



Launch of the Massive Open Online Course on Freedom of Expression, Artificial Intelligence and Elections

2-30 April 2024

Dear electoral practitioners, members of electoral commissions, civil society organizations, media representatives, journalists, and everyone who wants to help promote information integrity in democratic institutions, and elections:

We are pleased to inform you that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas have developed a free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on ***Freedom of Expression, Artificial Intelligence and Elections***.

In 2024, 76 countries representing over half of the world's population will hold elections. For the first time, AI may extensively be used to generate and disseminate content during electoral processes. While AI brings benefits like cost reduction and instant responses, its potential misuse poses a significant risk, particularly in spreading disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech through social media.

The upcoming MOOC is building on the experience of the previous MOOC on ***Information and Elections in the Digital Era***, organized by the Knight Center for Journalism, UNESCO, and UNDP in 2022 that reached a global audience with participants from 162 countries and territories, with more than 5,000 students.

Divided into four modules, the MOOC explores how these technologies affect the information ecosystem in elections and provides ideas for responding to these challenges.

The course will start the 2 April and will take place for over a period of four weeks. It's asynchronous, meaning there will be no live sessions, and participants may access the course content on their own time throughout the four-week period.

The course will be available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. Registrations are now open on the following link:

<https://journalismcourses.org/product/freedom-of-expression-artificial-intelligence-elections/>

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- **Analyze the impact of AI on elections:** Identify both the benefits and risks of AI for Freedom of Expression related issues in electoral contexts.



- **Understand some of the existing regulations and standards:** be familiar with current international and national frameworks on freedom of expression and addressing AI-related challenges.
- **Develop strategies to combat AI misuse:** Propose and implement concrete actions to mitigate the risks of AI for information integrity in elections, tailored to your specific role or stakeholder group.
- **Employ relevant tools and resources:** Utilize AI-driven monitoring systems, fact-checking techniques, media literacy programs, and ethical impact assessment tools to address AI-related harmful practices in information integrity in elections.
- **Collaborate with other stakeholders:** Work effectively with diverse groups, including government officials, civil society organizations, women's groups, media, and the private sector, to build a more resilient and ethical AI ecosystem for freedom of expression in elections.
- **Promote informed citizens' choices and inclusive elections:** Contribute to creating a digital environment where all voters have access to accurate information, can participate freely, and are better equipped to identify and/or be better protected from AI-based manipulation.

This MOOC is free of charge and is organized in partnership with the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas. It is part of UNESCO and UNDP's efforts to address new challenges facing freedom of expression and electoral processes in the context of rapid technological advances. It is also a continuation of both organizations' work in the area of peace promotion and strengthening of democratic institutions.

Attached you will find a short description of the MOOC modules and a flyer advertising the course. We would be very grateful if you could circulate this information among your networks.

Please note that participants who successfully complete the course will receive a certificate of completion.

If you require further information about the course, please contact:

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- UNESCO: Virginia Antonelli; v.antonelli@unesco.org
- UNDP: Osama Aljaber osama.aljaber@undp.org



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "Sylvie Coudray".

Sylvie Coudray
Director of Division for Freedom of Expression, Media
Development and Media & Information Literacy, UNESCO

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "Sarah Lister".

Sarah Lister
Head of Governance
Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, UNDP

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Rosental Calmon Alves
Director of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas
University of Texas at Austin



Annex: description of the MOOC

Module 1 – Introduction to AI and International Standards on Freedom of Expression

(April 2 – 7, 2024)

Module 1 introduces the intersection of freedom of expression, information access, and AI. It provides a concise overview of international standards on freedom of expression and access to information. Participants will examine the Three-Part Test and its application in electoral contexts. The module also introduces AI, covering its everyday presence, history, types such as Generative AI, and the UNESCO's first-ever global standard on AI ethics. Also, it discusses the impact of AI on information integrity in elections, referencing relevant findings from the "Governing AI for Humanity", the Interim Report of the UN Secretary-General's AI Advisory Body, and the report "Towards a Shared Vision for Technology and Governance" by UNDP.

Module 2 - Disinformation, Gender-based Violence, and Hate Speech in Elections

(April 8 – 14, 2024)

Module 2 provides more insights into the 'electoral cycle and how inclusion, transparency, and trust are critical components for credible elections. It further explores the role of AI in fueling disinformation, hate speech, and gender-based violence (GBV) in elections. The module defines harmful online content, highlights the dangers of AI-generated hate speech, and explores the intersection of AI and GBV, particularly how it can impact elections and the challenges faced by journalists, particularly women. Finally, the module stresses the importance of responsible AI use to protect vulnerable groups and contribute towards inclusive, transparent and peaceful electoral processes.

Module 3 - An Ecosystem Based Response

(April 15 – 21, 2024)

Module 3 explores how various players in the election ecosystem can combat harmful AI-generated contents like disinformation and hate speech. It will provide examples of tools to address disinformation and hate speech in elections. It will look into strategies for journalists and media to fact-check and counter false information, and steps for online platforms to moderate content and comply with UNESCO guidelines. Ultimately, it promotes a collaborative approach between stakeholders to build coalitions and safeguard the information ecosystem during elections from AI misuse.

Module 4 - Individual skills to address harmful practices and concluding initiatives

(April 22 –30, 2024)

Module 4 provides strategies and tools to counter harmful practices for information integrity during elections. Electoral management bodies and regulators gain access to AI-powered



detection tools for monitoring elections, while media professionals receive guidelines to navigate the evolving technology landscape. Voters are empowered to critically analyze online information and resist disinformation. Additionally, ethical considerations are addressed with tools for assessing the impact of AI systems and promoting responsible development in view of the information ecosystem and deployment in elections. Overall, the module underscores the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to contribute to a healthy information ecosystem for transparent, inclusive, and credible elections.