



## THE CODE

Ahead of the local government elections, the Independent Electoral Commission (“IEC”) issued the [Electoral Code of Conduct Countering Disinformation in Local Government Elections](#) (“the Code”).



## AIM

To safeguard **information integrity** by **tackling disinformation** in election-related communications, conduct, and campaigning, both online and offline.



## SCOPE

All **political parties and candidates**, and anyone acting on their behalf. It covers **paid and unpaid** content and recognises that social media and AI can spread misleading content quickly.



## STATUS

In effect from 4 September 2026 until the election results are declared.

## Information integrity means that:



Parties and candidates must be **open** about their communications, structures, decisions, and spending;



They **must not manipulate voters** with fake accounts, bots, deceptive AI content; and



They **must not encourage or pay** for technologies or tools that spread disinformation.



## DISINFORMATION



Under the Code, disinformation means **publishing false information, knowing it is false or without reasonable grounds for believing it is true, with the intention of disrupting or preventing an election, creating hostility or fear to influence an election, or influencing the conduct or outcome of an election.**



The Code does not limit satire, opinion, fair criticism, or genuine political debate.



The IEC has published practical guidance on what disinformation looks like, how to check it, and how to report it: [Report Election Disinformation](#).

<sup>1</sup> This explainer is a simplified summary to help readers understand the Code. It is not a substitute for the Code itself, and readers should refer to the [full text of the Code](#) for its exact wording and requirements.



## THE DOS & DON'TS

### ✓ What must parties and candidates do?

- ✓ Publicly withdraw (where possible) and correct disinformation spread by them or on their behalf, as soon as possible and within 36 hours of finding out
- ✓ Report disinformation spread online to Real411 within 36 hours of finding out
- ✓ Clearly label political adverts with the relevant party or candidate, and label any AI-generated content
- ✓ Monitor their own online platforms, including content posted by others, and keep records of any disinformation
- ✓ Provide training on the Code to office-bearers, members, and supporters

### ✗ What must parties and candidates not do?

- ✗ Produce, spread, sponsor, or encourage disinformation, or other information they know is false or have no reasonable grounds to believe is true
- ✗ Use tools or techniques that spread disinformation or manipulate voters
- ✗ Spread content that may reasonably lead to voter dissuasion, public violence, harassment, hate speech, or unfair discrimination
- ✗ Falsely label legitimate criticism or reporting as untrue
- ✗ Spread disinformation about the IEC, its Commissioners, or its staff



## CONSEQUENCES



Any contravention of, or failure to comply with, the Code is a breach and is subject to sanction under the [Local Government: Municipal Electoral Act 27 of 2000](#).



## REPORTING & THE REAL411

The IEC has designated [Real411](#) as the official online complaint's mechanism under the Code.

Real411 is run by Moxii Africa, which **investigates complaints independently and recommends action to the IEC**.

The IEC then considers the findings and can either:

1. **Flag** the content as disinformation on its social media channels, or issue an official correction; or
2. Recommend that the **Electoral Court** consider the matter and impose sanctions where the Code has been breached.

### What is Real411?

- Real411 is the official platform for reporting misinformation and disinformation in the lead-up to elections.
- All election-related complaints are shared with the Electoral Commission's Directorate for Electoral Offences (IEC).
- Real411 submits its independent outcomes to the IEC, which, with its integrity and impartiality, carefully assesses each case and ensures that appropriate measures are taken.

Although the Code's obligations apply to parties and candidates, **anyone can submit** a complaint. If you come across election-related disinformation, you can also **report** it to Real411 [here](#):

1

To report submit a complaint via Real411's online form, with a link or screenshot and details of where and when you saw the content.

2

Real411 reviews each complaint and may refer it to the IEC, the police, the South African Human Rights Commission, the Press Ombud, or the Electoral Court.

3

You will be told the outcome and can appeal if you disagree.

ENDS.