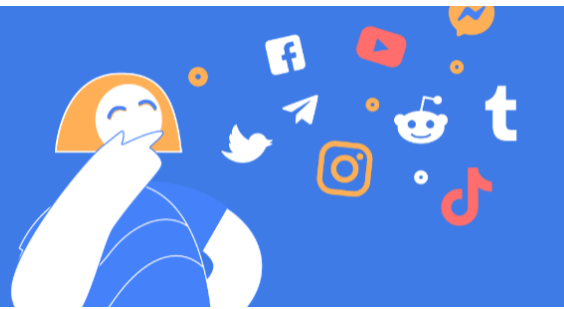


SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING



The Social Media Training Centre by Democracy Reporting International

In recent years, social media has become a crucial space for democratic debate. Alongside its potential, we have witnessed a surge in information manipulation, hate speech, and targeted disinformation campaigns that threaten the integrity of public discourse. Technological advancements, including generative AI, have accelerated these risks, posing new challenges to the digital enabling environment for civil society.

At Democracy Reporting International, we believe that countering these threats requires evidence-based monitoring and technical capacity building. To meet this need, we created the Social Media Training Centre, a hub of training and resources designed to equip civil society actors, journalists, and researchers with the tools to analyse, understand, and respond to harmful online dynamics. At the core of this effort is [the Digital Democracy Monitor Toolkit](#), our open-source methodology for investigating the impact of social media on democracy.

We have expanded our digital toolkit into a flexible and modular learning centre, designed to respond to the diverse needs and experience levels of our audience. It now includes three tailored resources:

- I. **Social Media Monitoring Training:** A hands-on training based on our methodology, designed for those seeking to systematically analyse the impact of social media on the digital enabling environment. The training covers key phenomena such as misinformation, disinformation, manipulation, hate speech targeting CSO activists, and broader dynamics of online public discourse.
- II. **Foundations Course** - “Democracy in the digital age: The role of social media”: A practical introductory course for those interested in exploring key issues such as the impact of social media on democratic processes, online threats, and the challenges posed by emerging technologies like AI and Generative AI. The course also examines the role of national and supranational institutions in regulating online spaces, along with the responsibilities of platforms and civil society.
- III. **Data Access resource:** A practical guide to navigating the complex ecosystem of data access on digital platforms. Designed to help researchers and civil society organisations assess which tools are best suited for data collection, based on their research goals, available funding, technical capacity, and other key considerations.

I. Social Media Monitoring Training

What is in the training?

This is a **learner-centred training**, developed and designed with instructional designers. In a departure from the traditional trainer-focused method, where the instructor leads the exposition of content to passive learners, this curriculum relies on **active** participation, **interactive** and varied activities, and exercises to **engage** the learner.

Our curriculum is divided into four modules, each lasting four hours. In total the training programme requires **20 hours**.

Module 1: Introduces the concept of social media monitoring, outlines its impact, and presents different forms of monitoring. It also emphasises the importance of considering international and national regulatory frameworks, as well as platform policies, when conducting social media monitoring.

Module 2: Explores the foundations of a successful research project by highlighting the importance of assembling the right team, identifying the relevant phenomena, selecting platforms, defining the timeline, and choosing an appropriate unit of analysis.

Module 3: Focuses on qualitative research. It addresses the opportunities and challenges of qualitative approaches, discusses various sampling techniques, and presents different methods for manual data collection.

Module 4: Covers data analysis, with a focus on practical approaches to analysing qualitative data.

In scheduling online session, we will consult the group and try to find best time and pace for all. Usually, the programme of online live sessions takes from two weeks (2 Modules per week pace) to 4 weeks (1 Module per week pace).

Additionally, the training includes four office hour sessions, offering learners the opportunity to ask questions about the course material and receive tailored feedback on their social media monitoring (SMM) projects. The course is designed for small online cohorts of 10–15 participants. We aim to form groups consisting of 3–4 civil society organizations (CSOs), with 3–4 participants from each. Both the training sessions and office hours will be available in English, French, and Spanish.

Who is it for?

- Civil society working on democracy, governance, human rights and related issues
- International organisations and donors
- Activists and advocacy groups

What you will learn:

- Social media analysis skills
- Ethical and legal awareness
- Research design and methodology
- Team collaboration and workflows
- Vicarious trauma awareness
- Data collection and qualitative analysis
- Problem-solving skills
- Contextual critical evaluation

What you will achieve:

- Improved understanding on how to monitor social media around the digital enabling environment
- Improved understanding of methodological concepts and frameworks necessary before starting a SMM project.
- Improved understanding of new methods for data access, data collection and qualitative analysis.
- Improved understanding of how to create effective advocacy efforts based on evidence and findings from a SMM project.

How have others used this training?

Our training has been successfully applied by civil society organisations and researchers. Below are a few illustrative examples:

- 1) Election Monitoring: Civil society organisations in Moldova used the training to identify and track disinformation campaigns and hate speech during parliamentary elections.
- 2) Hate Speech Analysis: A civil society organisation in Armenia used the training to explore gender-based violence and discrimination across social media platforms.
- 3) Research on Narratives: Researchers applied the training to analyse how online narratives about civil society have evolved over time on social media.

What participants have said:

- “The evidence-based approach has empowered us to advocate for reforms that aim to both prevent and mitigate hate speech against women in the digital sphere.”
- “DRI had a strong contribution towards building the technical and research capacity of our organisation to analyse online discourse and gender-based violence on social media”.



II. Foundations Course: Democracy in the digital age: The role of social media

What is it in the training?

This training offers a practical introduction to the foundations of social media and its intersection with democracy. This **four-hour online** course explores key issues such as the impact of social media on democratic processes, online threats, and the challenges posed by emerging technologies like AI and Generative AI. It also examines the role of national and supranational entities in regulating online

spaces, alongside the responsibilities of platforms and civil society. To ensure an engaging and applied learning experience, the session combines theoretical concepts with real-world case studies and interactive activities.

Our curriculum is divided into five modules (4h in total):

Module 1: Explores the relationship between social media and democracy, highlighting both its positive contributions and its role in shaping democratic processes.

Module 2: Unpacks what happens "behind the feed" and how social media works by defining key concepts such as recommender and ranking systems.

Module 3: Focuses on the threats of social media, including disinformation, misinformation, hate speech, online gender-based violence, and information manipulation.

Module 4: Defines AI and Generative AI and discusses their impact on the digital enabling environment.

Module 5: Highlights the importance of regulating social media at both national and international levels and examines the roles of platforms and civil society.

The course is designed for a group up to 15 participants.

Who is it for?

- Civil society working on democracy, governance, human rights and related issues
- International organisations and donors
- Activists and advocacy groups
- Researchers, journalists and anyone looking to better understand the power and risks of digital platforms

What you will learn:

- How social media influences democratic processes
- What happens behind the feed: how platforms work
- Key online threats and disinformation tactics
- The impact of AI and generative AI on the digital enabling environment
- Who's regulating what: national and international-level efforts
- What roles platforms, governments, and civil society must play

What you will achieve:

- Improved conceptual and practical understanding of how social media and emerging technologies impact democracy and the digital enabling environment.
- Be equipped to critically assess digital threats and platform dynamics to inform advocacy, policy, or research.

What participants have said

- "It was both insightful and practical. It deepened my understanding of how digital platforms influence democratic discourse and provided useful strategies to navigate misinformation and promote constructive engagement online. I found the real-life case studies particularly valuable in connecting theory to practice."
- "I recommend this course for civic space actors all over the world."
- "Solid introduction to the impact of social media on the political discourse."

III. Data Access Resource

What is the resource?

Social media research is powered by data, but understanding which data is available and how to access it can be a challenging task for researchers and civil society organisations. Our Data Access Resource simplifies this process by outlining the ways of accessing data, which types of data offered by each platform, their access procedures and ethical considerations when working with data.

Who is it for:

Whether you have already taken our social media monitoring training or are simply interested in exploring the tools available for collecting social media data and understanding how to access them, this resource is for you.

It is specifically designed for:

- Civil society organizations and researchers working on democracy, governance, human rights, and related issues
- International organizations
- Activists and advocacy groups

What you will learn:

- What is the legal right for data access for research purposes (such as the DSA in Europe)
- Different ways to access social media data: Platform protocols (API's, platform user interfaces, Secure Processing Environments (SPEs)), social media listening tools, manual data collection, other alternative ways to circumvent data access restrictions (ex. scraping)
- How to choose the most suitable access method based on the platforms you're targeting.
- What types of data you can obtain through each method (e.g. posts, comments, engagement metrics, metadata, etc.)
- Key limitations to consider, such as:
 1. **funding** (some tools require paid access but offer immediate data, such as social media listening tools)
 2. **data quality** (for example, TikTok VCE data may be low quality or incomplete)
 3. **time** (access to certain resources like Meta's Content Library can take weeks)
 4. **technical skills** (APIs often require programming knowledge)
 5. **Research scope** (for example manual data collection could have a limiting impact on your research goal)
- Support to access Meta Content Library
- Reflect on ethical considerations when working with social media data

Format:

- Guidebook with infographics