

# THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING ELECTIONS

Seoul International Forum on Elections 2021 organized by the National Election Commission of the Republic of Korea focused on the role & responsibilities of social media during elections



## Seoul International Forum on Elections 2021

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### **After the Pandemic, Finding a Path to a Better Democracy**

The overall theme of the Seoul International Forum on Elections 2021 (SIFE) was finding a path to a better democracy after the pandemic. In the first part of the conference, panelists discussed the crisis of democracy and building trust in elections. The second part of the conference focused on the roles and responsibilities of social media platforms in elections. Social media has become a central part of our daily lives and is now one of the main channels for election campaigning as well. This is why platform companies are asked to assume a certain level of social responsibility and play a role that befits their influence in society.

Our expert focused on how the media landscape has changed over the last few years, also bringing about a shift in media's impact on the democratic process that is particularly notable during election periods. The arrival of private actors that for the most part remain non-regulated, such as Facebook and Google, has greatly affected citizen's ability to receive important information about elections. These players have become a principal platform of political interaction, as well as a critical vehicle for political advertising.

#### **Positive aspects of social media's role during elections:**

- Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms allow political contestants to better reach out to their voters and to engage them more directly in their campaigns
- They also enhance the opportunities for citizens to retrieve information that is important for their voting decisions, which is particularly impactful where freedom of expression and access to information is restricted (Belarus)
- They are very efficient and relatively cheap tools for voter mobilization

## **Negative aspects of social media & elections:**

- Voter suppression (misrepresentation of "factual" voter information – e.g. regarding methods, place, location, time, qualifications, and identification)
- Voter fraud (vote buying/selling)
- Incitement to violence, spreading of hate speech (to heighten deep-seated sources of tension, discord, and hatred - including calls for political and electoral exclusion - in ways that undermine public trust in democratic institutions and increase the possibility of electoral violence and political instability).
- Bullying, harassment, and arbitrary surveillance of journalists or other public figures
- Cyberespionage (which is a form of cyberattack that steals classified or sensitive data to undermine a candidate or party)
- Doxing of candidates and activists for the purposes of harm, harassment, online shaming, manipulation, and shaping the opinions of voters (doxing means publishing personal information about people without their consent, which can include addresses, phone numbers, credit card details, medical information, private e-mails. Etc.)
- Data mining for political micro-targeting used in electoral campaigns (political micro-targeting is even more tailored to individual voters than normal advertising used for example on television, and relies on a broad set of collected data about an individual, based on traces s/he leaves through online interactions).
- Spreading disinformation and misinformation (false or misleading information that is created or disseminated with the intent to cause harm – to persons, groups, institutions or processes – or to benefit the perpetrator)
- Exerting foreign interference in elections (attempts by governments, covertly or overtly, to influence elections in another country)
- Trolling (aimed at generating online discord by upsetting people or starting quarrels, through content that is inflammatory or off-topic that is posted in an online community. Trolls are hired by political contestants – parties or candidates – to discredit opponents).
- Identity theft (the deliberate use of someone else's identity to discredit opponents, for example by stealing personal emails and other data)
- Digital attacks against journalists and other media actors (this includes attempts to limit legitimate political speech through the shutdown of Internet and other communications channels, filtering or blocking content pertaining to elections, applications, and websites, as well as illegitimate surveillance, tracking, hacking, fake domain attacks, denial of service attacks, data mining, doxing, and confiscation of digital hardware, among other modalities).
- Online Harassment (female politicians)

## **Possible solutions:**

- *The need to upgrade information and communications technologies (ICT) capacities for election administration*
- Application of human rights standards and normative frameworks to the challenges that social media and AI pose to elections
- *Regulation, self-regulation, and co-regulation of online content*
- The importance of media and information literacy
- Agreements between EMBs and technology companies to combat disinformation
- Political parties and candidates joining forces to prevent and counter disinformation

- Fact-checking, myth-busting, trust, and credibility-enhancing initiatives
- Carrying out social media monitoring
- Fostering transparency in online campaigning and political advertising
- Advancing gender equality and addressing violence against women in elections
- Promoting voter education, media and information literacy, and youth's participation in elections

Here is the MEMO 98 presentation in pdf: [sife-presentation-final-version](#)

The program of the conference is available here:

# 2021 Seoul International Forum on Elections



We invite you to the 2021 Seoul International Forum on Elections to be held online, where we will discuss important issues in the field of elections and the development of democracy around the world.

We are looking forward to your keen interest and participation.

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<b>Date and Time</b>	May 13, 2021 (Thur) 3pm - 5:50pm (KST)
<b>Host</b>	National Election Commission of the Republic of Korea
<b>Theme</b>	After the Pandemic, Finding a Path to a Better Democracy
<b>Platform(Zoom) Link</b>	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89512179889">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89512179889</a>

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## Program

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15:00-15:20	Opening Ceremony	<b>Opening Remarks</b> <b>Noh Jeong-hee</b> Chairperson, National Election Commission
		<b>Congratulatory Remarks</b> <b>Frode Solberg</b> Ambassador of Norway to the Republic of Korea <b>Jonghyun Choe</b> Secretary General, Association of World Election Bodies
<b>Crisis of Democracy and Building Trust in Elections</b>		
<b>Moderator</b>		
<b>Daniel Connolly</b> Assistant Professor of International Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies		
<b>Presenters</b>		
15:20-16:30	Session One	<b>Staffan Darnoff</b> Senior Advisor of Global Electoral Operations and Administration, International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES)
		<b>Meng Chih-Cheng</b> Commissioner of the Central Election Commission of Taiwan
		<b>Cho Won-yong</b> Professor, Korean Civic Education Institute for Democracy
<b>Break</b>		
<b>The Roles and Responsibilities of Social Media Platforms in Elections</b>		
<b>Moderator</b>		
<b>Yu Hong-sik</b> Professor of Mass Communication, Chung-ang University		
<b>Presenters</b>		
16:40-17:50	Session Two	<b>Yoon Chae-eun</b> Head of Public Policy of Twitter Korea
		<b>Rast'o Kužel</b> Executive Director of MEMO 98
		<b>Keum Hee-jo</b> Professor of Media & Communication, Sungkyunkwan University

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**The full video recording of the conference is available here**

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