

# Online Platforms of the Audit Courts of Brazilian States: an assessment of access to information

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## Abstract

This article presents the results of a study to understand the empirical reality of the platforms of the Audit Courts of Brazilian states after six years of the Freedom of Information Act. In addition to the courts of the 26 states, the Audit Court of the Federal District was also considered. Descriptive research was used for a documentary study, with a predominantly qualitative approach. Observation protocol was used to collect the data. In the theme of this study, the same information request was sent to all Audit Courts and the data was submitted to descriptive analysis. The online platforms evaluation model was developed based on literature. The theoretical framework discusses topics such as transparency and online platforms. All platforms have indicators that can be improved using the analyzed model. For those who received the highest scores, it is assumed that the effort to reach the “optimal” condition of the model (maximum score) is lower, unlike those that received the lowest scores. Most courts’ platforms were evaluated as “optimal”. The study shows that there is room for the online platforms to improve in the indicators ‘communication’, and ‘login and receipts’, observing that the scores for the indicator ‘barriers’ are already high.

**Keywords:** Freedom of Information Act. Passive transparency. Platforms.

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## Introduction

The debate on transparency in the national and international agenda has gained attention both from public opinion and in the academia. The term has continuously been used as if it is a solution to many problems found in democracy (ZUCCOLOTTO; TEIXEIRA; RICCIO, 2015). Angélico and Teixeira (2012) say that transparency is a central element of contemporary democracy. The authors use as evidence for their statement the fact that dozens of countries have passed Freedom of Information Acts in recent decades with the declared intention of putting into practice the notion of transparency.

The Brazilian Freedom of Information Act was published on November 18, 2011, but only came into force 180 days later on May 16, 2012. Since then, many works have been developed to investigate the effectiveness of the law (LUCENA et al., 2014; RAUPP; PINHO, 2014; BERNARDES; SANTOS; ROVER, 2015; RAUPP; PINHO, 2015; COMIN et al., 2016; CRUZ; SILVA; SPINELLI, 2016; ROSA et al., 2016; ANDRADE; RAUPP, 2017; VIEIRA; BIANCHI; KRONBAUER, 2017). Most of these works show low effectiveness of the law. From a pessimistic perspective, this would reveal a not very encouraging scenario for transparency in Brazil. On the other hand, a realistic perspective grasping how things commonly work in Brazil, this data points to the existence of a movement towards transparency (RAUPP; PINHO, 2015).

Although active transparency is already contemplated in previous legal texts, the regulation of passive transparency was given by the Freedom of Information Act. Therefore, after six years, one begins to comprehend to what extent the new typology has been built in the Brazilian context, since in the case of active transparency several studies were undertaken. In this scenario, it is understood that the conditions of the platforms represent a fundamental element for the exercise of passive transparency to happen. If there are no technological conditions, properly structured sites, the citizen cannot apply for information. The objective of this article is to understand the empirical reality of the online platforms of the Audit Courts of Brazilian states after six years of the Freedom of Information Act (FIA).

As it comes to assessing access to information, it is important to resort to the concept of assessment. Assessment is an effort to produce information and knowledge for the design, implementation and validation of programs and projects, with the purpose of

improving the management of interventions (JANNUZZI, 2016). The author places the objectives assessment in three areas: the assessment of effectiveness; the effectiveness assessment; and efficiency assessment.

This study contributes both theoretically and to the practice. From a theoretical point of view, while it is possible to note that there is more research focused on the study of active transparency, studies that attempt to investigate passive transparency are scarce (CRUZ; SILVA; SPINELLI, 2016; RAUPP, 2016; MICHENER; CONTRERAS; NISKIER, 2018). In general, the studies mix active transparency reviews with passive transparency, nominal with effective transparency and information visibility with inference capacity. Most importantly, these studies mix the analytical perspectives of transparency, while assessing accounting transparency and budget, purchasing processes and media transparency (ZUCCOLOTTO; TEIXEIRA; RICCIO, 2015). From a practical point of view, the work presents a diagnosis of the reality of the platforms that can be used by managers of Audit Courts and other public agencies to improve them and inspire improvements, making them a useful tool for passive transparency.

### **Freedom of Information Act, passive transparency and online platforms**

According to Angélico and Teixeira (2012, p. 9), Freedom of Information Acts “detail how government agencies should proactively provide information to the public and specify how governments should handle information requests”. In November 2011, Brazil became the 89th country to adopt a FIA. When the law first came into force, the challenge was to turn it into an effective instrument of support for a more open and responsive government (ANGÉLICO, 2012). A FIA “may be strong on paper, but it is notoriously difficult to ensure its full implementation and compliance.” (MICHENER; CONTRERAS; NISKIER, 2018, p. 612).

Brazilian literature highlights two normative issues: the first is the comprehensiveness of the law, as a way of framing the empirical object; the second concerns the guidelines, demonstrating the relationship between normative and theoretical choices. According to the sole paragraph, art. 1st, the FIA covers:

I – public bodies that form the direct administration of the Executive and Legislative Branches, including the Audit Courts; the Judiciary and the Public Prosecutor’s Office; II – autonomous government agencies, public

foundations, public companies, mixed-capital companies and other entities directly or indirectly controlled by the Federal Government, the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities. (BRASIL, 2011).

Therefore, the empirical object of this study, the Audit Courts of Brazilian states, are covered by the FIA. The law procedures, according to art. 3rd, ensure the right to information access. The procedures should be implemented by the basic principles of public administration and based on the following guidelines:

I – observance of publicity as a general rule and of secrecy as the exception; II – disclosure of information of public interest, irrespective of requests; III - use of the existing means of communication made available by information technology; IV – promotion of the development of a transparency culture within the Public Administration; V - development of the social control of the Public Administration (BRASIL, 2011).

The theoretical constructs that guide this study – transparency and platforms – are included in the guidelines of the law. Considering that the concept of transparency is still under construction, despite the many advances in the international literature on conceptualizations, definitions and classifications (ZUCCOLOTTO; TEIXEIRA; RICCIO, 2015), the study's theoretical selection considers transparency as part of the concept of accountability. For Koppell (2005), transparency represents one of the dimensions of accountability and reflects on whether the organization shows its results and acts in a visible and deductible way. According to the author, a transparent public organization must guarantee the effectiveness of the Freedom of Information Act, giving information access to interested parties to evaluate the performance of the agency on the activities carried out.

The work by Zuccolotto, Teixeira and Riccio (2015) classifying transparency as active or passive helps to clarify critical elements for this study. Active transparency is the disclosure of information that occurs at the initiative of the government entity, independent of requests, and fulfilling provisions of Law. Article 8 of the FIA states that “regardless of external requests, public bodies and entities shall promote the disclosure of information they either produce or keep, be it of collective or general interest, in a location of easy access under their jurisdiction.” (BRASIL, 2011).

Passive transparency refers to the provision of information upon request. Article 10 of the FIA states “any person is entitled to submit, by any legitimate means, a request for access to the public bodies and entities referred to Article 1 of this Law, and such request shall include applicant’s identification and further specification on the requested information.” (BRASIL, 2011). For Michener, Contreras and Niskier (2018, p. 611), “passive transparency forces public officials to respond to unanticipated demands for information from citizens within a given time frame. Passive transparency represents a “demanding test” of the commitment toward giving access to public information”.

According to § 2nd, art. 10 of the FIA, “public bodies and entities should make use of their official websites on the internet to provide an alternative way for the public to submit requests for access.” (BRASIL, 2011). These options to send requests are offered in different ways in practice. Cruz, Silva and Spinelli (2016), for instance, observed municipalities and identified four different structures: a) specific channels for requesting information (electronic system of the citizen information service – e-SIC), providing a protocol number to follow the request; b) general channels for requesting information (forms or e-mail), issuing receipts when requests are submitted; c) general channels for requesting information without issuing receipts; d) lack of digital channels for requesting information.

It should be noted that platforms with adequate information represent the first step in passive transparency, since it is from the platform that the other steps occur, where the citizen sends the information request, follows the progress of their request, obtains a response and can appeal if needed (DREHMER; RAUPP, 2017). Unlike the “contact us” area in websites and e-mails, online platforms to channel requests facilitate citizen communication because they consolidate the process of sending requests, receiving responses and appealing (PADILHA; MICHENER; CONTRERAS, 2016).

Drehmer and Raupp (2017), in a study with Brazilian government branches, opted for an order of priority for sending information requests. First they searched the e-SIC information system; when there was no e-SIC, the request was sent through a form to send information requests available on the website, normally located on the main page. As a third option, they searched for an e-mail address for information requests, including ombudsman or “contact us”. In situations where no specific communication channel to information access was identified, the authors used a general contact form, such as a

“contact us.” Box 1 summarizes how the authors understood each of the channels they utilized in their research.

Box 1 – Information request channels

Channel	Understanding
e-SIC	Area to send requests and track their progress. Some agencies have a specific login, which allows access to a user area, where the request is made and followed up. Other bodies have a form on their website that can be filled in to send the information request and which generates a protocol number. Although it does not have a specific user area, certain agencies have the option of entering the protocol number and checking the status of the request, as well as viewing the response.
Form to send information requests	A form without the option to track the requests progress. To receive this classification, it is necessary that the website inform that the purpose of the form is for information requests, or there is a field on the form to select this option.
e-mail for information requests	Created exclusively to receive information requests. This email address can be used to receive the responses from the requests submitted. It's also possible to use the ombudsman or “contact us”.
General contact form	This form is often found on websites used as an alternative to a contact email, often referred under the tap “contact us.” There is, in this case, no indication that this area can be used for the information request, usually characterized as an area for sending complaints, suggestions, praise, and opinions.

Source: The author (2018) adaptation DREHMER; RAUPP (2017).

Among the channels presented in Box 1, e-SIC presents the most favorable conditions to build passive transparency. The other channels, even if they allow sending information requests, should be considered by the organs as pre-stages to be developed and resolved to reach the status of e-SIC. The indicators used to evaluate the platforms of the Audit Courts of Brazilian states researched, as well as other methodological choices, are presented below.

## Methodology

The object of the study is the Audit Courts of Brazilian states, including the Federal District. The identification of the addresses of the electronic portals for later analysis of the platforms was performed using Google, using the term ‘Audit Courts’, on February 10, 2018. Box 2 identifies the addresses of the electronic portals.

Box 2 – Addresses of the electronic portals

Court	Addresses
Acre	<a href="http://www.tce.ac.gov.br/">http://www.tce.ac.gov.br/</a>
Alagoas	<a href="https://www.tceal.tc.br/">https://www.tceal.tc.br/</a>
Amapá	<a href="https://www.tce.ap.gov.br/">https://www.tce.ap.gov.br/</a>
Amazonas	<a href="http://www.tce.am.gov.br/">http://www.tce.am.gov.br/</a>
Bahia	<a href="https://www.tce.ba.gov.br/">https://www.tce.ba.gov.br/</a>
Ceará	<a href="https://www.tce.ce.gov.br/">https://www.tce.ce.gov.br/</a>
Distrito Federal	<a href="https://www.tc.df.gov.br/">https://www.tc.df.gov.br/</a>
Espírito Santo	<a href="https://www.tce.es.gov.br/">https://www.tce.es.gov.br/</a>
Goiás	<a href="https://portal.tce.go.gov.br/">https://portal.tce.go.gov.br/</a>
Maranhão	<a href="http://site.tce.ma.gov.br/">http://site.tce.ma.gov.br/</a>
Mato Grosso	<a href="https://www.tce.mt.gov.br/">https://www.tce.mt.gov.br/</a>
Mato Grosso do Sul	<a href="http://www.tce.ms.gov.br/home">http://www.tce.ms.gov.br/home</a>
Minas Gerais	<a href="https://www.tce.mg.gov.br/">https://www.tce.mg.gov.br/</a>
Pará	<a href="https://www.tce.pa.gov.br/">https://www.tce.pa.gov.br/</a>
Paraíba	<a href="http://tce.pb.gov.br/">http://tce.pb.gov.br/</a>
Paraná	<a href="https://www1.tce.pr.gov.br/?classica=sim">https://www1.tce.pr.gov.br/?classica=sim</a>
Pernambuco	<a href="https://www.tce.pe.gov.br/internet/">https://www.tce.pe.gov.br/internet/</a>
Piauí	<a href="https://www.tce.pi.gov.br/">https://www.tce.pi.gov.br/</a>
Rio de Janeiro	<a href="http://www.tce.rj.gov.br/">http://www.tce.rj.gov.br/</a>
Rio Grande do Norte	<a href="http://www.tce.rn.gov.br/">http://www.tce.rn.gov.br/</a>
Rio Grande do Sul	<a href="http://www1.tce.rs.gov.br/portal/page/portal/tcers/inicial">http://www1.tce.rs.gov.br/portal/page/portal/tcers/inicial</a>
Rondônia	<a href="http://www.tce.ro.gov.br/">http://www.tce.ro.gov.br/</a>
Roraima	<a href="https://www.tce.rr.leg.br/portal/index.php">https://www.tce.rr.leg.br/portal/index.php</a>
Santa Catarina	<a href="http://www.tce.sc.gov.br/">http://www.tce.sc.gov.br/</a>
São Paulo	<a href="https://www.tce.sp.gov.br/">https://www.tce.sp.gov.br/</a>
Sergipe	<a href="http://www.tce.se.gov.br/SitePages/default.aspx">http://www.tce.se.gov.br/SitePages/default.aspx</a>
Tocantins	<a href="https://www.tce.to.gov.br/sitetce/">https://www.tce.to.gov.br/sitetce/</a>

Source: The author (2018).

The research is descriptive, carried out through a documentary study, with a predominantly qualitative approach. Observation protocol was used to collect the data. According to Creswell (2007) when the research involves multiple observations, it is recommended to use a protocol to record information and highlight descriptive and reflective notes. The theme of the study is passive transparency when a citizen makes an information request to a public entity. The research team prepared an information request and sent it to the Audit Courts of the states on March 15, 2018. The same request was sent to all the Audit Courts through their online platforms, requesting how much was spent by the court on international travel in 2017. It should be noted that the study was not focused on analyzing the information received in return for the requests but checking the conditions of the

platforms where the Audit Courts receive and process the requests. The collected data were submitted to descriptive analysis.

The platforms evaluation model (Box 3) was developed based on Padilha, Michener and Contreras (2016). The authors evaluated the application of the FIA in state governments and large cities.

Box 3 - Platforms evaluation model

Indicator	Score	Criteria
Communication on the platform	100	The platform allows sending requests, receiving responses and appealing if needed.
	50	The platform allows sending requests, receiving responses or offers an appropriate area for information access
	0	There is no platform or appropriate area for information access
Login and receipts	100	The platform that sends requests and receives responses adopts a login system
	50	Provides a receipt or protocol for the request
	0	Does not provide a receipt or protocol for the request
Barriers to access	100	There is no limit of characters or request for personal information except name, fiscal or ID number ( <i>CPF/RG</i> ) and contact information
	50	Does not request for personal information except name, <i>CPF/RG</i> and contact information; But it does have a limit of characters
	0	Requires personal information in addition to name, <i>CPF/RG</i> and contact information

Source: The author (2018) adaptation PADILHA; MICHENER; CONTRERAS (2016).

For the indicator 'communication', evaluation was made to see whether the platform allows sending requests, receiving responses and appealing. Scores were assigned as follows: 100 points, if the platform allows sending a request, receive responses and appealing; 50 points if the platform a) allows sending requests and receive responses, or b) offers area to access information (50 points will also be awarded if the platform provides "a" and "b"); and 0, if there is no platform or area to access information (PADILHA; MICHENER; CONTRERAS, 2016).

For the indicator 'login and receipts', the evaluation considers the possibility of tracking the request process and having clear proof that the request was submitted.



Scores were as follows: 100 was awarded if the platform allowing to send requests and receive responses has a login system; 50, if it provided a receipt or a protocol number of the request; and 0 if it did not provide either receipt or protocol of the request. The existence of a specific login provides a placeholder for the submission of the request, as well as the possibility to keep a history of the requests made and the responses obtained. In addition, specific login is important because it provides the ability to track the request, which is not always provided by the protocol. As mentioned before, 'receipt' is the confirmation that the request was made and received, and the protocol is a number that allows monitoring the progress of the request (PADILHA; MICHENER; CONTRERAS, 2016).

For the indicator 'barriers to access', the study observed if there were restrictions to submit the request, such as character limits, and the requirement to provide more personal information than what is determined by law. For this indicator, scores were assigned as follows: 100 if the form has no character limit and does not require personal information in addition to the name, *CPF/RG* and contact information; 50 points if it does not require personal information in addition to the name, *CPF/RG* and contact information; but imposes a character limit; and 0 if it requires personal information besides the name, *CPF/RG* and contact information, regardless of whether or not it had a character limit. In this case, name, fiscal or ID number (*CPF/RG*) and contact information, are not considered barriers to access (PADILHA; MICHENER; CONTRERAS, 2016).

## Results

The results obtained from the empirical research with Audit Courts of Brazilian states are presented first, individually by indicator: communication on the platform, login, and receipts, and barriers to information access. Following on from consolidated results, a discussion was held on the positioning of each platform within the group of platforms analyzed.

### Communication on the platform

The first indicator analyzed refers to communication on platforms. According to Padilha, Michener, and Contreras (2016), this indicator evaluates if the system is friendly. For the authors, a friendly system is one that carries out the relevant processes: send

requests, receive responses and allows appealing if needed. The score attributed to the courts is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Communication on the Audit Courts platforms

Court	Score
Espírito Santo	100
Goiás	100
Tocantins	100
Acre	50
Alagoas	50
Amapá	50
Amazonas	50
Bahia	50
Ceará	50
Maranhão	50
Mato Grosso	50
Minas Gerais	50
Pará	50
Paraíba	50
Paraná	50
Pernambuco	50
Piauí	50
Rio de Janeiro	50
Rio Grande do Norte	50
Rio Grande do Sul	50
Rondônia	50
Santa Catarina	50
São Paulo	50
Sergipe	50
Distrito Federal	0
Mato Grosso do Sul	0
Roraima	0

Source: The author (2018).

The Audit Courts of the states, for the most part (21 courts or 77.77%) have platforms that allow: a) sending a request and receive a response or b) offer an area to information access. Only the Audit Courts of Espírito Santo, Goiás and Tocantins have platforms that make it possible to send a request, receive responses and appeal if needed. A third group, which does not have platforms or area to information access, is formed by the courts of the Federal District, Mato Grosso do Sul and Roraima, and represents 11.11% of the total number of courts. Other three (11.11%) courts, Espírito Santo, Goiás and Tocantins, present the “optimal” condition of communication on the platform. When considering

courts with 50 and 100 points together, there is a total of 24 (88.88%) courts with areas to access information. Padilha, Michener and Contreras (2016) also attributed 50 to 100 points to most of the platforms of Brazilian states and large cities analyzed in their study, which shows a convergence between the results obtained here.

For the courts that did not have an area for information access, other means were used to carry out the request. In the case of the Audit Court of the Federal District, the request was made through the e-mail from the ombudsman's office. It is understood that the ombudsman has a different function, however, it was the only option to send the information request. For the Audit Court of Mato Grosso do Sul, after completing all the fields of the ombudsman's form, it was not possible to send the request. Several attempts were made to send an e-mail through a general address on the platform, but all returned with an error message ("unable to deliver"). For the Audit Court of Roraima, the request was sent through the general "contact us" form. Similarly, it is understood that "contact us" has another goal, however, was the only one to send the request for information.

In general, the Audit Courts of Brazilian states meet the characteristics established for the indicator 'communication', since most of them have an area for information access. This result is consistent with results obtained by Drehmer and Raupp (2018), who investigated Brazilian state governments. According to the authors, of the three government branches, the executive had more structured platforms, making e-SIC available in all states. As for the aspect of communication on the platform, the 27 executive, 25 judiciary and 20 legislative branches had an area for information access. The legislative branch was the government branch that showed the worst performance in communication, according to the authors, because in six legislative bodies, the request was made through a general contact form and in one case, there was no form of electronic contact available.

### **Login and receipts**

The second indicator evaluates the guarantees offered by the platform that the request for information access is appropriately processed. Protocols are essential because they prove that a request has been made and offer the means to observe its progress (PADILHA; MICHENER; CONTRERAS, 2016). The scores given to the courts' online platforms for this indicator are in Table 2.

Table 2 – Login and receipts on the Audit Courts platforms

Court	Score
Bahia	100
Espírito Santo	100
Goiás	100
Maranhão	100
Acre	50
Alagoas	50
Ceará	50
Mato Grosso	50
Minas Gerais	50
Pará	50
Paraíba	50
Paraná	50
Pernambuco	50
Piauí	50
Rio de Janeiro	50
Rio Grande do Sul	50
São Paulo	50
Sergipe	50
Tocantins	50
Amapá	0
Amazonas	0
Distrito Federal	0
Mato Grosso do Sul	0
Rio Grande do Norte	0
Rondônia	0
Roraima	0
Santa Catarina	0

Source: The author (2018).

Three groups of Audit Courts can be organized based on the empirical data regarding login and receipts. In the first group, the platforms that allow sending requests and receiving responses have a login system. There are four (14.81%) courts in this group, Bahia, Espírito Santo, Goiás, and Maranhão. A second group concentrates most of the courts, 15 (55.55%), and the platforms provide either a receipt or a protocol number to follow the request process. A significant number of courts, eight (29.62%), do not provide a receipt or a protocol number.

Considering that all the indicators have the same degree of importance (there are no different weights for the indicators in the model), the conditions of the courts' platforms in terms of communication are better than for the indicator 'login and receipts'. Data obtained in this research seem to be farther from the findings of Padilha, Michener and

Contreras (2016) since the platforms of states and large Brazilian cities surveyed by the authors mostly scored 50 or 100 points for the indicator 'login and receipts'.

On the other hand, the results are close to those obtained by Drehmer and Raupp (2018), who found that in the executive branch all the platforms allowed to follow the progress of the request, 17 of them through login and ten with a protocol number. In the judiciary, only one platform had access with login and 11 did not provide a receipt or protocol to track the request. In the legislative branch, 15 platforms did not provide any way to follow the requests. According to the authors, the absence of protocol or receipt, besides hindering the monitoring by the citizen, also indicates a failure to control the power over the requests received.

### Barriers to access information

The third indicator, according to Padilha, Michener and Contreras (2016), evaluates discrimination. This item examines whether there are policies that require applicants to disclose more personal information than what is required by law, or if there is any restriction on how to request information, such as a character limit. The score attributed to the courts is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – Barriers to access information on the Audit Courts platforms

Courts	Score
Acre	100
Alagoas	100
Amapá	100
Amazonas	100
Bahia	100
Ceará	100
Distrito Federal	100
Maranhão	100
Mato Grosso	100
Minas Gerais	100
Paraíba	100
Paraná	100
Pernambuco	100
Piauí	100
Roraima	100
Santa Catarina	100
São Paulo	100

Continua

		Conclusão
Courts	Score	
Sergipe	100	
Tocantins	100	
Espírito Santo	50	
Goiás	50	
Mato Grosso do Sul	0	
Pará	0	
Rio de Janeiro	0	
Rio Grande do Norte	0	
Rio Grande do Sul	0	
Rondônia	0	

Source: The author (2018).

The diagnosis of the third indicator reveals that of the total number of Audit Courts studied, 19 (70.37%) have no character limit and do not require personal information in addition to name, identification (*CPF/RG*) and contact information. In smaller number, two (7.40%) courts, the states of Espírito Santo and Goiás, have platforms that do not require personal information in addition to the name, *CPF/RG* and contact information; but they impose a character limit for the user to write their demand. A third group had six (22.22%) courts with platforms that required personal information besides the name, *CPF/RG* and contact information.

The most frequent personal information, besides to the name, *CPF/RG* and contact information were: date of birth, education, age group, and gender. The Audit Court of Rio Grande do Sul, for example, requested that a valid document (for identification) be attached to the request. Some platforms demanded information beyond those included in the analysis model without, however, being part of the third group, since such information was not considered personal, as is the case of the Audit Court of Bahia that, in addition to the name, e-mail, *CPF*, and address, requested the reasons for the consultation. According to § 3, Art. 10 of the FIA, “any requirements related to the reasons for requesting information of public interest are prohibited.” (BRASIL, 2011).

Similar to what was identified in the first indicator, the results related to the barriers appear to be close to the results obtained by Padilha, Michener and Contreras (2016). On the other hand, the results seem more optimistic compared to the results of Drehmer and Raupp (2018), where the executive branch presented 11 platforms with maximum score, the judiciary 12 and the legislative 15. However, according to the authors, the absence of

barriers for legislative power can be explained mainly by the simplicity of the forms available.

### Synthesis of the online platforms' situation

Table 4 presents a synthesis of the score received by the Audit Courts of Brazilian states about the platforms:

Table 4 – Score synthesis of the platforms

Courts	Score			
	Communication	Login and receipts	Barriers	Total
Bahia	50	100	100	250
Espírito Santo	100	100	50	250
Goiás	100	100	50	250
Maranhão	50	100	100	250
Tocantins	100	50	100	250
Acre	50	50	100	200
Alagoas	50	50	100	200
Ceará	50	50	100	200
Mato Grosso	50	50	100	200
Minas Gerais	50	50	100	200
Paraíba	50	50	100	200
Paraná	50	50	100	200
Pernambuco	50	50	100	200
Piauí	50	50	100	200
São Paulo	50	50	100	200
Sergipe	50	50	100	200
Amapá	50	0	100	150
Amazonas	50	0	100	150
Santa Catarina	50	0	100	150
Distrito Federal	0	0	100	100
Pará	50	50	0	100
Rio de Janeiro	50	50	0	100
Rio Grande do Sul	50	50	0	100
Roraima	0	0	100	100
Rio Grande do Norte	50	0	0	50
Rondônia	50	0	0	50
Mato Grosso do Sul	0	0	0	0

Source: The author (2018).

Based on the synthesis of the score, we separate six groups of platforms according to their position in the ranking of scores. It is worth noting that no platform received the maximum score (300) in all analyzed indicators. The scores show that all platforms have indicators that can be improved in light of the analyzed model. The assumption is that the platforms that received a total of 250 points have to put fewer efforts to reach the “optimal” condition of the model (maximum score), unlike those who received lower scores, which will have to invest more energy to improve.

The first group counts five (18.51%) courts’ platforms that received a total score of 250. In this group, each of the platforms received a maximum score in two of the three indicators. The second group presents the highest number of courts, 11 (40.74%), and they received a total score of 200. A fact that reinforces the homogeneity of the group is that all 11 platforms received 50 in the indicators ‘communication’ and ‘login and receipts’, and 100 in the indicator ‘barriers’. If we add the courts of the first and second groups – those closest to the “optimal” condition – we obtain a total of 16 (59.25%) courts. The third and fourth groups, with total scores of 150 and 100, respectively, represent intermediate groups, and together they are eight (29.62%) courts. In the fourth group, it is important to highlight two courts with scores of zero in two indicators. They are the Audit Courts of the Federal District and Roraima. Distributed in the last two groups are three (11.11%) courts. It should be noted that a portal that has a higher score does not necessarily mean that it is better than another. The analysis should be done individually, indicator by indicator, considering that all items are equally important.

### **Conclusion and study limitations**

This study aimed to understand the empirical reality of the online platforms of the Audit Courts of Brazilian states, after six years of the Freedom of Information Act (FIA). The objective is related to the theme of passive transparency and arises from two choices. The first is the choice for working with the analysis of platforms, observing that their structure must be designed to respond to information requests and, consequently, contribute to the construction of passive transparency. The second choice concerns the empirical object represented by the Audit Courts of Brazilian states, a choice made given their importance as an external control body. Considering the nature of the courts as



control bodies, the assumption was that their platforms would be in “optimal” conditions for passive transparency.

Six years after the FIA first came into force, the reality of the platforms of the Audit Court partly confirms the initial assumption of the study, since it was noted that most courts were in the “optimal” condition. Notwithstanding, all platforms have indicators that can be improved using the analyzed model. Observing the performance of the indicators, the platforms can be improved in ‘communication’ and ‘login and receipts’. Their best score was in the indicator ‘barriers’. It is worth mention that pursuing such improvements is not something technically difficult. About the indicator ‘communication’, platforms can be reviewed in a way that allows not only the sending of the request but also receiving responses and making appeals. In the case of the indicator ‘login and receipts’, online platforms can be optimized to provide the possibility of sending requests and receiving responses from a specific login.

The results and conclusions obtained here present some limitations. The first limitation refers to the analysis model chosen. It is possible that choosing another model could imply in different results. The second limitation refers to the fact that the selected body leads to results and conclusions of the research that cannot be generalized to other public bodies. The third limitation is related to the speed of changes/improvements of the technologies and of the information and services made available on the online platforms, that is, the presented data indicate the reality limited to the period of the collection.

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## Plataformas dos Tribunais de Contas Estaduais Brasileiros: uma avaliação do acesso à informação

### Resumo

O artigo traz os resultados do estudo que teve por objetivo compreender a realidade empírica das plataformas dos tribunais de contas estaduais brasileiros após seis anos de Lei de Acesso à Informação. Além dos tribunais dos 26 estados, considerou-se também o Tribunal de Contas do Distrito Federal. Foi feita uma pesquisa descritiva, por meio de um estudo documental, com abordagem predominantemente qualitativa. O protocolo de observação foi o instrumento utilizado para coletar os dados. Considerando a temática do estudo em tela, foi formulada uma solicitação de informação com o mesmo conteúdo para todos os tribunais de contas. Uma vez coletados os dados, a análise foi realizada utilizando-se a técnica da análise descritiva. O modelo de avaliação das plataformas foi elaborado com base na literatura. Os fundamentos teóricos cobrem discussões sobre transparência e plataformas. Todas as plataformas apresentam indicadores que podem ser aperfeiçoados à luz do modelo analisado. Para aquelas que receberam as maiores pontuações, pressupõe-se que o esforço para chegar a condição “ótima” do modelo (pontuação máxima) seja menor, ao contrário daquelas que receberam as menores pontuações. A maioria dos tribunais se aproximam da condição “ótima”. De forma específica, as plataformas podem ser trabalhadas na direção de aperfeiçoar, principalmente, os indicadores comunicação e *login* e recibos, pois as melhores notas estão presentes no indicador barreiras.

**Palavras-chave:** Lei de Acesso à Informação. Transparência passiva. Plataformas.

## Plataformas En Línea de los Tribunales de Cuentas Estaduales Brasileños: una evaluación del acceso a la información

### Resumen

El artículo trae los resultados del estudio que tuvo por objeto comprender la realidad empírica de las plataformas de los Tribunales de Cuentas Estaduales brasileños tras seis años de Ley de Acceso a la Información. Además de los tribunales de los 26 estados, se consideró también el Tribunal de Cuentas del Distrito Federal. Se realizó una investigación

descriptiva, a través de un estudio documental, con un enfoque predominantemente cualitativo. El protocolo de observación fue el instrumento utilizado para recopilar los datos. Considerando la temática del estudio en pantalla, se formuló una solicitud de información con el mismo contenido para todos los Tribunales de cuentas. Una vez recogidos los datos, el análisis se realizó usando la técnica del análisis descriptivo. El modelo de evaluación de las plataformas fue elaborado basado en la literatura respectiva. Los fundamentos teóricos abarcan discusiones sobre transparencia y plataformas. Todas las plataformas presentan indicadores que pueden ser perfeccionados a la luz del modelo analizado. Para las que recibieron mayores puntuaciones, se supone que el esfuerzo para llegar a la condición "óptima" del modelo (puntuación máxima) sea menor, a diferencia de las que recibieron las menores puntuaciones. La mayoría de los tribunales se acercan a la condición "óptima". De forma específica, las plataformas pueden ser trabajadas en la dirección de perfeccionar, principalmente, los indicadores comunicación y *login* y recibos, pues las mejores notas están presentes en el indicador barreras.

**Palabras clave:** Ley de acceso a la información. Transparencia pasiva. Plataformas.