ICT, Elections and Democracy

An International IDEA global initiative

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is a trusted source for unbiased knowledge and analysis. International IDEA's 2018-2022 strategy recognizes that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are gaining ever more prominence in electoral management and democratic processes. Rapid changes in technology and in society are affecting and challenging our traditional assumptions about how democracies work. Developing and developed democracies alike are facing difficult choices when assessing, adopting and regulating technology. To this end, policymakers and practitioners need access to comparative knowledge, best practice examples, conversations with peers, as well as analysis and advice customized to local context.

International IDEA: an independent convener

International IDEA's global initiative on ICTs, Elections and Democracy, engages in trend research and supports in-country policymaking and legislation. This Initiative offers a balanced view of opportunities and challenges for technology in democratic processes at the global level which is complemented by a customized application to specific country contexts.

The Initiative also serves as a platform for dialogue between international, regional and national stakeholders on ICT, election and democracy related topics. Through better informed decision making, technology can be applied to enhance, rather than undermine democratic developments. To this end, International IDEA draws on its national networks of election management bodies, political parties, civil society, academia, democracy practitioners as well as the private sector.

Pillars of the ICT, Elections and Democracy initiative

Under the institution-wide initiative, International IDEA's programmatic activities within the ICTs, Elections and Democracy focuses on two pillars:

1. **Elections and ICTs** as an already well-established area of International IDEA's work, including topics such as electronic voting, digital disclosure systems, election integrity and security in the face of misinformation, trust and transparency of election technologies as well as the role of technology in electoral campaigns.
2. **Participation and Representation** through ICTs covering International IDEA's work on technologies for citizen participation, such as public consultations in constitution building, increasing participation in government at the national and local level, and digital tools for political parties and political actors in general.

Learn the latest on the ICT, Elections and Democracy initiative
To get in touch directly, please email: ICT-election-democracy@idea.int

New and developing democracies as a sounding board

Many new and developing democracies are pioneers in the use of innovative technical solutions. This creates a stark contrast to some established democracies that increasingly focus on the challenges and risks of new technologies for democracy. This Initiative consolidates both perspectives and uses experiences and expertise in new democracies as a sounding board to achieve a comprehensive approach.

Foundations of the ICT, Elections and Democracy initiative

Strengthening democracy and electoral management is inconceivable without taking technical developments into account. The Institute's programming activities reflects this. For example:

- The **Electoral Processes** programme developed several publications, including on Open Source (2014), Certification of Election Technology (2015), Open Data (2016), and Biometrics (2017) and in 2015 the programme launched the ICTs in Elections Database.
- The **Political Participation and Representation** programme launched the Digital Parties Portal in 2015, a database of ICT tools that help political parties become more efficient in almost every area of their work.
- The **Constitution-Building Processes** programme organized a "Constitution-Building Tech Fair" in 2015 that convened tech entrepreneurs and constitutional experts and practitioners to present the methodologies, opportunities and challenges of using ICTs in constitution-building processes.
- **International IDEA's Secretary-General** Yves Leterme is the Vice-Chair of the Kofi Annan Commission on Elections and Democracy in the Digital Age.
- The **Wider Europe** programme on cyber security, data protection, and country projects on digital innovations for political parties.
- The **Africa and West Asia** programme on technology for out-of-country voting.
- The **Asia and the Pacific** programme trained EMBs and civil society on electoral ICT issues and is supporting an e-parliament initiative in Bhutan.
- The **Latin America and the Caribbean** programme implemented youth trainings on globalization, technology and development in Bolivia.
- The **Office of International IDEA's Permanent Observer to the UN** hosting the "Democracy and ICTs" panel at the International Economic Forum of the Americas.

Partners and collaboration

As part of its ICT-related work, International IDEA has created valuable cooperation and networks at global, regional and country level. This includes other organizations working on democracy support, academia, electoral management bodies and their networks, civil society, experts, policymakers and technology vendors, with International IDEA Member States as well as non-Member States. As part of the initiative, International IDEA is specifically seeking to deepen existing cooperation and looking for new partners in member states and beyond to collaborate with and contribute to this exciting initiative.

International IDEA envisages a range of upcoming ICT related projects and themes. These include a continued focus on the integrity and security in elections, increasing political participation and citizen engagement through technology, the role and potential regulation of digital campaigning, increasing participation for absentee and out of country voters and in party primaries through ICTs, cryptocurrencies in campaigns financing, and the cost and sustainability of elections and technologies.

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