



MEDIA STATEMENT

19 October 2026

Electoral Commission and digital platforms partner to counter disinformation and protect election information integrity in South Africa's 2026 Local Government Elections

The Electoral Commission (IEC) has entered into a partnership with Google, Meta, Microsoft, TikTok and non-profit organisation Moxii Africa to ensure the integrity of election information and counter disinformation ahead of the 4 November 2026 Local Government Elections.

The partnership is a sequel to a similar framework signed with the platforms ahead of the 2024 National and Provincial Elections (NPE). It is an indispensable lever buttressing the Commission's purposive measures to enhance the integrity of election information.

These measures include the gazetting of the Electoral Code of Conduct Countering Disinformation in the Local Government Elections (the Disinformation Code), on 4 September 2026. The Code applies to political parties, candidates and anyone acting on their behalf. It forms part of the Electoral Code of Conduct and carries the same sanctions. The partnership brings the platforms into the same effort to keep election information accurate and trustworthy.

Underscoring the importance of the partnership, Chief Electoral Officer Sy Mamabolo said that the strategic inclusion of the online platforms gives the Commission direct access to the platforms and a real fighting chance against disinformation.

"Our partnership with digital platforms is critical to ensuring that voters have access to credible, accurate and trustworthy information to make informed political choices. A technically flawless election can still lose public trust if citizens are overwhelmed by disinformation. Therefore, the partnership eliminates barriers to direct access to the platforms and enables instantaneous remedial action against disinformation peddlers," Mamabolo said.

The partnership covers the following:

- **Cooperation in good faith** during the election period.
- **Respect for existing laws**, with no requirement to share confidential user data.
- **Alignment with the Constitution, municipal electoral laws and the Electoral Code of Conduct**, including the Disinformation Code.
- **A working group** of partners, election awareness campaigns, and training on disinformation for political parties, candidates and other stakeholders.
- Room for **platforms to apply their own policies**, including content removal, advisory warnings and delisting.
- **Cooperation on other initiatives** intended to curb the impact of disinformation in elections.

The Commission has designated the Real411 platform to support its proactive efforts to minimise the impact of disinformation during the 2026 Local Government Elections.

Anyone who sees suspected election-related disinformation can report it to Real411 at real411.org.za or through the Real411 app. Complaints are handled in all eleven official languages.

Real411 assesses complaints independently and recommends action to the Commission and the platforms. Depending on the findings, the Commission, upon careful review of any reported complaint indicating disinformation or misinformation, can:

- Refer the matter to the Electoral Court, which can impose sanctions.
- Promptly refer the matter to the relevant online platform, which is expected to prioritise referrals from the Commission by acknowledging and swiftly processing the notification in line with its policies.
- Issue media statements to alert the public and correct the disinformation.

Guidance for voters on spotting, checking and reporting disinformation is available at www.elections.org.za/pw/Elections-And-Results/Report-Election-Disinformation.

Partner support

The partners welcomed the partnership and reaffirmed their commitment to working with the Commission. They noted that they already have policies and mechanisms to counter disinformation and will keep using them as part of the collective effort.

In affirming Microsoft's support for the partnership, the Director: Government Affairs, Microsoft South Africa, Abongile Vanda says:

"Free, fair and credible elections depend on people being able to trust the information they see. No single organisation can tackle disinformation alone,

which is why Microsoft is pleased to join the Electoral Commission in this partnership. Ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections, we will work alongside the Commission, civil society and industry to help voters find authoritative election information, strengthen media and AI literacy, and counter deceptive AI-generated content.

TikTok's Government Relations and Public Policy Lead for Southern Africa, Tholoana Ncheke-Mahlaela, adds:

"At TikTok, we recognise the important role our platform plays in helping people discover information and engage in public conversations. This is why we take our responsibility to protect our community during elections very seriously. Through our in-app Election Centre, South Africans will be able to access reliable information about the elections, and to further support this, we have introduced election-related labels and search banners that direct users to the centre with a single tap. This work is supported by advanced moderation, collaboration with fact-checking partners and electoral commissions like the IEC South Africa to ensure a safe, informed, and authentic election experience for our community."

Moxii Africa Director William Bird welcomed the partnership, saying:

"Information integrity is fundamental to the credibility of any democratic process. In an increasingly complex digital environment, protecting voters from misinformation and disinformation requires coordinated action across institutions, technology platforms, civil society and citizens themselves. This partnership represents an important commitment to ensuring that South Africans can access accurate, trustworthy election information and participate in the 2026 Local Government Elections with confidence. Moxii Africa is proud to support this collective effort to strengthen trust, transparency and democratic resilience."

Let's Get Up, Show Up, and Vote on 4 November 2026!

ISSUED BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Ensuring free, fair and credible elections

For media queries: Please contact Kate Bapela on 082 600 6386

For media interviews: Email requests to spokesperson@elections.org.za

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**VOLUNTARY FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION TO
ADDRESS DISINFORMATION DURING THE 2026 LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Preamble

Disinformation¹ threatens the exercise of various rights, including freedom of expression, access to credible and reliable information and indeed the freedom to make informed political choices. In particular, the dissemination of disinformation has the potential to undermine the fairness and credibility of elections and threaten democratic political and policy-making processes.

A multi-participant Working Group – formed by the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) and comprising of civil society organisation Moxii Africa (formerly Media Monitoring Africa); and online platforms, Meta Inc., Google, TikTok, and Microsoft (Participants) – seeks to provide voluntary support to the IEC regarding democratic processes of the upcoming 2026 Local Government Elections in South Africa. In doing so, the Participants have adopted this **Voluntary Framework of Cooperation to Address Disinformation During the 2026 Local Government Elections in South Africa** (Framework of Cooperation).

The Participants acknowledge that disinformation has the potential to threaten the ability of the public to meaningfully participate in the public process, including by impeding the ability of the public to remain informed. Mindful of this, the Participants are interested in helping to facilitate measures against the dissemination of disinformation during the contemplated election period. This Framework of Cooperation is one facet of the practical responses that may be undertaken by the Participants individually regarding elections that are free, fair, and credible. While this Framework of Cooperation does not constitute or create any legally binding or enforceable obligation(s) on the part of any Participant, the Participants intend to work together in good faith as outlined in these provisions.

The measures set out in this Framework of Cooperation will be developed and implemented in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and all applicable legislation, including the Electoral Act 73 of 1998 (Electoral Act) and the *Electoral Code of Conduct on Countering Disinformation in the 2026 Local Government Elections*, which instruments are incorporated herein by reference.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of the Framework of Cooperation is to identify the measures that the Participants may put in place to address the challenges related to disinformation in the lead-up to, and during, the 2026 election period, to promote conditions that are conducive to free, fair and credible elections; and to assist the IEC in its

¹ For present purposes, we support the definition of “disinformation” proposed by the High Level Group of the European Commission, which defines the term as follows:

“[A]ll forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit. It does not cover issues arising from the creation and dissemination online of illegal content (notably defamation, hate speech, incitement to violence), which are subject to regulatory remedies under ... national laws. Nor does it cover other forms of deliberate but not misleading distortions of facts such as satire and parody.”

See European Commission, ‘A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation: Report of the independent High Level Group on fake news and online disinformation’, 12 March 2018 at p 10, accessible at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>.

mandate to address intentionally false statements as set out in section 89(2) of the Electoral Act.

- 1.2. The Framework of Cooperation envisages that actions taken by the online platforms are in accordance with the terms of their community guidelines and/or policies and may include the removal of content, publication of advisory warnings, and/or delisting of content.
- 1.3. The Framework of Cooperation is:
 - 1.3.1. Acknowledged as being without prejudice to other initiatives aimed at addressing disinformation on the relevant online platforms;
 - 1.3.2. Acknowledged in good faith amongst the Participants, building on a fair and honest representation of their intentions; and
 - 1.3.3. Applies from the date of the last signature of the Participants and throughout the duration of the election period, which for the avoidance of doubt, includes the period from the date of proclamation of the 2026 Local Government Elections until the results of the elections are officially declared by the IEC.

2. Areas of cooperation

- 2.1. The Framework of Cooperation is an expression of goodwill and good faith amongst the Participants, who will use reasonable endeavours to take steps toward the following areas of cooperation:
 - 2.1.1. To establish a Working Group to provide advice and support the work of the IEC on Media and Information Literacy in Elections (MIL-E) programmes and strategies.
 - 2.1.2. To deploy appropriate policies, processes and safeguards to facilitate access to transparent and accurate information regarding electoral matters, including utilising pre-existing labels and/or disclosure technologies on the online platforms that allow for paid political advertising.
 - 2.1.3. Each participant will independently implement and promote appropriate policies, processes, and safeguards to address disinformation, and act in accordance with their respective policies.
 - 2.1.4. To voluntarily undertake information, education, and communication campaigns to build awareness around the 2026 Local Government Elections in South Africa.
 - 2.1.5. To voluntarily undertake media literacy campaigns. Where relevant, such campaigns may include driving users' awareness of the harms, risks, and

consequences of the dissemination of disinformation in the context of elections.

- 2.1.6. To voluntarily impart training on various products, services, mechanisms, and processes for responding to concerns of disinformation.
- 2.1.7. To voluntarily support other related efforts, if applicable, aimed at ensuring free, fair, and credible elections in South Africa.
- 2.2. Furthermore, the online platforms that are signatories to this Framework of Cooperation will voluntarily cooperate with the IEC and Moxii Africa in the implementation of the following initiatives:
 - 2.2.1. **Real411:** Moxii Africa has developed an online platform, the Real411, which is endorsed by the IEC. The Real411 allows members of the public to lodge complaints relating to content which may constitute disinformation. Once a complaint has been reviewed by Moxii Africa and forwarded to the IEC, and there is cause for concern that the content may violate the relevant electoral laws or policies of the online platforms, the IEC may notify the affected online platform(s) of the potential violation. Upon receipt of such notification, the online platform undertakes to, at the very least, investigate the matter and/or take remedial action, in line with the platform's existing practices.
 - 2.2.2. **PADRE:** PADRE is a transparent repository of political advertisements established by Moxii Africa and endorsed by the IEC. In consultation with the IEC and political contestants, Moxii Africa will endeavour to ensure that all political advertisements, including those targeted at individuals or specific groups on online media, will be available through the repository. The purpose of the repository is to increase transparency and to verify the authenticity of any political advertisement.
 - 2.2.3. **PIIE:** the Partnership on Information Integrity in Elections. PIIE is a multi-stakeholder coalition—led by Moxii Africa, SANEF and Africa Check and is dedicated to safeguarding the integrity of our democratic processes²: The Participants will become Associate members of PIIE. The purpose of PIIE is to ensure resources and knowledge sharing to help a coordinated response to online harms in the lead-up to the elections.
- 2.3. The online platforms that are signatories to this Framework of Cooperation shall:
 - 2.3.1. Keep up technological capabilities to mitigate risks related to election-related disinformation by for instance: using classifiers or robust background methods like watermarking or source marker tools.

² More on PIIE can be found here including the sign up form: <https://moxii-africa.webflow.io/piie>

- 2.3.2. Keep up capabilities to detect deceptive election-related content.
 - 2.3.3. Undertake collective efforts to evaluate and learn from the experiences and outcomes of dealing with deceptive election-related content.
 - 2.3.4. Support, where possible, efforts to develop and make available tools and resources, such as media literacy and other public programmes to build public resilience against the use of election-related disinformation.
 - 2.3.5. In line with existing policies and processes, promote the responsible use of AI and, where possible, make available technical standards for AI detection to combat the spread of deceptive AI-generated election content.
 - 2.3.6. During the election period, actively monitor platforms and maintain appropriate internal escalation and response processes, taking action where appropriate, proportionate, and operationally feasible under platform policies and applicable law.
- 2.4. In giving effect to these areas of cooperation, the Participants may work together, as applicable, on steps set out under this Framework of Cooperation, and/or engage in discussions regarding the dissemination of disinformation, as the case may be.

3. Application and good faith

- 3.1. The Framework of Cooperation will be in effect during the election period and shall automatically terminate once the results of the 2026 Local Government Elections are officially declared by the IEC.
- 3.2. Any of the Participants may terminate its participation in this Framework of Cooperation by notifying the other Participants in writing.
- 3.3. It is agreed that this Framework of Cooperation is one based on collaboration and good faith, and is not legally binding, does not form a contract and does not give rise to any legal or financial obligations of any kind whatsoever on any of the Participants.
- 3.4. In undertaking the activities contemplated in the Framework of Cooperation, the online platforms shall not be required to share or otherwise provide information, including confidential information or any information pertaining to their business activities, or any confidential user data with any of the other Participants, except insofar as this may be required in law. For the avoidance of doubt, the online platforms shall not be required to disclose confidential, proprietary, security-sensitive, or personal/user data. Any voluntary sharing of information by the online platforms shall be subject to confidentiality and privacy restrictions contemplated herein.

- 3.5. The online platforms shall at all times retain their respective independent discretion over their own moderation, safety, product and enforcement decisions.
- 3.6. Except where legally required, no party to this Framework of Cooperation shall use another party's name or logo or issue public statements about another party's participation without prior written consent, which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld.
- 3.7. The Framework of Cooperation shall be applied and implemented within the prescripts of the existing laws of South Africa and should not be construed in any way as replacing or interpreting the existing legal framework.
- 3.8. The online platforms hereby agree that this Framework of Cooperation shall comply with applicable competition laws and shall not, *inter alia*, involve sharing competitively sensitive information such as product roadmaps, strategic plans, algorithms or commercially sensitive metrics.
- 3.9. Any dispute arising from the interpretation or application of this Framework of Cooperation shall be addressed in good faith and amicably by the appointed representatives of each of the Participants. To the extent that the parties are unable to amicably resolve a dispute within a reasonable time, either party may immediately, on written notice to the other party, withdraw from this Framework of Cooperation without liability.
- 3.10. For the avoidance of doubt, no party to this Framework of Cooperation has any claim or remedy against another party arising from this Framework of Cooperation.

THE UNDERSIGNED PARTICIPANTS HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE IN GOOD FAITH TO COOPERATE IN THE TERMS DETAILED ABOVE.

Electoral Commission of South Africa

Name:

Date:

Google

Name:

Date:

Moxii Africa

Name:

Date:

Microsoft

Name:

Date:

Meta Inc.

Name:

Date:

TikTok

Name:

Date: