



# OBSERVATORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK ON ELECTORAL JUSTICE

**Work program**  
Draft 14/07/2021



# OBSERVATORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK ON ELECTORAL JUSTICE

**WORK PROGRAM**  
**March 2021 – December 2024**

## **Introduction**

The Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary (TEPJF), in collaboration with the Global Network of Electoral Justice (GNEJ) and other international organizations, promotes the creation of the **Observatory on Social Media of the Global Network on Electoral Justice**, as a mechanism that seeks to permanently analyze the technological factors that strengthen or threaten democratic principles and the exercise of political-electoral rights. This, so that the competent authorities issue fair and cutting-edge decisions that guarantee the correct delivery of electoral justice, addressing the needs of today's global society.

This work program of the Observatory on Social Media develops the elements that will accompany the implementation of the Observatory, the objectives, strategic lines, activities, as well as the thematic components and indicators.

This Program seeks to redefine international judicial norms from an innovative perspective: electoral justice. Moreover, it will be comprised by the judges themselves, who can share their first-hand experience of the challenges of new technologies and social media, as well as best practices to be shared with the members of the Network.

An important feature of the Observatory is its non-restrictive focus on member states and their potential. Its work can contribute thematically through exchanges and recommendations that consider the characteristics of the member country's region.

## I. General objective

Promote the exchange and analysis of the GNEJ and its members, as well as push for solid progress at the international level in the area of social media and new technologies in elections and electoral justice. This way and accompanied by other international actors and academics of excellence, electoral justice strategies and practices will be improved in a strategic and sustainable manner.

## II. Strategic objectives

**Strategic objective 1.** Permanently analyze technological factors that strengthen or threaten democratic principles and the exercise of political-electoral rights, in order to issue fair and cutting-edge decisions that guarantee the correct delivery of electoral justice that addresses current needs.

**Strategic objective 2.** Encourage the development of policies among the members of the GNEJ and issue recommendations in favor of institutional changes that strengthen the Rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights in the digital era, as well as their preparation to face the challenges presented by social media.

**Strategic objective 3.** Monitor and evaluate compliance with the recommendations issued and international standards regarding the use of new technologies and fake news in the electoral field.

## III. Suggested indicators and guiding questions

In the initial phase of the Observatory, the Board, and the Scientific Leader in particular, can adjust the following indicators and guiding questions. It will be important to define the indicators (quantitative, qualitative, and in harmony with the objectives of the GNEJ) to identify current challenges, draft relevant recommendations and measure the success of the Observatory. This will be done with a proactive approach and should result in concrete proposals with a verifiable impact. The Board will define the form of measurement, periodicity, form of data capture, calculation formulas and goals.

1. Do judges have and apply international methodologies and instruments that allow States to confront digital manipulation of elections?
2. What are the challenges identified for the proper functioning of the use of new technologies in electoral campaigns? Have judges resolved complaints related to fairness in the electoral contest, with independence and integrity?
3. In response to the identified challenges, do the judicial-electoral authorities have updated, informed and technological strategies? How many of these strategies contemplate the technological training of judges and officials of the jurisdictional authorities, and is their performance effective and efficient?
4. What progress has been made in the use of technology for access to justice, and what are the recommendations for its sustainable incorporation in the jurisdictional-electoral authorities?
5. Are the policies that regulate the content of the digital public sphere consistent with the basic principles of freedom of expression? In this sense, what types of regulation or mechanisms exist to ensure transparency, accountability and legality in campaigns? Does the jurisdictional-electoral authority play a proactive and progressive role to protect democratic principles?
6. What have been the reactions, responsibilities and measures taken by both the State and technology companies regarding data protection? How will these trends impact the resolutions issued by electoral judges?
7. What is or should be the role of the jurisdictional-electoral authorities in the strategies against fake news, disinformation and manipulation of content?
8. How should jurisdictional-electoral authorities relate to the auditing of political guidelines and ads? How can the transparency of the influence of money in digital electoral campaigns be improved?

#### IV. Strategic lines and activities

| <b>Strategic objective 1.</b> Permanently analyze technological factors that strengthen or threaten democratic principles and the exercise of political-electoral rights, in order to issue fair and cutting-edge decisions that guarantee the correct delivery of electoral justice that addresses current needs. |   |   |   |                              |
|--|---|---|---|------------------------------|
| <b>Strategic line</b>  | <b>Activities</b>   | <b>Type of indicator</b>                            | <b>Indicators</b>   | <b>Implementation period</b> |
| 1. Contribute to the exchange of experiences and best practices on social networks, elections and electoral justice, through the Observatory.  | 1. Establish the criteria for communication with the members of the GNEJ.   | Key documents on the performance of the Observatory | Communication policy of the Observatory.  | April - May 2021             |
|  | 2. Determine the methodology for the systematization and analysis of documents, articles and/or rulings related to the theme of the Observatory.  |   | Contrast the methodologies applied by similar observatories, to optimize its own analysis of inputs.  | April - May 2021             |
|  | 3. Compile, systematize and analyze the documents, articles and/or rulings related to the use of social media and new technologies in democracy and electoral justice and their challenges. |   | Bimonthly report on the Global Exchange Platform of the GNEJ on articles or judgments related to the topic.   | Permanent 2021 to 2024       |
| 2. Increase capacities in the issuing of rulings related to the use of social networks, elections and electoral justice.   | 1. Systematize the arguments, criteria and interpretations on the use of social media and new technologies in democracy and electoral justice and their challenges.                         |   | Periodic activity reports with a substantial section on substantive analysis. Record progress and comparisons with previous reports. Specialized and longitudinal research. | Permanent 2021 to 2024       |

| <b>Strategic objective 2.</b> Encourage the development of policies among the members of the GNEJ and issue recommendations in favor of institutional changes that strengthen the Rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights in the digital era, as well as their preparation to face the challenges presented by social media. |  |  |   |                              |
|---|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| <b>Strategic line</b>   | <b>Activities</b>  | <b>Type of indicator</b>                       | <b>Indicators</b>   | <b>Implementation period</b> |
| 1. Disseminate international standards in favor of institutional changes related to democratic principles in the new digital era.   | 1. Obtain and disseminate international standards on the use of social media and new technologies in democracies.                          | Research documents with a substantive analysis | Roadmap with the standards and report on the results of the dissemination issued on the Global Exchange Platform of the GNEJ. | April - December 2024        |
| 2. Promote the best practices of the  | 1. Conduct a study to learn about best practices related to democratic principles in the new digital era, within electoral justice bodies. |  | Comparative study of best practices.  | April - December 2024        |

| <b>Strategic objective 2.</b> Encourage the development of policies among the members of the GNEJ and issue recommendations in favor of institutional changes that strengthen the Rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights in the digital era, as well as their preparation to face the challenges presented by social media. |  |                   |   |                           |
|---|--|-------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Strategic line  | Activities   | Type of indicator | Indicators  | Implementation period     |
| electoral justice bodies that make up the GNEJ in favor of democratic principles in the new digital era.  | Consider the legal and electoral framework.  |                   |   |                           |
|   | 2. Identify areas of opportunity to invigorate and protect democratic principles in the new digital era. |                   | Recommendations document.   | Annual basis 2021 al 2024 |
|   | 3. Online course for members of the GNEJ on the use of social media and electoral justice.               |                   | Results report, based on the evaluation of the course and the new skills of the participants. | Annual basis 2021 al 2024 |

| <b>Strategic objective 3.</b> Monitor and evaluate compliance with the recommendations issued and international standards regarding the use of new technologies and fake news in the electoral field.    |  |   |   |                           |
|--|--|---|---|---------------------------|
| Strategic line   | Strategic line   | Type of indicator                               | Strategic line  | Strategic line            |
| 1. Evaluate the application of recommendations and standards on the use of new technologies by the member institutions of the GNEJ, in the practices of the authorities and in the decisions they issue. | 1. Establish indicators to measure the implementation of the recommendations and standards of the members of the GNEJ. | Documents for the evaluation of the performance | Rigorous list of indicators for the evaluation.                                   | April - May 2021          |
|  | 2. Determine the methodology for applying the indicators in accordance with international standards.                   |   | Methodological plan to evaluate implementation, as well as an analysis of inputs. | April - May 2021          |
|  | 3. Compile, systematize and analyze the information collected and findings.  |   | Annual report to the Plenary Assembly of the GNEJ.                                | Annual basis 2021 al 2024 |

It should be noted that the recommendations issued by the Observatory are non-binding, and that each document and roadmap will be developed based on a risk analysis.

## V. Implementation of the program

The development of the **Observatory on Social Media of the Global Network on Electoral Justice** will be reflected in a microsite hosted on the Global Exchange Platform of the Network, which will include information related to the use of social media and new technologies in democracy and electoral justice, and its challenges and the results of the activities carried out in the period from April 2021 - December 2024.

The Technical Secretariat will be the liaison responsible for coordinating the communication policy with the Global Network on Electoral Justice in order to centralize the documents, articles and/or rulings related to the use and challenges of social media and new technologies to democracy and electoral justice, which, having met the criteria of the methodology, will be uploaded thematically on the Observatory's microsite.

In addition, a representative of the Scientific Committee of the GNEJ will be the Scientific Leader of the Observatory and will guide the definition of a sustainable methodology and the thematic research of this initiative.

Following the generation of periodic reports, studies, roadmaps, recommendations and other results, the Board must disseminate them within the GNEJ, as well as on the Observatory's website and social media. The Board is requested to appoint a spokesperson to enhance the dissemination and impact of these tools, as well as to bring the issue closer to the public. The Technical Secretariat will commit to support the dissemination and the external communication strategy.

In 2024, the participants of the GNEJ will vote on whether to extend the work of the Observatory, and will have the opportunity to evaluate whether its functions and activities should be adjusted to the new needs.<sup>1</sup> This vote will require the presentation of a final report of activities, findings and recommendations, shared by the Observatory's Board.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the survey on the operational bases of the Observatories, completed by participants of the GNEJ in January 2021, a majority emphasized the relevance of ensuring the permanence of the observatories created. This is because the issues connected to electoral justice are dynamic.

## VI. Composition of the Board

- Presidency of the Board and the Observatory  
**Patrick Sensburg**, Chairman of the Committee for the Scrutiny of Elections, Immunity and the Rules of Procedure of Germany
- Scientific Leader of the Global Network on Electoral Justice (GNEJ)  
**Rafael Rubio**, Professor of Constitutional Law at the Complutense University of Madrid and Member of the Venice Commission (Spain)
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)  
**Lisa Reppell**, Global Social Media and Disinformation Specialist
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)  
**Ingrid Bicu**, Seconded National Expert from Romania on strategic communications and elections
- National Democratic Institute (NDI)  
**Julia Brothers**, Senior Program Manager for Elections and Deputy Director of the Open Election Data Initiative, and her substitute, **Mario Mitre**, Program Director for Elections and Political Processes
- Technical Secretariat  
**Alberto Guevara Castro**, Director General of International Relations of the TEPJF.<sup>2</sup>

### Responsible for content monitoring on behalf of TEPJF

- Head of the Technical Secretariat of the GNEJ.

---

<sup>2</sup> Persona Titular de la Secretaría Técnica de la RMJE.

## VII. Principles of the Program of the Observatory

Considering that social media and the Internet are indispensable pillars of democracy and for the exercise of political-electoral rights, the following are proposed as parameters for action by the Observatory:

### **Rule of law**

Consider Sustainable Development Goal 16 "Peace, justice and strong institutions" which, among its targets, includes the need to promote the Rule of law at the national and international levels, reduce corruption and ensure access to information and protect fundamental freedoms.

### **Human rights**

Consider that Sustainable Development Goal 17 on "Partnerships for achieve the goal", sheds light on the role of technology and access to technology in democracy, and capacity building in technology, and building effective partnerships in the public, public-private and civil society spheres.

### **Freedom of expression**

The characteristics of social networks as a medium that enables the democratic, open, plural and expansive exercise of freedom of expression, means that the position to be adopted regarding any measure that may impact them, must be aimed at safeguarding the free and genuine interaction between users, as part of their human right to freedom of expression, for which it is essential to remove potential limitations to the civic and political involvement of citizens.

### **Fake news**

Fictitious stories that appear to be news, disseminated on the Internet or using other media, generally created to influence political opinions<sup>3</sup>.

### **Post-truth**

Refers to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs rather than on facts<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> See <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/fake-news>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/post-truth>