Module 9: Good practices response strategies and building resilience

Training material to be shared with trainers only

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This module turns the standards, monitoring findings and case lessons from Modules 2–8 into practical arrangements for prevention, timely response and institutional learning. It does not prescribe one model for every country. Participants should build measures around the national legal framework, institutional mandates, media environment, platform use and identified electoral risks.

Use the separate participant workbook for all activities. Keep suggested outcomes and debriefs in this trainer document. A response protocol should protect voters and participants without creating an informal authority to decide political truth, direct editorial choices or bypass legal safeguards.

Trainer overview

Module objective

Enable participants to design lawful, coordinated and proportionate responses to problems in electoral communication; communicate verified findings clearly; convert monitoring into usable recommendations; and establish review, preparedness and learning arrangements that strengthen resilience across election cycles.

Learning outcomes

- Explain resilience as the capacity to anticipate, withstand, respond to and learn from disruption while preserving rights.
- Translate risk assessments into responsibilities, evidence rules and escalation thresholds.
- Distinguish monitoring, urgent voter protection, enforcement, platform action and longer-term reform.
- Draft timely, accessible and evidence-based corrections and public updates.
- Convert monitoring into concise findings with relevant examples and clear limitations.
- Draft implementable recommendations and turn after-action lessons into tested improvements.

Session techniques and methods

Cycle mapping; protocol clinic; escalation and correction exercises; report editing; recommendation test; multi-stakeholder simulation; after-action review. Mixed groups work from the same evidence while retaining different mandates.

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 condensed and standard routes use the short capstone simulation in Sheet 8a; the extended route uses the full simulation in Sheet 8b and adds a written institutional action plan.

Relationship to other modules

Module 1 introduces the core concepts and actors. Modules 2–7 provide the legal, fairness, monitoring, manipulation, platform and inclusion foundations. Module 8 supplies incident classification, evidence discipline and remedy selection. Module 9 asks what institutions and practitioners should prepare before an election, do during an incident and improve after the election.

Preparation and route selection

Trainer checklist

- Prepare a national responsibility map covering regulators, EMBs, campaign-finance and data-protection authorities, courts, law enforcement, equality bodies, public service media, press councils, platforms, journalists' organisations, fact-checkers, researchers, civil society and observers.

- Verify current laws, platform routes and institutional contact points shortly before delivery. Separate binding duties from voluntary cooperation and informal practice.
- Select two or three recurring risks from the national context. Include at least one traditional-media and one digital-environment issue.
- Prepare a neutral evidence packet with timestamps, source records, monitoring data and missing-information notes. Remove unnecessary personal data and harmful material.
- Ask whether existing protocols include accessibility, minority languages, gendered attacks, journalist safety and protection of confidential sources.
- Define who may issue authoritative voter information, who may assess media compliance and who may only refer or recommend.
- Prepare participant Sheets 1–7 and 8a–8b without the suggested debriefs in this document.
- Arrange a confidential route for participants who disclose a current threat or unresolved incident.

Route table

Session	90 min	120 min	180 min
1 Resilience cycle	10	10	15
2 Preparedness	15	20	25
3 Response protocols	15	20	30
4 Public communication	15	20	25
5 Reporting and recommendations	15	20	30
6 Media and civil society	5	10	15
7 Review and learning	5	10	15
8 Simulation and plan	10	10	25

For 90 minutes, use Sheets 1–4 and the short simulation in Sheet 8a. For 120 minutes, add the reporting and after-action exercises and retain Sheet 8a. For 180 minutes, complete every sheet, use the full simulation in Sheet 8b and require a written protocol and action plan.

Core messages that should remain constant

- Resilience is not the absence of conflict, criticism or harmful content. It is the ability to protect electoral rights and reliable information while institutions continue to act lawfully and credibly.
- Preparedness begins before the campaign. Mandates, contacts, evidence standards, accessibility needs and escalation thresholds should not be improvised during an incident.
- Cooperation does not merge mandates. Each participant should know what it can decide, what it can request and where it must refer.
- Rapid response must remain evidence based. Speed does not justify unsupported attribution, unnecessary removal, informal censorship or denial of due process.
- Authoritative voter information should come from the competent election body. Other actors can verify, contextualise, distribute and make it accessible without presenting themselves as the final legal authority.
- A correction should reach the affected audience through the channels where confusion occurred. Quietly changing a webpage may not reverse widely distributed false information.
- Monitoring has value when it produces timely, understandable and actionable findings. Volume of data is not a substitute for relevance or methodological transparency.
- A recommendation should address a demonstrated problem and identify who can act. It should not ask an institution to exercise powers it does not possess.
- Resilience requires inclusion. A response that does not reach linguistic minorities, persons with disabilities or groups targeted by harassment may deepen the original harm.
- Post-election review should examine institutional response as well as the originating incident. Record delays, gaps, successful cooperation and unintended effects.

Resilience as an election cycle

SESSION METHOD Cycle mapping using Sheet 1 | TIME 10 or 15 minutes

Four connected functions

Function	Practical question
Anticipate and reduce risk	What foreseeable weakness can be addressed before the campaign?
Withstand disruption	Which essential information and institutional functions must continue during pressure or failure?
Respond and recover	Who corrects, protects, preserves evidence, decides and communicates?
Learn and adapt	What must change in law, procedure, capacity, technology or professional practice?

Rights-based resilience

Measures should preserve freedom of expression, pluralism, privacy, political participation, non-discrimination and effective remedies. Building resilience does not mean removing every disputed statement. It means reducing vulnerabilities, improving reliable information and ensuring that lawful institutions can respond proportionately.

Guidance for trainers

Ask groups to place one lesson from Module 8 in each part of the cycle. The same event can produce different actions: an election-day correction, post-election investigation, revised cooperation protocol and future public-information campaign.

Preparedness and responsibility mapping

SESSION METHOD Protocol clinic using Sheet 2 | TIME 15, 20 or 25 minutes

Minimum preparedness map

Element	Questions to settle before the campaign
Risk picture	Which media and information risks are plausible, who may be affected and which services are essential?
Authority	Who has the legal power to decide, request information, order a remedy or hear an appeal?
Contact	Which named operational contact and backup are available during the election period?
Evidence	What information must be preserved, in which format, under which security and data rules?
Threshold	What triggers routine review, urgent escalation, safety intervention or public correction?
Communication	Who speaks, through which channels and in which accessible languages and formats?
Continuity	What happens during power, connectivity, staffing, cyber or platform-access failure?
Review	When will the protocol be tested, updated and evaluated?

Internal and external preparation

Internal preparation includes staffing, training, decision records, secure evidence handling, quality control, backup channels and approval rules. External preparation includes contact arrangements, referral forms, public explanations of mandates, cooperation exercises and predictable routes for complaints or urgent alerts.

Independence and safeguards

A cooperation arrangement should be public or capable of public explanation. It should identify the legal basis, participating bodies, information exchanged, data-retention rules, confidentiality, decision ownership, response time and review mechanism. Informal contact can speed up verification, but it must not permit political direction of journalism, secret content orders or transfer of protected data without authority.

Continuity and crisis planning

The International IDEA material on elections during emergencies emphasises comprehensive risk assessment, crisis procedures, contingency planning, adequate resources and post-event learning. Apply that logic to the information environment. Prepare for unavailable websites, compromised accounts, inaccessible platform tools, sudden staff absence, physical danger and overloaded complaint systems. Test backup publication and verification channels before the election.

Trainer debrief for Sheet 2

The strongest maps make gaps visible. If no body can compel platform data, record that limitation and prepare preservation requests, voluntary contacts and referrals; do not pretend that a cooperation agreement creates legal power. If two bodies share responsibility, set the handover point and who communicates during the gap.

Response protocols and coordination

SESSION METHOD Escalation exercise using Sheet 3 | TIME 15, 20 or 30 minutes

Common response sequence

1. Receive and log the alert with time, source and handling restrictions.
2. Preserve the original evidence and verify essential context.
3. Classify the issue, affected right, urgency and confidence level.
4. Identify the competent decision-maker and any immediate protection duty.
5. Select the least restrictive effective response available in time.
6. Refer only the questions that fall within another body's mandate.
7. Communicate what is known, unknown and being done.
8. Record reasons, review the result and retain material lawfully.

Escalation levels

Level	Typical condition	Response posture
Routine	Limited harm, reversible, no immediate safety or voting risk	Log, verify, monitor and address through ordinary procedure.
Priority	Recurring or growing problem with credible evidence	Accelerate assessment, contact relevant actor and prepare corrective action or referral.
Urgent	Specific threat, false voting instruction, major service failure or rapidly irreversible harm	Protect people or voter access immediately, preserve evidence, activate senior contacts and publish verified information.

Level	Typical condition	Response posture
Systemic	Repeated incidents reveal a structural design, capacity or accountability failure	Combine immediate response with investigation, oversight and reform planning.

Urgency and evidence

Escalation level and evidence level are independent. A claim can require an urgent response—protecting voters or a threatened journalist—while the underlying matter is still only a suspected incident. Do not wait for a legal determination before taking immediate protective action, and do not let urgency turn a signal into a verified fact.

Coordination without a ministry of truth

No coordination group should decide which political opinions are acceptable. Its legitimate functions may include verifying official electoral facts, routing evidence, protecting people, coordinating lawful institutional action and explaining procedures. Each body remains responsible for its own decision and reasons.

Information-sharing test

Before sharing information, ask: Is sharing necessary for a defined task? Does the recipient have a relevant mandate? What minimum data are required? Are sources, journalists, complainants and targeted persons protected? Must the subject receive notice? How long may the information be retained? Can the exchange and resulting action be reviewed?

Lessons from earlier modules

- Croatia 2009: an over-rigid remedy may reduce useful information; protocols should include proportionality and editorial-independence checks.
- Ukraine 2019 monitoring (CoE-commissioned methodology and training, Kužel and Burmahin, ahead of the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections): a monitoring project conducted in an active hybrid-conflict information environment shows why changes to a sample or method must be documented and their effect disclosed, rather than left to appear as concealed operational pressure.
- Romania 2024: evidence preservation may be urgent even when the final legal and causal assessment requires more time.
- Slovakia 2024: voluntary platform responses may arrive too late; distinguish a contact route from an enforceable information power.

Trainer debrief for Sheet 3

Reward groups that define decision ownership and limits. A referral saying “please investigate” is weaker than one identifying the incident, rule question, evidence, urgency and requested act. Require a record of both action and inaction.

Public communication and corrective action

SESSION METHOD Correction-writing laboratory using Sheet 4 | TIME 15, 20 or 25 minutes

Communication principles

Public communication should be accurate, timely, accessible and limited to what the institution can establish. It should name the authoritative source, explain the practical action voters should take and state when the next update will follow. Avoid repeating a falsehood in a dramatic headline, speculating about motive or claiming that an investigation has already established a violation.

Correction structure

Component	Example function
Verified position	State the correct voting information or confirmed fact first.
Source and time	Identify the responsible authority and when the information was verified.
Practical instruction	Tell voters where to check, vote, register or obtain assistance.

Component	Example function
Reach and accessibility	Publish through relevant broadcast, online and direct channels in usable formats and languages.
Uncertainty	Separate unresolved allegations from established facts.
Next update	Give a realistic time or condition for further information.

Choosing the messenger

The EMB should normally lead on voting procedures and official results. Regulators explain their own proceedings and decisions. Newsrooms correct their reporting and retain editorial responsibility. Civil society and fact-checkers can verify and extend reach, especially among communities that do not follow official accounts. Platforms should explain labels, restrictions and routes for review where their policies or legal duties require it.

Prebunking correction and media literacy

Prebunking can explain predictable manipulation techniques and reliable verification routes before false claims spread. It should not label lawful opposition arguments as disinformation or tell voters whom to trust politically. Focus on methods such as impersonation, false deadlines, decontextualised images, fabricated documents and undisclosed sponsorship.

Avoiding amplification

Use the verified fact as the headline. Include only enough of the misleading claim for readers to recognise the issue. Do not reproduce abusive imagery or link directly to harmful material unless necessary. Coordinate timing where several bodies must correct the same operational fact, but preserve independent wording and responsibility.

Inclusive delivery

Plan plain-language, captioned, screen-reader compatible and minority-language versions. Consider radio, regional media, messaging channels, community organisations and telephone support where official social accounts will not reach the affected audience. Monitor whether the correction reached the same communities as the original confusion.

Suggested debrief for Sheet 4

The best response is not necessarily the longest. It states the correct fact first, identifies the source, tells voters what to do and avoids unsupported blame. Ask whether the proposed communication would still work if the main website or social account were unavailable.

Reporting findings and recommendations

SESSION METHOD Report-editing exercise using Sheet 5 | TIME 15, 20 or 30 minutes

Reporting products

Press releases and rapid updates address a specific verified development. Interim reports identify emerging patterns while corrective action is still possible. Preliminary statements provide a time-bound assessment with clear limitations. Final reports analyse the whole period, explain methods and propose reforms.

From data to finding

The supplied Reporting presentation, which reinforces the reporting guidance introduced in Module 4, offers durable practical advice: prioritise what matters, support a trend with one or two well-chosen examples, use relevant comparisons and avoid categorical language unless the evidence supports it. Positive or negative tone alone does not establish bias; assess whether the outlet treats comparable subjects consistently over time.

Minimum finding structure

1. Scope and method: period, media, actors, units and limitations.
2. Evidence: the relevant quantitative pattern and qualitative context.
3. Standard: the legal, ethical or professional benchmark.
4. Assessment: what the evidence supports and with what confidence.
5. Consequence: why the finding matters to voters, contestants or the information environment.
6. Response: action taken, available remedy or institutional gap.

Recommendations that can be implemented

Recommendation test

Question	Weak practice	Stronger practice
Problem	General dissatisfaction	A documented pattern or procedural gap.
Actor	“The authorities”	The institution with the relevant mandate.
Action	“Ensure fairness”	A specific legal, procedural, technical or professional step.
Basis	Assumed best practice	Identified standard, evidence and national context.
Delivery	No timing, resources or review	Realistic sequence, capacity, deadline and review point.
Rights effect	Only enforcement considered	Impact on expression, privacy, equality, participation and remedy.

Drafting formula

Because the monitoring identified [problem and evidence], [responsible actor] should [specific action] through [lawful procedure] to achieve [intended result], while safeguarding [affected right]. Review progress by [milestone].

Moldova monitoring example

The supplied Moldova report describes campaign-period monitoring reports and graduated responses. Discuss publication while correction remains possible and consistency across periods. Verify the law and outcomes before presenting it as precedent.

Trainer debrief for Sheet 5

Reject recommendations that restate a value or assign a task to the wrong institution. Linked recommendations must remain separately accountable.

Practices for media and civil society

SESSION METHOD Practice exchange using Sheet 6 | TIME 5, 10 or 15 minutes

Newsrooms and media organisations

- Adopt election guidelines covering verification, official roles, paid content, polls, corrections, inclusive sourcing, synthetic media and staff safety.
- Explain selection criteria for debates and interviews, distinguish official activity from campaigning and label sponsored material.
- Establish fast correction, right-of-reply and escalation routes without surrendering editorial judgment.
- Prepare account security, backup publication and support for journalists facing threats or abusive litigation.

Civil society fact-checkers and observers

- Publish methods, samples, funding and limitations. Separate verified observation, analytical assessment and legal determination.
- Select media and platforms by relevance and impact, not only by ease of data access. Do not generalise from inaccessible or non-representative data.
- Share urgent voter-information evidence through established routes while preserving independence and source protection.
- Coordinate complementary monitoring and avoid duplicating harmful content or overwhelming institutions with identical alerts.

Shared professional discipline

The supplied monitoring materials repeatedly emphasise quality control: assess media behaviour rather than political contestants, interpret tone and prominence in context, prioritise significant trends, use relevant comparisons and check findings before publication. These habits are part of resilience because credible corrections and recommendations depend on trusted evidence.

Review learning and institutional resilience

SESSION METHOD After-action review using Sheet 7 | TIME 5, 10 or 15 minutes

Review questions

What happened and when? Which assumptions proved wrong? Which essential function continued or failed? What evidence was unavailable? Which response reduced harm? Which response was late, disproportionate or inaccessible? Where did responsibility become unclear? What should be retained, changed, tested or discontinued?

Review the system not only the incident

Examine staffing, training, legal powers, complaint intake, data access, decision speed, correction reach, inter-institutional referrals, platform cooperation, journalist safety and accessibility. Include affected groups and external practitioners in the review while protecting confidential information.

Resilience action register

Lesson	Corrective action	Owner	Resources	Deadline	Test or indicator
A verified gap, not a vague concern	A specific change	One accountable lead	People, budget, authority or tool	Election-cycle milestone	Evidence that the change works

Trainer debrief

Do not let the review become a search for individual blame or a list of ambitions. Select a small number of high-value changes, assign ownership and test them. Preserve practices that worked. Publish an appropriate summary so that learning supports public confidence without exposing protected operational details.

Capstone simulation and action planning

SESSION METHOD Multi-stakeholder tabletop using Sheet 8a or 8b | TIME 10 or 25 minutes

Two delivery options

Use Sheet 8a for a short four-role simulation in the 90- or 120-minute route. It follows an unverified claim that election results may be manipulated as it moves from social media to influencer amplification and traditional-media pickup. Use Sheet 8b for the extended route and a fuller multi-stakeholder response.

Full scenario: Sheet 8b

Seventy-two hours before voting, the EMB website becomes intermittently unavailable. A copied page displays a false polling deadline. A television discussion repeats the claim while criticising the EMB. Creators promote the copied page; sponsorship is unclear. A journalist documenting the network receives threats. Some platform contacts respond, while another requests a formal legal order.

Role tensions

- EMB: restore authoritative information without overreacting to an unverified claim.
- Media regulator: enforce compliance without directing editorial content.
- Campaign-finance or data authority: investigate without prejudging the outcome.
- Newsroom: report quickly without amplifying an unverified claim.
- Platform or digital-services contact: act on a national request without assuming a harmonised legal basis.
- Civil society or fact-checkers: extend reach with limited resources and no enforcement mandate.
- Journalist-safety organisation: protect the journalist without disclosing further identifying detail.
- Judge or lawyer: assess legality quickly without shortcutting due process.

Required outputs

1. A response for the first 60 minutes.
2. A verified public update and accessible distribution plan.
3. An evidence-preservation and referral map.
4. A protection response for the journalist.
5. A seven-day investigation and accountability plan.
6. Three post-election resilience actions with owners and tests.

Suggested debrief

The EMB should restore authoritative voter information through backup channels and correct the deadline. Other actors extend reach within their roles. Preserve the copied page, broadcasts, sponsorship records and threats. Legal and platform routes may proceed in parallel but require separate bases and decisions. The post-election plan should address continuity, contact powers, correction reach, safety and tested coordination rather than claiming that one intervention solved the information problem.

Training of trainers guidance and assessment

Module-specific facilitation

Use Module 9 to turn previous learning into arrangements that institutions can own and test. Common mistakes include creating a coordination group with undefined powers, waiting for certainty before protecting voters or journalists, issuing a correction through channels that missed the affected audience, and drafting recommendations without an accountable actor or review point. Require every proposed action to identify authority, owner, evidence, safeguard and test.

Audience-specific application

Regulators should build escalation and referral protocols. EMBs should practise authoritative correction and continuity. Judges, lawyers and policymakers should test safeguards and reform proposals. Journalists should design newsroom verification, correction and safety procedures. Civil society and observers should convert monitoring into timely findings and follow-up. In mixed simulations, preserve separate decisions while testing coordination.

Assessment and evaluation

Use the preparedness map as the entry diagnostic. Assess the escalation protocol, public correction, finding, recommendation, after-action review and role performance in the capstone simulation. The personal action card and institutional action register provide the exit assessment.

Evidence of learning and trainer reflection

Participants meet the objective when they assign decisions to competent actors, distinguish urgency from evidence level, draft an accessible correction, convert evidence into an implementable recommendation and define a resilience action with owner, resource, deadline and test. End with a confidence rating and one unresolved dependency. Trainers should review timing, participation balance and whether the simulation exposed a real protocol gap.

Audience adaptation

Audience	Emphasis	Best technique	Output
Regulators and supervisory authorities	Thresholds, evidence, coordination, proportionality and review	Protocol clinic and decision audit	Escalation and referral protocol
EMBs	Authoritative voter information, continuity, correction and crisis communication	Tabletop exercise	Accessible correction and backup plan
Judges, lawyers and policymakers	Legal authority, safeguards, remedy and structural gaps	Recommendation and drafting clinic	Implementable reform proposal
Journalists and media practitioners	Editorial protocols, verification, correction and safety	Newsroom simulation	Election coverage and incident checklist

Audience	Emphasis	Best technique	Output
Civil society and observers	Monitoring credibility, rapid reporting, referral and accountability	Report-editing and evidence exercise	Interim finding and follow-up tracker

Mixed groups

Give all groups the same incident but require outputs within their mandates. The plenary should identify duplication, gaps, conflicting messages and the final decision owner. Ask each group to state one dependency on another actor and one safeguard against inappropriate influence.

Facilitation guidance

Keep the module practical. Use national contact maps and real publication channels where safe. Do not measure success by the number of proposed sanctions. Reward verified information, timely protection, clear responsibility, accessibility, lawful authority and learning that can be tested.

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(2007)15 on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns.

3. Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)2 on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation.

4. Venice Commission, Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters and Interpretative Declaration on the Stability of Electoral Law, CDL-PI(2016)006.

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

6. Council of Europe, Media Coverage of Elections, 2017, supplied project resource.

7. ARTICLE 19, Guidelines for Election Broadcasting in Transitional Democracies, supplied project resource.

8. International IDEA, Elections during Emergencies and Crises, supplied project resource.

9. Democracy Reporting International, Guide for Civil Society on Monitoring Social Media during Elections, supplied project resource.

10. UNDP, Media and Elections guide, supplied project resource.

11. NDI, Media Monitoring to Promote Democratic Elections, supplied project resource.

12. Reporting presentation and Golden Rules of Our Monitoring, supplied training resources.

13. Media Monitoring Methodology for the National Council for Radio and TV Broadcasting of Ukraine and related monitoring guidelines, supplied project resources.

14. Moldova media-monitoring report and MEMO 98 election report 2020, supplied practice examples.

Final trainer note

Update institutional names, contact points, platform processes and legal powers before every delivery. Use real cases only after checking primary sources and later developments. Keep participant materials free of the suggested outcomes. End by asking each participant to identify one change that can be owned, resourced and tested before the next electoral period.

Module 9: Good practices response strategies and building resilience

Training material to be shared with participants

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PERSONAL ACTION CARD AND LEARNING CHECK 21

These exercises help you convert electoral communication risks and findings into lawful preparation, timely response, clear public information and practical institutional learning. Work within your assigned mandate and state what remains unknown.

Instructions

- Use the national legal and institutional map supplied by the trainer.
- Separate verified fact, analytical assessment and legal determination.
- Identify who owns each decision and where referral is required.
- Choose a response that is lawful, timely, accessible and proportionate.
- Protect personal data, confidential sources and persons facing threats.
- Do not infer motive, coordination, sponsorship, automation or electoral impact without evidence.

Output for each exercise

State the risk or problem; verified evidence; affected right or function; responsible actor; immediate response; referral; communication; safeguard; limitation; and longer-term improvement.

Sheet 1 Resilience cycle

Starting case

A false polling-place message circulated shortly before voting. The EMB corrected it after three hours, but only on its main website. Broadcasters and community organisations received no direct notice. After the election, no body reviewed how far the message or correction travelled.

Task

Place actions under four headings:

1. Anticipate and reduce risk.
2. Withstand disruption.
3. Respond and recover.
4. Learn and adapt.

Questions

Which action was needed before the campaign? What was urgent during the incident? Which affected groups may not have received the correction? What should be tested before the next election?

Sheet 2 Preparedness map

Scenario

Your country expects a close election, intense online campaigning and possible pressure on journalists. The EMB website has failed during previous traffic peaks. The media regulator cannot supervise campaign finance. Platform contacts exist but response times are unclear.

Protocol fields

For two priority risks define:

- lead institution and legal power;
- operational contact and backup;
- evidence to preserve;
- routine, priority and urgent thresholds;
- referral and response time;
- public messenger and channels;
- accessibility and language needs;
- continuity arrangement;

- review and test date.

Safeguard question

How will the arrangement support cooperation without transferring decision-making power or enabling political interference with media content?

Sheet 3 Response and coordination

Alert

On election morning, an account resembling the EMB posts a false extension of voting hours. A radio host repeats it. The copied account disappears after twenty minutes. Screenshots show different times. A platform contact asks for a formal request.

Task

1. Identify what must happen in the first 15, 30 and 60 minutes.

2. Separate evidence preservation, voter correction, media response, platform action and legal assessment.

3. Name the decision owner for each action.

4. Draft one referral specifying the rule question, evidence, urgency and requested action.

5. Identify the minimum information that can lawfully be shared.

6. Record one action your group must not take.

Sheet 4 Public correction

Drafting exercise

Write a public update of no more than 80 words for the alert in Sheet 3. It must:

- state the verified voting hours first;
- identify the authoritative source and verification time;
- tell voters where to check and obtain assistance;
- state what remains under review without speculation;
- promise only a realistic next update.

Distribution plan

Select the channels, languages and accessible formats needed to reach the affected audience. Include a backup if the EMB website or main social account is unavailable.

Amplification check

Which details of the false message are necessary for recognition? Which should not appear in the headline or visual?

Sheet 5a From data to finding

Monitoring extract

During a fourteen-day sample, Channel X devoted 48 per cent of political and election-related news time to the government, 22 per cent to Party A, 16 per cent to Party B and 14 per cent to other contestants. Government coverage was predominantly positive. Party B received more negative than positive coverage. Two long reports concerned a flood response led by ministers. The methodology does not separate their official and campaign appearances. No comparable data from outside the campaign are available.

Task

Draft a finding containing:

1. scope and method;
2. the most relevant quantitative pattern;
3. qualitative context;
4. applicable standard or question;
5. assessment at the level supported by evidence;
6. limitations;
7. possible follow-up.

Editing rule

Use no more than two examples. Do not state that tone alone proves bias or that the figures establish electoral impact.

Sheet 5b Recommendation clinic

Weak recommendations

A. “The authorities should ensure fair media.”

B. “Platforms must eliminate disinformation.”

C. “Journalists should be more professional.”

D. “The regulator should investigate all online campaigning.”

Rewrite

For each recommendation identify: documented problem; responsible actor; specific feasible action; legal or professional basis; intended result; affected rights and safeguards; resources or sequence; and review milestone.

Drafting formula

Because the monitoring identified [problem and evidence], [actor] should [action], through [lawful instrument or procedure], in order to [result], while safeguarding [right or protection]. Progress should be reviewed by [milestone].

Sheet 6 Professional practices

Newsroom group

Select six elements for an election coverage protocol. Consider verification, candidate selection, official activity, advertising, polls, corrections, inclusive sourcing, synthetic media, account security, journalist safety and legal support.

Civil society and observer group

Select six elements for a credible monitoring and rapid-reporting protocol. Consider scope, sampling, quality control, data access, evidence preservation, public language, urgent referrals, source protection, funding disclosure and limitations.

Exchange

Each group identifies one form of cooperation it needs from the other and one safeguard that protects independence.

Sheet 7 After-action review

Case record

An urgent correction reached most national television audiences but not two linguistic minorities. Platform data arrived after election day. The regulator issued a well-reasoned decision, but the referral took five days. A journalist-safety organisation prevented further disclosure of personal information. Staff used private messaging accounts because the official system failed.

Review table

For each point identify:

- what worked or failed;
- evidence and affected group;
- root cause within the system;
- corrective action;
- owner and required resource;
- deadline;
- test or indicator;
- information that may be published.

Priority choice

Choose the three changes that would reduce the greatest risk before the next election. Explain why the remaining actions can wait.

Sheet 8a Short capstone simulation

Scenario

On election morning, an unverified social-media post claims that election results may be manipulated. An influencer repeats the claim to a large audience and adds that "official silence proves it." A television presenter then cites the online discussion and asks whether the count can still be trusted. No verified evidence of manipulation has been produced.

Roles and core tensions

- Media: report quickly without amplifying an unverified claim.
- EMB: protect confidence through authoritative information without dismissing legitimate scrutiny.
- Media regulator: assess compliance without directing editorial content.
- Civil society and fact-checkers: verify and extend reliable information with limited resources and no enforcement mandate.

Three rounds

1. Social-media claim: decide what to verify, preserve and communicate in the first 15 minutes.

2. Influencer amplification: decide who contacts whom and what can responsibly be said within 30 minutes.

3. Traditional-media pickup: prepare a joint timeline for the first hour while keeping each actor's decision-making independent.

Output

State verified facts, unknowns, immediate actions, decision owners, one referral, one public message and one safeguard against overreaction.

Sheet 8b Full capstone simulation

Round 1

Seventy-two hours before voting, the EMB website becomes intermittently unavailable. A copied page displays a false polling deadline. A television discussion repeats the claim while criticising the EMB.

Roles and core tensions

- EMB: restore authoritative information without overreacting to an unverified claim.
- Media regulator: enforce compliance without directing editorial content.
- Campaign-finance or data authority: investigate without prejudging the outcome.
- Newsroom: report quickly without amplifying an unverified claim.
- Platform or digital-services contact: act on a national request without assuming a harmonised legal basis.
- Civil society or fact-checkers: extend reach with limited resources and no enforcement mandate.
- Journalist-safety organisation: protect the journalist without disclosing further identifying detail.
- Judge or lawyer: assess legality quickly without shortcutting due process.

First response

Prepare the first 60 minutes: verified facts; essential function; immediate action; public messenger; preservation; referral; safeguard; and next review time.

Sheet 8b Rounds 2 and 3

Round 2

Creators promote the copied page. Sponsorship is unclear. A journalist documenting the network receives threats. One platform responds, while another requests a formal legal order.

Round 3

The website returns. The EMB publishes a correction only in the majority language. The broadcaster corrects the statement but does not explain why it was aired. A platform removes some posts without reasons. Evidence suggests the copied page used infrastructure previously linked to commercial fraud, but no actor is identified.

Joint outputs

1. A verified and accessible public update.
2. An evidence-preservation and referral map.
3. A protection response for the journalist.
4. A seven-day investigation and accountability plan.
5. Three post-election resilience actions with owners and tests.

Final check

Which claims remain unsupported? Which institution owns each decision? Where could the response itself restrict rights or deepen distrust?

Personal action card and learning check

One practical commitment

Before the next electoral period, my institution or professional group should:

.....

The responsible owner should be:

.....

The change can be tested by:

.....

Six-question check

1. How is resilience different from eliminating harmful content?
2. What should a preparedness protocol settle before the campaign?
3. Why does cooperation not merge institutional mandates?
4. What makes a correction effective as well as accurate?
5. What are the five essential parts of an implementable recommendation?
6. Which lesson from an incident belongs in an after-action register?

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 9
GOOD PRACTICES, RESPONSE STRATEGIES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

Purpose and learning outcomes

- Explain resilience as the ability to anticipate, withstand, respond and learn while preserving rights
- Translate risk assessments into responsibilities, evidence rules and escalation thresholds
- Distinguish urgent protection, enforcement, platform action and longer-term reform
- Draft timely, accessible and evidence-based public corrections
- Convert monitoring into concise findings and implementable recommendations
- Turn after-action lessons into owned and tested improvements

Resilience across the election cycle

ANTICIPATE AND REDUCE	Which foreseeable weakness can be addressed before the campaign?
WITHSTAND	Which essential information and functions must continue under pressure?
RESPOND AND RECOVER	Who corrects, protects, preserves evidence, decides and communicates?
LEARN AND ADAPT	What must change in law, procedure, capacity or professional practice?

CYCLE MAPPING | SHEET 1 | 10–15 MINUTES

Rights-based resilience

Resilience protects reliable information and electoral participation while institutions continue to act lawfully and credibly.

PRESERVE	REDUCE VULNERABILITY	RESPOND LAWFULLY
Expression, pluralism, privacy and equality	Accessible information and tested systems	Proportionate action and effective remedy

Preparedness map

RISK PICTURE	Plausible risks, affected groups and essential services
AUTHORITY	Who decides, requests information, orders a remedy or hears appeal?
CONTACT	Named operational lead and backup during the election period
EVIDENCE	What to preserve, in which format and under which safeguards
THRESHOLD	Triggers for routine, priority, urgent or systemic action

Internal and external preparation

INTERNAL

- Staffing and training
- Secure evidence handling
- Decision and approval records
- Backup publication channels

EXTERNAL

- Operational contacts and referrals
- Public explanations of mandates
- Cooperation exercises
- Complaint and urgent-alert routes

Independence safeguards

- State the legal basis and decision owner
- Define the information exchanged and data-retention rules
- Protect confidentiality and personal data
- Set response times and review mechanisms
- Keep political direction away from editorial decisions
- Prevent informal contacts from becoming secret content orders

Continuity and crisis planning

WEBSITE FAILURE	Test backup publication and verification channels
ACCOUNT COMPROMISE	Prepare authentication, recovery and alternative accounts
STAFF ABSENCE	Define backups, approval powers and handovers
PLATFORM ACCESS	Preserve evidence and alternative contact routes
COMPLAINT SURGE	Triage, staffing and realistic response commitments

Common response sequence

1. Receive and log the alert
2. Preserve evidence and verify essential context
3. Classify the issue, affected right, urgency and confidence
4. Identify the competent decision-maker
5. Select the least restrictive effective response available in time
6. Refer only questions outside the actor's mandate
7. Communicate what is known, unknown and being done
8. Record reasons, review the result and retain material lawfully

Escalation levels

ROUTINE	Limited, reversible harm; ordinary verification and procedure
PRIORITY	Recurring or growing problem with credible evidence
URGENT	Specific threat, false voting instruction or rapidly irreversible harm
SYSTEMIC	Repeated incidents reveal a structural capacity or accountability failure

Election-morning alert

An account resembling the EMB posts a false extension of voting hours.

- A radio host repeats the claim
- The copied account disappears after twenty minutes
- Screenshots show different times
- A platform contact requests a formal notice

Coordination without a ministry of truth

A coordination group should not decide which political opinions are acceptable.

VERIFY	Official electoral facts and source records
ROUTE	Evidence and questions to the competent body
PROTECT	Voters, journalists and other persons facing harm
EXPLAIN	Procedures, known facts, unknowns and next steps

Information-sharing test

PURPOSE	Why is the information needed?
AUTHORITY	What permits collection, disclosure or retention?
NECESSITY	What is the minimum information required?
SECURITY	Who receives it and how is access controlled?
ACCOUNTABILITY	Who records the decision and reviews the result?

REFERRAL TASK | SHEET 3 | 15–30 MINUTES

Principles for public correction

- Lead with the verified fact voters need
- Name the authoritative source and verification time
- Explain where people can check and obtain assistance
- State what remains under review without speculation
- Promise only a realistic next update
- Publish through the channels, languages and formats that reach the affected audience

Correction structure

FACT FIRST	Verified voting hours or procedural information
SOURCE AND TIME	Competent authority and latest verification
ACTION	What voters should do and where to obtain help
UNCERTAINTY	What remains under review
NEXT UPDATE	A realistic time or condition for further information

DRAFTING EXERCISE | SHEET 4 | 15–25 MINUTES

Choosing the messenger

AUTHORITATIVE	TRUSTED	REACHABLE
The institution with the mandate to confirm the fact	Media, community groups and experts who can contextualise	Channels, languages and accessible formats used by the audience

Other actors extend reach without presenting themselves as the final legal authority.

Prebunking, correction and media literacy

PREBUNKING	Explain likely tactics and verification routes before exposure
CORRECTION	Address a specific false or misleading claim after it appears
MEDIA LITERACY	Build longer-term skills for evaluating sources and evidence

Choose the tool that matches the timing, audience and demonstrated risk.

Reporting products

URGENT ALERT	Short verified warning with immediate action
INTERIM FINDING	Current evidence, assessment and limitations
PERIODIC REPORT	Patterns across a defined sample and period
FINAL REPORT	Conclusions, methodology and recommendations
CONFIDENTIAL REFERRAL	Necessary evidence for a competent body

From data to finding

Channel X devoted 48% of political and election-related news time to the government during a fourteen-day sample.

CONTEXT

Two long reports covered a flood response led by ministers.

LIMITATION

The method does not separate official and campaign appearances.

Minimum finding structure

SCOPE AND METHOD	Sample, period, units and analytical approach
QUANTITATIVE PATTERN	The most relevant comparable figures
QUALITATIVE CONTEXT	Examples that explain the pattern
STANDARD AND ASSESSMENT	The benchmark and supported conclusion
LIMITATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP	Missing data, uncertainty and next step

Recommendation test

PROBLEM	Does evidence demonstrate the problem?
ACTOR	Does the named actor have the mandate and capacity?
ACTION	Is the proposed step specific and feasible?
BASIS	Which lawful instrument or professional procedure?
RESULT AND SAFEGUARD	What should improve, and which rights must remain protected?

Weak recommendations to rewrite

"The authorities should ensure fair media."

"Platforms must eliminate disinformation."

"Journalists should be more professional."

"The regulator should investigate all online campaigning."

REWRITE | SHEET 5B | 15–30 MINUTES

Recommendation formula

Because the monitoring identified

[problem and evidence]

[actor] should [action] through [lawful procedure]

to achieve [result] while safeguarding [right].

Review progress at [milestone].

Professional practices

NEWSROOMS

- Verification and corrections
- Candidate-selection criteria
- Inclusive sourcing and safety
- Advertising and synthetic-media rules

CIVIL SOCIETY AND OBSERVERS

- Sampling and quality control
- Evidence preservation
- Urgent referrals
- Public language and limitations

Shared professional discipline

- Publish methodology and material limitations
- Separate observation, assessment and legal determination
- Use relevant comparisons rather than isolated volume
- Correct errors openly and preserve an audit trail
- Protect sources, targets and personal data
- Disclose funding and conflicts where relevant

After-action review

- What happened and which assumptions proved wrong?
- Which essential function continued or failed?
- What evidence was unavailable?
- Which response reduced harm, and which was late or inaccessible?
- Where did responsibility become unclear?
- What should be retained, changed, tested or discontinued?

Resilience action register

LESSON	A verified gap, not a vague concern
CORRECTIVE ACTION	A specific change
OWNER AND RESOURCES	One accountable lead and what is required
DEADLINE	An election-cycle milestone
TEST OR INDICATOR	Evidence that the change works

Short capstone simulation

"Official silence proves that election results may be manipulated."

ROUND 1	Unverified social-media claim
ROUND 2	Influencer amplification
ROUND 3	Traditional-media pickup

FOUR-ROLE TABLETOP | SHEET 8A | 10 MINUTES

Full capstone: round 1

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

- The EMB website becomes intermittently unavailable 72 hours before voting
- A copied page displays a false polling deadline
- A television discussion repeats the claim while criticising the EMB
- Creators begin promoting the copied page
- Sponsorship remains unclear

FIRST 60 MINUTES | SHEET 8B | 25 MINUTES

Full capstone: rounds 2 and 3

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

ROUND 2

Creators promote the copied page. A journalist receives threats. Platform responses differ.

ROUND 3

The website returns, but the correction uses only the majority language. Platform removals lack reasons.

JOINT RESPONSE | SHEET 8B | 25 MINUTES

Capstone role tensions

EMB	Restore authority without dismissing scrutiny	**REGULATOR**	Enforce without directing editorial content
NEWSROOM	Report quickly without amplifying an unverified claim	**PLATFORM CONTACT**	Act without assuming a harmonised legal basis
CIVIL SOCIETY	Extend reach without enforcement power	**JUDGE OR LAWYER**	Assess legality quickly without shortcutting due process

OPTIONAL OR EXTENDED

Audience adaptation

REGULATORS	Protocol clinic and decision audit
EMBs	Tabletop exercise and accessible backup plan
LAWYERS / POLICYMAKERS	Recommendation and drafting clinic
JOURNALISTS	Newsroom simulation and incident checklist
CIVIL SOCIETY / OBSERVERS	Report editing and follow-up tracker

Trainer preparation and safeguards

- Verify current laws, platform routes and institutional contacts
- Use at least one traditional-media and one digital-environment risk
- Prepare neutral evidence packets and remove unnecessary personal data
- Check accessibility, minority languages, gendered attacks and journalist safety
- Keep outcomes out of participant materials
- Provide a confidential route for current threats or unresolved incidents

Personal action and learning check

- How does resilience differ from eliminating harmful content?
- What should a preparedness protocol settle before the campaign?
- Why does cooperation not merge institutional mandates?
- What makes a correction effective as well as accurate?
- What are the essential parts of an implementable recommendation?
- Which lesson belongs in an after-action register?

Key messages

- Preparedness begins before the campaign
- Cooperation connects mandates without merging them
- Urgent response remains evidence based and proportionate
- Corrections must reach the audience that received the confusion
- Monitoring should produce understandable and actionable findings
- Resilience grows through inclusive delivery, review and tested improvement

END OF MODULE 9

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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