

ELECTIONS IN DIGITAL TIMES

The guide focuses on how the internet, social media, and AI impact electoral integrity and offers an overview of international commitments related to the rights to freedom of expression, access to information, political participation, and privacy.



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UNESCO released a new handbook [Elections in Digital Times: A Guide for Electoral Practitioners](#) authored by Professor Robert Krimmer, Dr. Armin Rabitsch, Rastó Kužel, Dr. Marta Achler, and Nathan Licht. The handbook offers a comprehensive overview of international and regional standards regarding the rights to freedom of expression, access to information, political participation, and privacy in the context of electoral processes. It also maps a series of good practices implemented by diverse stakeholders worldwide during electoral processes. It is organized in eight sections: six sections dedicated to the analysis of the challenges and the general situation of elections in digital times, a section dedicated to conclusions, and a section with suggestions for possible action. Each of the first six sections has a guide of suggested questions at the end in case the publication is used for trainings and workshops.

While the internet and social media can strengthen democratic participation, improve voters' access

to information, and facilitate interaction between political parties and their electorates, they also harbor risks that may disrupt and undermine electoral processes. This range, amongst others, from the spread of disinformation, misinformation, mal-information, conspiracy theories and hate speech, to surveillance and micro-targeting, and to censorship and internet shutdowns.

The publication thus assesses the impact, both positive and negative, of new developments relating to social media and Artificial Intelligence in the context of democratic elections. It is based on the need for key electoral stakeholders to have access to more tools and knowledge to tackle the complex problem posed by disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information as well as hate speech during electoral processes. This handbook is a concrete response to the many requests made to UNESCO, with which we are reinforcing the capacities of electoral practitioners to guarantee free, plural, and fair elections by fostering freedom of expression. The manual is addressed to electoral practitioners and outlines emerging issues linked to the opportunities and risks posed by the Internet, social media, and AI.

It also provides good practice examples and recommendations in different electoral settings. These guidelines serve to provide electoral management bodies, electoral practitioners, the media, political parties, civil society organizations, and other key stakeholders with the necessary tools to help prevent online and offline electoral-related violence and manipulation. Towards this end, existing international law and norms, and good practices around the world, are identified and highlighted. These norms and practices function as important benchmarks, and we have used them to develop concrete practical suggestions for all relevant stakeholders in the electoral process. The handbook aims to contribute to capacity-building initiatives and training, both online and on the ground.

The full version of the guide can be found here: [guide](#)