Research Assessment Panels  
Observatory on Information and Democracy

Call for Contributions

I/ Introduction

The International Observatory on Information and Democracy is an initiative by the Forum on Information and Democracy, created by 11 organisations from civil society to expand the principles of the International Partnership on Information and Democracy and issue concrete recommendations for regulation and self-regulation.

The International Observatory on Information and Democracy is a multi-stakeholder entity whose mission is to evaluate the means, norms and architectures of the global information and communication space. The Observatory should provide decision-makers with a shared understanding of the challenges involved, so that they are encouraged to implement democratic principles and standards in this space at the international and national levels.

The main mission of the Observatory on Information and Democracy is to propose, in the form of a biennial report, a synthesis of the main knowledge resulting from research on the information and communication space. The report will provide an overview of the state-of-the-art of existing research, informing the questions raised in the framework of regulatory decisions. It will also provide an assessment of the gaps in research. This report will be addressed to governments, policymakers, regulatory bodies, NGOs, public information bodies, and tech corporations, to provide a shared understanding of the structure of the information and communication space and how it impacts democracy.

At their first meeting in September, the Steering Committee confirmed the Observatory roadmap and meta-analysis priority themes around which three Research Assessment Panels which include a wide network of researchers and academics. Led by a Scientific Director, expert rapporteurs and the Observatory's permanent staff, these Research Assessment Panels are working respectively on:

- Artificial Intelligence, Information ecosystems and democracy
- Media, Politics and Trust
- Data Governance and Democracy.
- Misinformation and Disinformation as a cross-cutting issue.

Their production will constitute one chapter of the inaugural report of the Observatory that will be published in late 2024.

III/ Research Assessment Panel on Artificial Intelligence, Information Ecosystems and Democracy

Artificial intelligence (AI) is impacting on information flows in the global communication ecosystem. AI, including generative AI, systems are reshaping content generation, its
governance, and flows. The absence of a clear definition of what ‘AI’ is in the global information ecosystem makes it a challenge to establish causal links between AI use and everyday experience, and human rights and changes in societal values.

This RAP will examine the role of AI, assess its consequences, and recommend new lines of research on governance issues. It will explore how AI advances impact on the safeguarding of fundamental rights and the dynamics of the decision-making process in societies, including shifts in values, structures, and information quality in global communication flows. The meta-research will spotlight the necessity of considering diverse AI definitions. It will underscore the critical importance of nurturing AI literacy among individuals, enabling them to critically evaluate content and actively engage in discussions about AI applications that profoundly influence their professional and daily lives. The analysis will provide a framework for understanding the complex relationship between AI and the information ecosystem, considering its advantages and potential challenges when the technology intersects with information, media, and societal well-being.

**IV/ Contributions for each RAP**

To address the questions of each RAP, we invite contributors to answer the questions below. Contributions do not need to cover all aspects listed below, but can be focused on specific ones. This list is not exhaustive and contributions addressing related areas are welcome. Contributions can take the form of existing academic papers, reports or opinion pieces on the topics addressed by the Research Questions below. Please use the format provided below for your responses.

**4.1 RAP on Artificial Intelligence, Information Ecosystems and Democracy - Research Questions**

1. What does content governance “by AI” mean and which differences exist in the use of the notion of “AI”?

2. How is AI used in content generation and how do platforms deal with AI-generated content and synthetic actors?

3. How does AI, including automated content governance tools (for curation/moderation) influence the information ecosystem systemically, considering, in particular, the questions of media diversity, information quality, and mis/disinformation?

4. With a focus on the changes in the global information ecosystem, what are the impacts of existing normative approaches (both binding and self-regulatory) on the use of AI in content creation and content governance?

5. With a focus on the changes in the global information ecosystem, what are the impacts of AI on internationally protected human rights and fundamental freedoms, including media freedom?

6. How is AI implemented in public administration, especially in the majority world, and what is the experience of these AI systems?
7. How is AI used by disinformation actors and how does the broader availability of AI tools contribute to strengthening mis/disinformation campaigns, with a focus on the dynamics of revenue generation?

8. What is the evidence on the role of (promoting) AI literacy to increase information literacy and, conversely, to promote information literacy to increase AI literacy?

4.2 Format

We welcome your contributions to the questions above by submitting a comment or papers, reports or published opinion pieces. You may submit the contribution template directly to our email: observatory@informationdemocracy.org in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese by 7 January.

The call for contributions is open to any individual or institution working in any capacity on these issues. We will not attribute any individual comments to you by name. However, with your permission we will thank you for your contribution in the Acknowledgements section of the RAP’s final report. If you agree, please include your biography or description of the institution in your contribution.

V/ Methodology

The Observatory will use meta-research, by aggregating and synthesizing existing evidence through literature reviews and thematic analysis, informed by expert consultations as appropriate.

VI/ Deliverables and objectives

The first report of the Observatory will be published in December 2024.

VII/ Team

Scientific Director: Robin Mansell

Lead Rapporteur: Rob Procter

Media Rapporteurs: Matthias C. Kettemann, Immaculate Odwera