening of institutional capacities to address them, including the implementation of the Early Warning System.

After participating in the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS), he led the implementation in Colombia of recommendations to ensure accessibility to controlled medicines, achieving improved indicators of access to opioids when he was manager of the state pharmaceutical laboratory².

His special expertise in cannabis regulation has led him to be invited as a speaker at multiple international academic events. Likewise, in 2021, he participated in the INCB expert group on control and monitoring of cannabis and related substances.

¹Competent National Agency for the purposes of Article 18 of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, Article 16 of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and Article 12 (in part) of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

²The per capita consumption of morphine equivalent, increased from 7.93 mg in 2016 to 9.04 mg in 2018, according to internal calculations of the National Narcotics Fund based on sales of hydromorphone, meperidine, methadone and morphine, which are opioids exclusively imported, manufactured and distributed (monopoly) by the Ministry of Health.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

He was Director General of the National Narcotics Fund of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (2016–2019). He also led the implementation of Law 1787 of 2016, related to the medical, scientific, and industrial use of cannabis. In addition, from this position as expenditure authorizing officer, he ensured the availability of controlled medicines in Colombia, as well as the reformulation of resource allocation procedures for attention to drug abuse problems, especially funding for harm reduction in cities with high rates of injecting drug use.

He was an advisor to the Direction of Drug Policy of the Ministry of Justice and Law (2013–2016). In this role, he played a key role in the formulation of Law 1787 as well as its subsequent regulation. Additionally, he contributed to the planning and execution of the characterization of drug markets in different cities in Colombia. During his time at the Ministry of Justice, he developed expertise in synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances, contributing to the training of thousands of Colombian officials in this area and to the implementation of the national Early Warning System (Sistema Nacional de Alertas Tempranas).

He was part of Colombia's official delegations to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) in 2016 and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2017 and 2019. After participating in the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs, he led in Colombia the implementation of recommendations to ensure accessibility to controlled medicines, managing to improve indicators of access to opioids when he was manager of the state pharmaceutical laboratory.

Between 2007 and 2012, Andrés held various positions at the National Narcotics Fund. One of his main achievements was the construction and accreditation of the quality management system for control and monitoring activities for the licit use of controlled substances.

He is currently an independent international consultant on drug policies.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITY AND PUBLICATIONS

He has been invited to lecture on topics of his expertise at multiple universities and academic spaces, both in Colombia and other countries. In addition to his professional background, he has attended the following trainings:

- Short course: “Drug Policy Reform after UNGASS 2016: Prospects, Proposals, Constraints”, Central European University, Budapest - September of 2016.
- Short course: “Anticipating Drug Legalization”, Central European University, Budapest - Mayo de 2015.
- Lecturer on “2014 Synthetic Drug Training Seminar” organized by the Department of Justice of the United States of America. – Drug Enforcement Administration, Bogotá D.C. March of 2014.
- Attendance to the “International Meeting of Crime observation and investigation centers with emphasis on the fight against drugs” organized by the Ministry of Justice and Law and the Anti-Narcotics Police of Colombia., Bogotá D.C. May of 2013.
- Attendance to the “Workshop on Internet-related drug trafficking”, organized by CICAD-OAS, Interpol y Swedish Police Authority, Bogotá D.C. August-September of 2011.
- Attendance to the Seminar-workshop: "Availability and Accessibility of Opioids in Colombia"., Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia, November 2007.

He has also participated as a co-author of the following publications:

1. "Consumption of opioids, analysis of their availability and access in Colombia, (Original title: “Consumo de opioides análisis de su disponibilidad y acceso en Colombia”), Bogotá: Universidad de La Sabana, 2019, ISBN: 978-958-12-0519-6.
2. Colombian Drug Report 2016 (Original title; “Reporte de Drogas de Colombia 2016”) Drug Observatory of Colombia ISBN: 2463-1418. Edición N° 2.
3. Colombian Drug Report 2015 (Original title: "Reporte de Drogas de Colombia 2015") Drug Observatory of Colombia ISBN: 2463-1418.
4. Heroin in Colombia, production, use and impact on public health (Original title: “La heroína en Colombia, producción, uso e impacto en la salud pública”) Ministry of Justice and Law, 2015, Bogotá D.C.
5. The Drug Problem in Colombia: Actions and Results 2011-2013, Original title: “El Problema de drogas en Colombia: Acciones y resultados 2011-2013”, Ministry of Justice and Law, Bogotá D.C. Available in <http://www.odc.gov.co/Portals/1/publicaciones/pdf/consumo/estudios/nacionales/OD010121113-acciones-resultados-2013.pdf>