Module 7: Inclusive and responsible coverage

Training material to be shared with trainers only

CONTENTS

TRAINER OVERVIEW 2

PREPARATION AND ROUTE SELECTION 3

CORE MESSAGES THAT SHOULD REMAIN CONSTANT 5

INCLUSION AS AN ELECTORAL COMMUNICATION STANDARD 5

VISIBILITY, VOICE AND PORTRAYAL 6

GENDERED DISINFORMATION AND ONLINE ABUSE 7

SAFETY-CENTRED ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE 8

SOCIAL PLURALISM AND INTERSECTIONAL EXCLUSION 9

ACCESSIBILITY AND VOTER INFORMATION 9

MONITORING INCLUSIVE COVERAGE 10

QUALITY CONTROL AND REPORTING 12

EDITORIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES 12

CASES, LEARNING CHECK AND NEXT STEPS 13

TRAINING OF TRAINERS' GUIDANCE AND ASSESSMENT 15

AUDIENCE ADAPTATION 16

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES 17

This module helps participants assess whether election communication enables people in all parts of society to receive useful information, speak in public debate and participate without discrimination or intimidation. It addresses gender equality, minority voices, disability and accessibility, regional and linguistic inclusion, stereotyping, gendered disinformation and technology-facilitated violence.

Use the separate participant workbook for all activities. It contains scenarios and tasks but no outcomes. Keep the debriefs and suggested assessments in this trainer document until participants have completed the exercises. Adapt identity terms to the national context and consult affected groups before delivery.

Trainer overview

Module objective

Enable participants to identify exclusion and harmful portrayal across broadcast, print and digital media; assess quantity, quality, voice, accessibility and safety; distinguish robust political criticism from discriminatory or threatening conduct; and design responses that protect participation, dignity and freedom of expression.

Learning outcomes

- Explain why inclusive coverage concerns voters' access to information as well as candidates' opportunity to communicate.
- Distinguish visibility, direct voice, prominence, subject matter, tone and portrayal.
- Identify stereotypes, sexualised attacks, gendered disinformation, discriminatory narratives and threats without treating every offensive statement as unlawful.
- Examine how gender, disability, age, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, geography and socio-economic position can combine to shape exposure and exclusion.
- Assess accessibility of voter information and campaign coverage across formats and platforms.
- Design a monitoring record that combines disaggregated quantitative data with contextual qualitative analysis.
- Select an ethical editorial, regulatory, institutional or civil-society response within the actor's mandate.

Session techniques and methods

Source audit; portrayal comparison; harm and response map; accessibility test; monitoring-design workshop; newsroom or institutional simulation; reflective learning check. Use fictionalised examples where real material could reproduce abuse. Offer printed, digital, large-print and screen-reader-friendly versions.

Duration

Standard route: 120 minutes. Condensed route: 90 minutes. Extended route: 180 minutes. Timing includes instructions, group work, reporting and debriefs but excludes breaks, interpretation and preparation. The standard route completes Sheets 1–5. The extended route adds detailed coding and the recent-case comparison.

Relationship to other modules

Module 3 supplies the fairness and pluralism concepts, Module 4 the monitoring discipline, and Module 5 the general framework for disinformation and manipulation. Module 6 addresses platform and advertising obligations. This module applies those foundations to participation, representation, safety and accessibility. Modules 8 and 9 develop wider violations, remedies and resilience.

Preparation and route selection

Trainer checklist

- Map groups that may be underrepresented or exposed to discriminatory coverage in the national context. Avoid assuming that one list fits every country.
- Review election, equality, anti-discrimination, media, accessibility, criminal and data-protection rules and identify the competent bodies and available remedies.
- Gather sex-disaggregated candidate data and, where lawful and useful, other aggregate participation data. Do not infer sensitive identity characteristics from appearance or names.
- Sample public service, private and community media, online news, candidate accounts and relevant platforms. Include minority-language and regional outlets where appropriate.
- Review terminology with local equality bodies, organisations of persons with disabilities, women's organisations, minority representatives, journalists, regulators, EMBs and observers.
- Prepare Sheets 1–7 without trainer answers. Remove usernames and unnecessary personal data from abusive content. Warn participants before showing distressing examples and provide a non-exposure alternative.
- Check accessibility of the room and materials, including contrast, font size, captioning, interpretation, reading order and time for participation.
- Establish a referral and safety protocol for credible threats, doxxing, stalking or targeted harassment disclosed during training.

Route table

Session	90 min	120 min	180 min
1 Inclusion standard	10	15	20
2 Visibility and portrayal	15	20	30
3 Gendered disinformation and abuse	20	25	35
4 Social pluralism	10	15	20
5 Accessibility	10	15	20
6 Monitoring	15	20	30
7 Responses and cases	5	5	15
8 Learning check	5	5	10

For 90 minutes, provide the standards map in advance and use one portrayal example, one online-harm scenario and the accessibility test. For 120 minutes, complete Sheets 1–5. For 180 minutes, add Sheet 6 coding, Sheet 7 institutional planning and a national adaptation discussion.

Core messages that should remain constant

- Inclusion is part of electoral integrity because voters need accessible and plural information and contestants need a genuine opportunity to be heard.
- Headcounts alone do not establish inclusion. Measure who appears, who speaks directly, where coverage appears, what topics they address, how they are framed and whether comparable actors receive comparable scrutiny.
- Equal treatment does not always mean identical treatment. Reasonable accommodation, accessible formats and carefully designed measures can remove barriers without controlling editorial conclusions.
- Women candidates should be assessed through their political record and programme under standards comparable to men. Routine attention to appearance, family status or emotional traits can displace substantive scrutiny.
- Gendered disinformation uses false or misleading claims and gendered narratives to deter participation, discredit public actors or polarise communities. Sexist abuse may be harmful even when it is not demonstrably false.
- Online abuse can combine repetition, sexualisation, impersonation, manipulated images, threats and disclosure of personal information. Reach and coordination matter, but a single credible threat can require urgent action.
- Political criticism, satire and unpopular opinion remain protected expression. Assessment must distinguish offence from discrimination, harassment, incitement and credible threats, applying the relevant legal threshold.
- People experience overlapping barriers. Analysis should consider intersectional effects without assigning identities or exposing sensitive personal data.
- Accessible election information benefits a wide public. Accessibility should be designed from the beginning, not added after publication.
- Responses should preserve evidence, protect the target, correct factual harm where possible, address behaviour and systems, and avoid amplifying abusive content unnecessarily.

Inclusion as an electoral communication standard

SESSION METHOD Inclusion and rights map using Sheet 1 | TIME 10, 15 or 20 minutes

Rights and responsibilities

Freedom of expression protects political debate, including speech that shocks or offends. Electoral inclusion also draws on equality and non-discrimination, the right to free elections, political participation and access to information. These principles should be read together rather than used as automatic trump cards.

Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)12 calls for accessible, diverse and inclusive electoral communication and attention to groups that may face exclusion. Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 addresses gender equality and media, while CM/Rec(2019)1 provides a framework for preventing and combating sexism. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly Articles 9, 21 and 29, supplies the central accessibility and participation framework for persons with disabilities.

Four dimensions

Dimension	Practical question
Access	Can voters find, receive and understand election information in formats they can use?
Presence	Are different groups visible as candidates, experts, officials, voters and sources?
Agency	Do people speak in their own voices, or are they mainly described by others?
Safety and dignity	Can they participate without discriminatory degradation, intimidation or avoidable exposure to harm?

Guidance for trainers

Ask participants to identify one barrier in each dimension. Keep the distinction between a poor practice, an ethical breach, a platform-policy issue and an unlawful act. The responsible body and remedy may differ.

Visibility, voice and portrayal

SESSION METHOD Comparative source audit using Sheet 2 | TIME 15, 20 or 30 minutes

What to examine

Indicator	Question
Visibility	How much time, space or share of relevant items does each group receive? Compare with candidacy, political relevance and the programme format.
Direct voice	Who receives uninterrupted speech, interviews, quotations or debate participation?
Prominence	Does coverage appear in headlines, opening items and high-audience programmes, or only in marginal slots?
Topics	Are women and minority actors confined to health, family or identity issues while others discuss the economy, security and leadership?
Portrayal	Does the item focus on competence and policy, or on appearance, family, age, morality, disability or conformity with social roles?
Scrutiny	Are comparable actors challenged with comparable seriousness, evidence and relevance?
Sources and experts	Whose expertise counts, and who appears only as a victim, witness or ordinary citizen?

Gender-responsive analysis

Cross-tabulate gender with time or space, tone, direct speech, topic, role and prominence. Compare coverage with the proportion and political standing of candidates. A finding that women received 20 per cent of candidate coverage means little without the candidate composition, programme type and selection rules.

Trainer debrief for Sheet 2

The two fictional profiles contain equally relevant policy proposals. The second version shifts attention to appearance, family and likeability and uses fewer direct quotations. Participants should identify the change in editorial framing without demanding flattering coverage or immunity from legitimate scrutiny.

Gendered disinformation and online abuse

SESSION METHOD Harm and evidence map using Sheet 3 | TIME 20, 25 or 35 minutes

Working distinctions

Pattern	Evidence question
Gender stereotype	Does the message assign competence, morality or social roles according to gender?
Sexist or sexualised abuse	Does it degrade the person through sex, sexuality, body, family status or gender expression?
Gendered disinformation	Which factual or manipulated claim is false or misleading, and how does gender make it persuasive or harmful?
Impersonation or synthetic media	Was an account, voice, image or video fabricated or altered? What can be verified about provenance?
Harassment campaign	Is there repetition, targeting, pile-on behaviour, cross-platform migration or coordinated amplification?
Threat or doxxing	Is there a credible threat, personal data exposure, stalking indicator or immediate safety risk?

Gendered disinformation overlaps with misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and broader influence operations, but the concepts are not interchangeable. Record the content, behaviour, actor, target, audience and harm separately.

Evidence ladder

Begin with the observable post and its context. Add repetition, distribution, linked accounts and technical indicators only when evidence supports them. Do not infer coordination from similar opinions alone or attribute a campaign to a state or organisation merely because its narrative serves that actor's interests.

Safety-centred analysis and response

Harm assessment

Ask whether the content seeks to discredit competence, sexualise the target, question moral legitimacy, isolate a community, suppress participation, provoke harassment or create physical danger. Consider scale and speed, but also specificity. A low-reach post containing an address and credible threat may require a faster response than a high-reach insult.

Do not reproduce the harm

- Capture the minimum necessary evidence and restrict access to personal data.
- Avoid repeating slurs, intimate images or false allegations in headlines and social posts.
- Do not require the target to prove emotional suffering before institutions act on a credible safety concern.
- Seek informed consent before identifying a victim or survivor and explain foreseeable publication risks.
- Offer participants a text summary instead of graphic content.

Trainer debrief for Sheet 3

The fictional scenario contains a manipulated sexualised image, repeated posts and publication of a campaign worker's telephone number. Groups should separate verification, platform reporting, newsroom correction, security assessment and possible legal referral. Removal may be urgent, but preservation of evidence should occur first where safely possible. Public rebuttal should avoid republishing the image or exposing the telephone number.

Slovakia and Czechia research example

The 2025 study by MEMO 98 and Women in Media examined gendered disinformation in Slovakia and Czechia across key political events from 2022 to 2025, including the 2024 European Parliament elections. Its analysis covered more than 8,600 public social-media posts that together recorded more than 16 million views. The posts either contained defined gendered-disinformation keywords or featured or quoted actors identified by the research. These figures describe the study dataset and platform-reported views. They do not represent the number of unique people exposed or the prevalence of gendered disinformation across the whole information environment.

The study also incorporated interviews with 21 experts and reported results from a Women in Media survey of Czech journalists. Within that survey, 71 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men reported a decrease in self-esteem following attacks. Reported forms of online abuse included disinformation attacks at 25 per cent, defamation at 19 per cent, and harassment or stalking at 10 per cent. Trainers must present these as findings from the cited survey sample, not as population estimates for all journalists in Czechia or the wider region.

One documented narrative misrepresented the Istanbul Convention as promoting so-called "gender ideology" and falsely linked it to same-sex marriage or mandatory sex education. Use this example to show how a treaty on preventing and combating violence against women can be reframed as a threat to identity, sovereignty or family life. Examine the factual claim, narrative frame, political context and distribution separately. Avoid naming individual targets or reproducing abusive content. The wider research describes attacks on women in politics and journalism and on LGBTQ+ people and illustrates how gender or sexuality may overlap with ethnicity, religion or another minority status.

Social pluralism and intersectional exclusion

SESSION METHOD Voice and source map using Sheet 4 | TIME 10, 15 or 20 minutes

Social pluralism

Social pluralism concerns the range of social experiences, communities, regions, languages, beliefs and interests represented in public communication. It can be examined through programme diversity, geographical coverage, sources, topics, language and access by different groups.

Count who appears, then ask what role each person occupies and what topics they may address. A programme may include women or minority speakers mainly as victims while relying on majority men as experts and decision-makers. Numerical presence can coexist with limited agency.

Intersectional analysis

Intersectionality examines how overlapping characteristics and structures produce distinct barriers. A Roma woman candidate, a young politician with a disability or an LGBTQ+ journalist in a rural area may experience patterns that cannot be understood by examining one characteristic alone.

Use aggregate categories only when they answer a defined question and can be recorded lawfully and reliably. Self-identification is preferable. Do not guess ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity from names, images or speech.

Trainer debrief for Sheet 4

Participants should identify missing voices and the roles assigned to those present. A responsible response might diversify sources, commission reporting from undercovered regions, provide interpretation or accessibility, and review booking practices. It should not impose a predetermined viewpoint or use token representatives as substitutes for substantive reporting.

Accessibility and voter information

SESSION METHOD Accessibility test using Sheet 5 | TIME 10, 15 or 20 minutes

Accessibility chain

Stage	Checks
Find	Clear titles, predictable location, searchable text, timely publication and workable links.
Perceive	Captions, transcripts, sign-language provision where appropriate, alt text, contrast, readable type and audio description for essential visual information.
Understand	Plain language, translated or minority-language information where needed, explained deadlines and examples.
Act	Accessible forms, keyboard navigation, sufficient time, contact alternatives and help routes.
Verify	Date, issuing authority, version, correction notice and consistent information across channels.

Editorial and institutional responsibility

EMBs have a direct responsibility to make official voter information accessible. Media should consider accessibility in debates, interviews, election explainers and digital publishing. Platforms and other intermediaries influence whether accessibility features survive distribution. Candidates and parties also shape participation through accessible campaign communication.

Guidance for trainers

Give groups one fictional EMB notice, television clip transcript or social-media card. Ask them to complete a task as a voter using only the supplied information. Do not turn accessibility into a checklist detached from users: ask which person encounters the barrier, what information is lost and how the design can be corrected.

Monitoring inclusive coverage

SESSION METHOD Monitoring design using Sheet 6 | TIME 15, 20 or 30 minutes

Minimum coding framework

Field	Record
Item	Unique item number, outlet or account, programme or post, date, time, URL and coder.
Topic	Main subject of the item and relevant electoral issue.
Source	Each person, organisation or document quoted, paraphrased or otherwise relied upon.
Voice	Social or professional group represented by each source and whether the person speaks directly.
Gender	Gender category only when defined by the methodology and supported by reliable information or self-identification. Record unknown rather than guessing.
Area	Geographical origin or focus, including national, regional, local or outside the country.
Actor and role	Candidate, party, official, expert, journalist, voter, civil-society representative or other role.
Identity category	Only categories defined by the methodology and supported by reliable data or self-identification. Include unknown rather than guessing.
Visibility	Duration, words, appearances, posts, prominence and direct speech.
Topic and function	Policy topic, electoral issue and whether the actor appears as decision-maker, expert, advocate, victim or witness.

Field	Record
Portrayal	Relevant policy scrutiny, stereotype, appearance or family focus, sexualisation, misgendering, discriminatory framing or other defined indicator.
Online harm	False claim, manipulated media, slur, threat, doxxing, impersonation, harassment pattern and amplification indicator.
Accessibility	Captions, transcript, interpretation, alt text, readable format, language and correction information.

The six fields Item, Topic, Source, Voice, Gender and Area provide a practical minimum drawn from the social-pluralism monitoring approach used in the source materials. Add prominence, direct speech, portrayal, accessibility or online-harm variables when the research question requires them. “Voice” identifies the social group and agency of the source; it is not the same as tone.

Denominators and comparisons

Compare like with like. Candidate coverage should be read against candidate composition and political relevance. Source diversity may use all quoted sources as the denominator. Online abuse studies may compare posts, targets or engagements, but these answer different questions. State the unit and denominator beside every percentage.

Quality control and reporting

Coding discipline

- Define indicators with positive and negative examples. Distinguish stereotype, criticism, insult, false claim, discriminatory expression and threat.
- Train coders on borderline cases and double-code a sample. Record disagreement and revise unclear definitions.
- Separate the journalist's narration, a quoted speaker and user comments. Responsibility and analytical meaning differ.
- Record unavailable or unknown identity information. Never fill a data gap by inference.
- Combine counts with close reading. A small number of prominent, sexualised attacks may matter even when the overall tone variable appears neutral.
- Protect targets and coders. Limit exposure, rotate difficult material, provide breaks and establish escalation routes.

Writing findings

Use three layers:

1. Observation: what the sample recorded.

2. Assessment: the pattern and the standard used.

3. Attribution or impact: only what evidence can support.

Example: "Within the monitored prime-time sample, women comprised 31 per cent of candidate speaking time, compared with 42 per cent of registered candidates. They were more frequently questioned about family responsibilities. The sample indicates unequal framing; it does not establish that the pattern changed voting behaviour."

Trainer debrief for Sheet 6

The proposed study should combine quantitative visibility with direct voice, topic, role and portrayal. Its online component should sample content and behaviour rather than equate engagement with public opinion. A short methodology and limitations statement is part of the result, not an appendix to be forgotten.

Editorial and institutional responses

SESSION METHOD Multi-role response simulation using Sheet 7 | TIME 5 or 15 minutes

Response ladder

1. Preserve necessary evidence and protect personal data.

2. Verify the content, source, target, distribution and applicable rule.

3. Assess urgency, especially credible threats, doxxing, stalking and election-day voter suppression.

4. Contact and support the target without placing the entire response burden on them.

5. Correct or contextualise false claims without unnecessary repetition.

6. Use platform, editorial, regulatory, equality, electoral, civil or criminal routes according to mandate and threshold.

7. Explain the decision, offer review and monitor recurrence or displacement.

Audience decisions

Audience	Practical task
Regulator or supervisory authority	Determine jurisdiction, threshold, urgency, evidence and a proportionate remedy while protecting political debate.
EMB	Deliver accessible neutral information, protect staff and candidates within mandate, and refer threats or media matters appropriately.
Judge or lawyer	Test equality, expression, privacy, safety, due process and effective remedy on the established facts.
Policymaker	Remove accessibility and enforcement gaps without vague speech restrictions or identity surveillance.
Journalist or media practitioner	Diversify voices, challenge stereotypes, verify manipulated material and report abuse without amplifying it.
Civil society or observer	Monitor consistently, support targets, document institutional response and distinguish advocacy from legal findings.

Cases, learning check and next steps

SESSION METHOD Case comparison and individual exit task | TIME 5, 10 or 15 minutes

Case comparison

Visibility without voice

A broadcaster includes women candidates in short visual sequences but reserves most interviews and policy questions for male party leaders. The issue concerns direct voice, prominence and political role, not presence alone.

Manipulated intimate image

A fabricated image targets a woman candidate and spreads through anonymous accounts. The response requires verification, evidence preservation, safety assessment and restrained correction. Do not republish the image merely to demonstrate falsity.

Inaccessible voter information

An EMB posts a deadline only in an image with small text and no accessible alternative. The information is formally public but not equally usable. Rapid correction should cover the website, social channels, broadcasters and help services.

Five-question check

1. What is the difference between visibility and direct voice?

2. Which contextual information is necessary before comparing women's and men's share of candidate coverage?

3. What distinguishes gendered disinformation from sexist abuse?

4. Name two urgent indicators in an online-harm assessment.

5. Why should unknown identity data remain unknown?

Suggested answers

Visibility means appearing; direct voice means speaking through a quotation, interview or uninterrupted contribution. Candidate composition, political standing and programme type are needed for comparison. Gendered disinformation contains a false or misleading element using gendered narratives; sexist abuse need not contain a factual claim. Credible threats, doxxing, stalking, location disclosure or rapid targeted escalation may create urgency. Unknown data should remain unknown because inferred sensitive characteristics are unreliable, intrusive and analytically misleading.

Training of trainers' guidance and assessment

Module-specific facilitation

Establish respectful language and a safe participation protocol before discussing discrimination, gendered abuse or violence. Do not require participants to disclose personal experiences. Common mistakes include measuring presence without voice, treating women or minority groups as homogeneous, reproducing abusive material unnecessarily, and reporting individual examples without showing the broader pattern. Use aggregate evidence and fictionalised cases unless identification serves a clear purpose and the affected person's safety has been considered.

Audience-specific application

Regulators and policymakers should examine systemic inclusion and available safeguards. EMBs should test accessibility and minority-language voter information. Journalists should revise sourcing, framing and newsroom response. Lawyers should analyse equality, expression and protection duties. Civil society and observers should code visibility, voice, portrayal and abuse while protecting affected persons.

Assessment and evaluation

Use a baseline prompt asking who is visible, who speaks and who remains absent. Assess the visibility-and-voice analysis, gendered-disinformation scenario, accessibility check, minimum coding framework and response plan. The case comparison and learning check provide the exit assessment.

Evidence of learning and trainer reflection

Participants meet the objective when they distinguish presence from meaningful voice, identify intersectional exclusion, propose accessible communication, code abuse without reproducing it, and select a safety-centred response. Invite an anonymous feedback response on whether the exercise felt safe and usable. Trainers should document accessibility barriers in the session itself and correct them before reuse.

Audience adaptation

Audience	Emphasis	Best technique	Output
Regulators and supervisory authorities	Mandate, evidence, thresholds, accessibility and proportionate remedies	Complaint triage and reasoned decision	Short assessment with referral or remedy
EMBs	Accessible voter information, neutrality, staff safety and coordination	Accessibility journey and incident simulation	Accessible communication and escalation plan
Judges, lawyers and policymakers	Inter-related rights, discrimination, privacy, due process and legal certainty	Moot review or legislative clinic	Structured legal test or revised provision
Journalists and media practitioners	Source diversity, portrayal, verification, newsroom safety and correction	Editorial conference	Revised story, headline and safety protocol
Civil society and observers	Sampling, documentation, target support and responsible reporting	Monitoring-design lab	Codebook, sample and limitations statement

Mixed groups

Give each professional group the same facts but a different mandate. Ask groups to state what they can do, what they cannot do and which actor should receive a referral. The plenary should expose responsibility gaps without assuming that one institution controls the whole information environment.

Facilitation safeguards

Do not invite participants to disclose personal experiences. Challenge discriminatory statements without turning a targeted participant into the group's educator. Establish ground rules on confidentiality and respectful terminology. If a scenario resembles a live case, remove unnecessary identifiers and avoid prejudging proceedings.

Recommended resources

1. Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)12 on electoral communication and media coverage of election campaigns.

2. Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media.

3. Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism.

4. Council of Europe, Study on media coverage of elections with a specific focus on gender equality, 2017.

5. European Convention on Human Rights, Articles 10 and 14, and Article 3 of Protocol No. 1.

6. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly Articles 9, 21 and 29.

7. OSCE/ODIHR, Handbook on Observing and Promoting Women's Electoral Participation, second edition, 2023.

8. OSCE/ODIHR, Handbook on Media Monitoring for Election Observation Missions, 2012.

9. OSCE/ODIHR, Guidelines for Observation of Election Campaigns on Social Networks, 2021.

10. Elections in Digital Times: A Guide for Electoral Practitioners, supplied project resource.

11. Gendered Disinformation in Slovakia and Czechia, supplied research and long-form reports.

12. NDI, Violence Against Women in Elections: Media Monitoring tool, 2016.

Final trainer note

Update national law, institutional contacts, platform reporting routes and accessibility practice before delivery. Keep participant sheets free of outcomes. The module succeeds when participants can identify a barrier precisely, describe the evidence and select a response that improves participation without sacrificing lawful political debate.

Module 7: Inclusive and responsible coverage

Training material to be shared with participants

CONTENTS

SHEET 1 INCLUSION AND RIGHTS MAP 21

SHEET 2 VISIBILITY, VOICE AND PORTRAYAL 22

SHEET 3 GENDERED DISINFORMATION AND ONLINE ABUSE 23

SHEET 4 SOCIAL PLURALISM 24

SHEET 5 ACCESSIBILITY TEST 25

SHEET 6 MONITORING DESIGN 26

SHEET 6 DATA INTERPRETATION 27

SHEET 7 INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE 28

EXIT TASK 29

These exercises help you assess participation, representation, safety and accessibility in electoral communication. Work from the facts supplied. Distinguish observation, assessment and legal conclusion. Do not infer personal characteristics that the evidence does not establish.

Instructions

- Use the standards and national law provided by the trainer.
- Do not repeat abusive language or display harmful images unless essential to the assessment.
- Treat names, accounts and records in the scenarios as fictional.
- Record uncertainty and identify missing evidence.
- In mixed groups, work within the mandate assigned to your role.

Ground rules

No participant must disclose personal experience or political opinion. You may request a text-only alternative to distressing content. Preserve confidentiality during discussion.

Sheet 1 Inclusion and rights map

Scenario

A national election debate is broadcast live and streamed online. The venue is inaccessible to a candidate who uses a wheelchair. The broadcaster offers remote participation but the connection is less reliable and excludes the candidate from informal follow-up exchanges. The programme has no live captions. A minority-language candidate receives interpretation only after repeated requests.

Task

For each issue, record:

1. The affected person or public interest.
2. The relevant dimension: access, presence, agency, safety or dignity.
3. The information needed before reaching a conclusion.
4. The actor able to prevent or correct the barrier.
5. A response that preserves editorial independence and meaningful participation.

Sheet 2 Visibility, voice and portrayal

Two coverage profiles

Profile A gives Candidate A 90 seconds of direct speech on taxation, experience and coalition plans. The presenter challenges the cost of the proposals.

Profile B gives Candidate B 25 seconds of direct speech. The introduction describes clothing, age and family arrangements. Two commentators discuss whether the candidate is likeable and emotionally suited to leadership. One policy proposal appears only in paraphrase.

Assume the candidates hold comparable positions in parties with similar electoral support.

Questions

1. Compare visibility, direct voice, prominence, topic and scrutiny.
2. Which features of Profile B are relevant to a finding on stereotyping or unequal framing?
3. Which criticism would remain legitimate even if expressed firmly?
4. Rewrite Profile B's introduction and first two questions using comparable editorial standards.
5. What additional sample would you need before making a finding about the outlet as a whole?

Sheet 3 Gendered disinformation and online abuse

Scenario

Three days before voting, anonymous accounts circulate a manipulated sexualised image of a woman candidate with a false claim about how she obtained office. Several accounts repeat identical text. One post publishes the telephone number of a campaign worker. A high-profile commentator shares a blurred version while condemning the attack, leading many users to search for the original.

Questions

1. Separate the observable facts from the assessments that still require evidence.
2. Identify the stereotype, false claim, manipulated media, harassment indicators and safety concern.
3. Which action is urgent and who should take it?
4. What evidence should be preserved, and what personal data should be restricted?
5. Draft a correction that does not reproduce the image or false allegation.
6. Does identical wording prove coordination? Explain what further evidence is needed.

Sheet 4 Social pluralism

Scenario

During one week, a public broadcaster airs 20 election stories. Its sources include 18 national politicians, 9 government officials, 6 business representatives, 3 civil-society representatives and 12 voters. Most expert sources are men from the capital. Women appear mainly as voters discussing household costs. One Roma representative appears in a story about public disorder. No person with a disability speaks directly. Regional stories use national commentators rather than local sources.

Questions

1. Which groups are present, absent or confined to narrow roles?

2. Which quantitative counts would help, and which qualitative indicators are necessary?

3. What can and cannot be concluded from one week?

4. Suggest four changes to source selection or production practice without prescribing a political viewpoint.

5. Which identity information should not be inferred by a monitor?

Basic coding task

Code the scenario using six fields: Item, Topic, Source, Voice, Gender and Area. For each source, record whether the person speaks directly and the social or professional role represented. Use unknown when gender or another identity characteristic cannot be recorded reliably.

Sheet 5 Accessibility test

Voter notice

The EMB publishes the final registration deadline in a social-media image. The image contains small text, low contrast and no alt text. The linked page is a scanned PDF. A video repeats the information without captions. The telephone helpline operates only during standard working hours. A later correction changes the required document but remains on a separate page.

Task

Test the chain: find, perceive, understand, act and verify.

1. Identify the barrier at each stage.
2. Who may be excluded or delayed?
3. Which corrections must occur immediately?
4. Draft a short accessible notice containing the deadline, required document, source, date and help route.
5. Propose one check that would prevent inconsistent versions.

Sheet 6 Monitoring design

Research question

Does campaign coverage provide women and men candidates with comparable opportunities to speak on substantive issues, and does online discussion expose women candidates to distinct patterns of gendered abuse or disinformation?

Design your study

Define:

- media and platform sample;
- monitoring period and collection frequency;
- unit of analysis;
- the minimum fields Item, Topic, Source, Voice, Gender and Area;
- actor and role categories and whether each source speaks directly;
- method for recording gender without guessing;
- visibility, direct speech, prominence, topic, tone and portrayal variables;
- online content and behaviour indicators;
- denominators for each percentage;
- quality-control and coder-welfare measures;
- ethical limits and personal-data safeguards.

Sheet 6 Data interpretation

Fictional results

Women comprise 40 per cent of registered candidates in the monitored parties. In prime-time candidate coverage they receive 29 per cent of speaking time and 18 per cent of live interviews. Twelve per cent of items about women mention appearance or family status, compared with 2 per cent of items about men. The online sample records 600 posts mentioning women candidates, of which 90 meet the project's gendered-abuse definition. The posts generate 25,000 interactions.

Questions

1. Which comparisons are valid and which require more information?
2. What does the 29 per cent figure show? What does it not show?
3. Can 25,000 interactions be described as 25,000 people or as public opinion?
4. What information is needed about party standing, programme type, post selection and unique users?
5. Write one observation sentence, one assessment sentence and one limitations sentence.

Sheet 7 Institutional response

Scenario

An election monitor refers the Sheet 3 material to several institutions. The media regulator can assess broadcaster conduct but not anonymous platform users. The EMB controls official voter information and candidate liaison but has no removal power. Police request evidence of credible threats. The platform offers reporting routes for impersonation, intimate imagery and personal-information exposure. A newsroom plans a report.

Role task

Work as a regulator, EMB, lawyer or judge, policymaker, newsroom, or civil-society observer.

1. State your mandate and its limits.
2. Identify the evidence you need.
3. Select immediate and longer-term actions.
4. Explain how you will protect freedom of expression, privacy, safety and due process.
5. Identify the referral needed from another actor.
6. Prepare a two-minute reasoned decision or action plan.

Exit task

Complete individually.

1. Explain the difference between visibility and direct voice.
2. Name two variables that reveal portrayal rather than quantity.
3. Distinguish gendered disinformation from sexist abuse.
4. Identify two indicators that can make an online incident urgent.
5. Explain why monitors should record an identity category as unknown rather than infer it.
6. Name one improvement you will make in your professional practice.

Personal action note

The barrier I will examine:

The evidence I will collect:

The person or organisation I should consult:

The practical change I can make:

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW



DROITS DE L'HOMME, DÉMOCRATIE ET ÉTAT DE DROIT

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

MODULE 7
INCLUSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE COVERAGE

Purpose and learning outcomes

- Explain inclusion as a condition for informed electoral participation
- Distinguish visibility, direct voice, prominence and portrayal
- Identify gendered disinformation, discriminatory narratives and safety risks
- Assess accessibility across media formats and platforms
- Design monitoring that combines disaggregated data with contextual analysis
- Select an ethical response within the responsible actor's mandate

90, 120 AND 180 MINUTE ROUTES

Inclusion in electoral communication

ACCESS	Can voters find, receive and understand election information?
PRESENCE	Are different groups visible as candidates, experts, officials and voters?
AGENCY	Do people speak directly, or are they mainly described by others?
SAFETY AND DIGNITY	Can people participate without discrimination, intimidation or avoidable harm?

Interrelated rights and responsibilities

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Political debate includes speech that may shock or offend.

EQUALITY AND PARTICIPATION

Barriers and discriminatory treatment can silence participation.

FREE ELECTIONS

Voters need plural, accessible information to make a choice.

Read these principles together. None operates as an automatic trump card.

Sheet 1 scenario

A live election debate creates four possible barriers.

VENUE	A candidate who uses a wheelchair cannot enter
REMOTE ACCESS	The alternative connection is unreliable
CAPTIONS	The programme offers no live captions
LANGUAGE	Interpretation follows only after repeated requests

GROUP TASK | SHEET 1 | 10–20 MINUTES

Visibility, voice and portrayal

VISIBILITY	How much time, space or share of items?	**DIRECT VOICE**	Who receives quotations, interviews or uninterrupted speech?
PROMINENCE	Headlines and high-audience slots, or marginal placement?	**TOPICS**	Who discusses policy, leadership, family or identity?
PORTRAYAL	Competence and record, or stereotypes and personal traits?	**SCRUTINY**	Do comparable actors face comparable, relevant challenge?

SOURCE AUDIT | SHEET 2 | 15–30 MINUTES

Gender-responsive comparison

CANDIDATE COMPOSITION	COVERAGE SHARE	EDITORIAL CONTEXT
Who is standing and with what political relevance?	**Time, space, direct speech and interviews**	**Programme type, selection rules, topic and scrutiny**

A percentage has meaning only when its denominator and comparison are clear.

Two profiles, unequal framing

PROFILE A

90 seconds of direct speech on taxation, experience and coalition plans. The presenter challenges costs.

PROFILE B

25 seconds of direct speech. The introduction focuses on clothing, age and family. Policy appears only in paraphrase.

Gendered harm: working distinctions

GENDER STEREOTYPE	Assigns competence, morality or social roles according to gender
SEXIST OR SEXUALISED ABUSE	Degrades through sex, sexuality, body, family status or gender expression
GENDERED DISINFORMATION	Uses a false or misleading claim and a gendered narrative
SYNTHETIC MEDIA	Fabricates or alters an account, voice, image or video
HARASSMENT CAMPAIGN	Shows repetition, targeting, pile-on behaviour or cross-platform migration

Evidence and attribution

OBSERVABLE CONTENT	Post, image, wording, account and time
CONTEXT	Target, conversation, platform and election phase
PATTERN	Repetition, distribution and linked accounts
TECHNICAL INDICATORS	Provenance, alteration or automation evidence
ATTRIBUTION	Only when evidence supports the actor or organiser

Similar opinions or shared wording alone do not prove coordination.

Urgency depends on harm and specificity

REACH AND SPEED

Repetition and rapid amplification can intensify reputational and participatory harm.

SPECIFICITY AND DANGER

An address, telephone number, stalking indicator or credible threat may require immediate action even at low reach.

Assess both. Do not use engagement as the sole measure of harm.

Do not reproduce the harm

- Capture only the evidence needed and restrict personal data
- Avoid repeating slurs, intimate images or false allegations in headlines
- Offer a text summary instead of graphic material
- Seek informed consent before identifying a victim or survivor
- Preserve evidence before removal where this can be done safely

Manipulated-image scenario

Anonymous accounts circulate a manipulated sexualised image and a false claim about a woman candidate three days before voting.

- Several accounts repeat identical wording
- One post publishes a campaign worker's telephone number
- A commentator shares a blurred version while condemning the attack
- The condemnation drives users to search for the original

Slovakia and Czechia research example

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

The study examined more than 8,600 public posts across political events from 2022 to 2025. Platform-reported views exceeded 16 million.

SURVEY FINDING

71% of women and 38% of men in the cited Czech journalist survey reported decreased self-esteem after attacks.

These figures describe the study dataset and survey sample. They do not estimate prevalence across the whole information environment.

Narrative example: the Istanbul Convention

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

A documented narrative misrepresented the Convention as promoting "gender ideology" and linked it falsely to same-sex marriage or mandatory sex education.

FACTUAL CLAIM	What can the source text verify?
NARRATIVE FRAME	How is equality recast as a threat to identity or family?
POLITICAL CONTEXT	Which event or dispute gives the claim salience?
DISTRIBUTION	How does the message travel and who amplifies it?

Social pluralism

Social pluralism concerns the social experiences, communities, regions, languages, beliefs and interests represented in public communication.

COUNT PRESENCE	EXAMINE ROLE	ASSESS AGENCY
Who appears?	Expert, leader, victim, witness or voter?	Who speaks directly and about which topics?

Intersectional exclusion

Overlapping characteristics and structures can create a distinct barrier that one category alone cannot explain.

- Use categories only when they answer a defined research question
- Prefer self-identification and reliable aggregate data
- Record unknown instead of guessing from names, images or speech
- Protect sensitive personal information and avoid unnecessary exposure

Social pluralism coding

ITEM	Outlet, programme or post, date and identifier	**TOPIC**	Main subject and electoral issue
SOURCE	Person, organisation or document relied upon	**VOICE**	Social group, role and whether the source speaks directly
GENDER	Defined category supported by reliable information	**AREA**	National, regional, local or outside the country

BASIC CODING TASK | SHEET 4 | 10–20 MINUTES

Accessibility chain

FIND	Clear titles, timely publication, searchable text and workable links
PERCEIVE	Captions, transcripts, alt text, contrast and audio description
UNDERSTAND	Plain language, relevant translations and explained deadlines
ACT	Accessible forms, keyboard navigation, time and help routes
VERIFY	Date, authority, version, correction notice and consistency

Responsibilities along the information chain

EMB	Accessible, neutral and consistent official voter information
MEDIA	Accessible debates, interviews, explainers and digital publishing
PLATFORMS	Preserve accessibility features during distribution
PARTIES AND CANDIDATES	Provide campaign communication that people can use

Voter-notice accessibility test

The EMB publishes the registration deadline only in a low-contrast social-media image.

- No alt text and a scanned PDF at the link
- The video has no captions
- The helpline operates only during standard working hours
- A correction changes the required document on a separate page

Inclusive-coverage monitoring record

IDENTIFICATION	Outlet, programme, date, URL and coder	**ACTOR AND ROLE**	Candidate, official, expert, voter or other role
VISIBILITY	Duration, words, prominence and direct speech	**TOPIC AND FUNCTION**	Issue and role as decision-maker, expert, victim or witness
PORTRAYAL	Policy scrutiny, stereotype, sexualisation or discriminatory framing	**ACCESSIBILITY AND HARM**	Format barriers, false claim, threat or amplification indicator

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

MONITORING DESIGN | SHEET 6 | 20–30 MINUTES

Denominators and comparisons

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

CANDIDATE COVERAGE

Compare with candidacy, standing and programme format.

SOURCE DIVERSITY

Use all quoted sources or another declared unit.

ONLINE ABUSE

Posts, targets, views and interactions answer different questions.

State the unit and denominator beside every percentage.

Quality control and coder welfare

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

- Define each indicator with positive and negative examples
- Train coders on borderline cases and double-code a sample
- Separate journalist narration, quoted speech and user comments
- Combine counts with close reading of prominent or severe cases
- Limit exposure to abusive material, rotate difficult work and provide breaks
- Document unknown data, disagreements and methodological limitations

Three layers of reporting

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

OBSERVATION	What the defined sample recorded
ASSESSMENT	The pattern and the standard used
ATTRIBUTION OR IMPACT	Only what the available evidence can support

"Within the monitored prime-time sample, women received 31% of candidate speaking time, compared with 42% of registered candidates."

DATA INTERPRETATION | SHEET 6 | 20–30 MINUTES

Response ladder

1. Preserve necessary evidence and protect personal data
2. Verify content, source, target, distribution and rule
3. Assess urgency, especially threats, doxxing and stalking
4. Contact and support the target
5. Correct false claims without unnecessary repetition
6. Use the competent platform, editorial, regulatory or legal route
7. Explain the decision, offer review and monitor recurrence

One incident, different mandates

REGULATOR	Jurisdiction, threshold, evidence and remedy	**EMB**	Accessible information, liaison and referral
LAWYER OR JUDGE	Expression, equality, privacy, safety and due process	**POLICYMAKER**	Close gaps without vague restrictions or identity surveillance
JOURNALIST	Verify, diversify voices and avoid amplification	**CIVIL SOCIETY / OBSERVER**	Monitor, support targets and distinguish advocacy from legal findings

Three cases for comparison

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

VISIBILITY WITHOUT VOICE	Women appear in short sequences while male leaders receive most interviews
MANIPULATED INTIMATE IMAGE	A fabricated image spreads through anonymous accounts
INACCESSIBLE VOTER INFORMATION	An EMB publishes a deadline only in an image with no accessible alternative

Learning check

- What is the difference between visibility and direct voice?
- Which context is needed before comparing women's and men's coverage shares?
- What distinguishes gendered disinformation from sexist abuse?
- Name two indicators that can make an online incident urgent
- Why should unknown identity data remain unknown?

INDIVIDUAL EXIT TASK | 5–10 MINUTES

Audience adaptation

REGULATORS	Complaint triage and a reasoned decision
EMBs	Accessibility journey and incident simulation
LAWYERS / POLICYMAKERS	Moot review or legislative clinic
JOURNALISTS	Editorial conference and safety protocol
CIVIL SOCIETY / OBSERVERS	Monitoring-design laboratory

Trainer preparation and safeguards

- Map underrepresented groups and consult affected organisations before delivery
- Adapt identity terms and examples to the national context
- Provide printed, digital, large-print and screen-reader-friendly materials
- Set confidentiality and non-disclosure ground rules
- Offer non-exposure alternatives for distressing content
- Prepare a referral protocol for threats, doxxing or stalking

Key messages

- Inclusion concerns access, presence, agency, safety and dignity
- Headcounts need context on voice, prominence, topic and portrayal
- Accessibility and reasonable accommodation remove barriers to participation
- Gendered disinformation combines a misleading claim with gendered narratives
- Monitoring must protect sensitive data and state its denominators and limits
- Responses should preserve evidence, protect targets and avoid amplifying harm

END OF MODULE 7