

Online Roundtable

Retrospective Insights: Election Monitoring Efforts to Preserve Information Integrity

Thursday, September 4, 2025 | 15:00 CET – 16:30 CET

[REGISTER HERE](#)

The past three years have seen major shifts in the digital democracy landscape, including both encouraging and concerning developments. Since 2023, DRI's [access://democracy](#) project, funded by Stiftung Mercator, has investigated threats to online public discourse, advocated for stronger digital regulation, and monitored emerging technologies. During this period, landmark legislation like the EU's AI act and Digital Services Act came into effect, while novel generative AI technologies came into widespread mainstream use. In Europe alone, over a dozen elections took place, with several high-profile incidents of foreign interference attempts and disinformation, such as in the 2024 Romanian presidential elections. Beyond Europe, the 2024 re-election of Donald Trump in the United States and the takeover of X (formerly Twitter) by Elon Musk has signaled a rightward shift in global politics, and many major social media platforms have jumped at the opportunity to further scale back already scarce moderation and fact-checking efforts.

What do these developments mean for the future of online democratic discourse, and what threats remain underreported? How will these shifts impact our research capacities and our methodologies for monitoring and auditing? In this 90-minute roundtable, we will highlight the most prevalent issues, identify feasible solutions for the research and advocacy community and open the floor to our civil society organisations peers conducting similar work. Each thematic segment will begin with a short example from DRI and our partners, followed by an open discussion where participants will have the opportunity to present their own insights, challenges, and lessons learned. These insights will help inform and may be referenced in a DRI-authored meta-analysis report expected to be published November 2025.

Objectives:

- Present highlights and comparative insights from 6 European and national elections since 2023
- Peer exchange between civil society and academic researchers on experiences, challenges, and feasible solutions for addressing disinformation, foreign interference, and other online threats.
- Gather insights to comprehensively represent and highlight similarly focused civil society work from across the EU in a soon-to-be-released meta-analysis report.
- Explore potential advocacy, research, and policy priorities for the coming year.

What to prepare

We encourage participants to prepare to share their social media monitoring, research, and policy insights gathered over the last three years of election monitoring. This includes but not limited to:

- Links to published research or resources.
- Examples of challenges faced during election-related monitoring (technical, political, or resource-based).
- Key findings or trends observed in social media activity, disinformation campaigns, or digital civic engagement.
- Policy responses and advocacy efforts undertaken, and lessons learned from engaging with decision-makers or platforms.
- Reflections on methodologies used in monitoring or research, including what has worked well and where gaps remain.

Participants are encouraged to highlight **country-specific experiences** relevant to the selected breakout group. Contributions may also cover emerging issues (e.g., AI-generated disinformation, platform regulation, cross-platform coordination challenges) to inform discussion.

Agenda

Retrospective Insights: Election Monitoring Efforts to Preserve Information Integrity	Time
Opening Remarks Moderator: • <i>Sorina Matei, Digital Democracy Programme Manager, DRI</i>	15:00 – 15:10
Group 1: Promising Developments – The DSA and AI Act as Major (Though Incomplete) Frameworks <i>This session will explore how frameworks like the DSA and AI Act are reshaping platform accountability and underpinning civil society organisations’ and researchers’ right to data access. Participants will discuss how these frameworks impact CSO rights, best practices for actionable research in policy advocacy, and different pathways for enhancing platform accountability.</i> • <i>Have these frameworks changed how you work with platforms?</i> • <i>What successes or frustrations have you experienced using these mechanisms?</i> • <i>Do you think strategic litigation is a feasible solution? What challenges can we foresee if so?</i>	15:10 – 16:00

Moderators: • <i>Carlos Hernández-Echevarría, Assistant Director, Head of Public Policy & Institutional Development, Maldita.es</i> • <i>Camila Weinman, Digital Democracy Research Officer, DRI</i>	
Group 2: The Impact of AI – Threats, Trends, and the Need for Audits <i>This session will explore the growing impact of generative AI on democratic discourse and democracy writ large, highlighting key findings from research on genAI, concerns of the disinformation potential of these technologies, and its role in fueling disinformation and “slopaganda” within political discourse.</i> <i>Discussion questions:</i> • <i>Have you seen AI tools used to influence political discourse in your region/research focus?</i> • <i>Has your organisation done investigations into the impact of genAI technologies on elections? If so, what are your findings / major trends observed?</i> • <i>Where do we see these trends going in the next year or two?</i> Moderators: • <i>Sonia Horonziak, Director of the Democracy and Civil Society Programme, Institute of Public Affairs</i> • <i>Duncan Allen, Digital Democracy Research Associate, DRI</i>	15:10 – 16:00
Group 3: FIMI and Inauthentic Behaviour – Trends and Emerging Threats <i>This session will explore trends and emerging threats in Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) and inauthentic behaviour, drawing on insights from our social media monitoring efforts. It will highlight the challenges of tracing content origins on platforms with weak research frameworks and examine the evolving dynamics between foreign and domestic disinformation actors.</i> <i>Discussion questions:</i> • <i>What trends have you observed in your work with regards to disinformation campaigns, inauthentic behaviour, and attribution challenges?</i> • <i>What methods have you found effective in tracking cross-platform or hard-to-attribute disinformation?</i> • <i>Do you see domestic actors as a bigger threat than foreign interference? Is this distinction still important?</i>	15:10 – 16:00

Moderators: • <i>Armin Rabitsch, Co-founder, and Chairman, Election-Watch.EU</i> • <i>Francesca Giannaccini, Digital Democracy Research Associate, DRI</i>	
Conclusion & The Role of Civil Society Going Forward <i>Discussion questions:</i> • <i>How are you adapting to reduced data access?</i> • <i>What strategies or partnerships have helped sustain your work under these constraints?</i> • <i>Where do you see challenges in the field going forward? Is upskilling needed in the CSO field as many easy-to-use tools become unavailable?</i> • <i>What tools have you been using for your research? Any hidden gems (Chainforge) that are open source and easy to use?</i> <i>Moderators:</i> • <i>Michael Meyer-Resende, Executive Director, DRI</i> • <i>Ognjan Denkovski, Digital Democracy Research Coordinator, DRI</i>	16:00 – 16:30