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COMBATING AI-GENERATED POLITICAL DISINFORMATION IN THE EU: PROTECTING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

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Target Audience: European Commission policymakers and EU officials responsible for digital policy and electoral integrity

KEY POINTS

1. Misleading AI-generated political content can threaten election security.

2. Existing EU rules need stronger and more coordinated implementation.

3. Transparency, fast fact-checking, and cooperation should be improved.

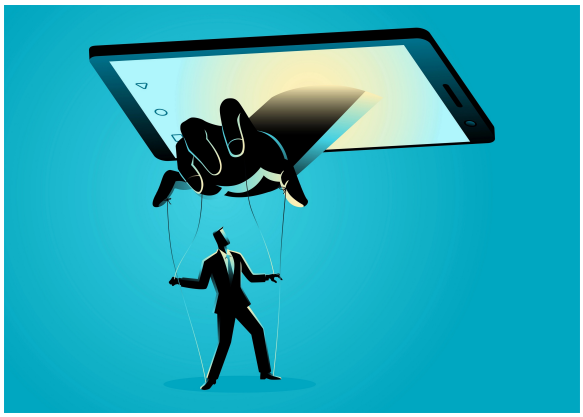
Summary

How can the European Union reduce the effects of misleading AI-generated political content on election security? The main hypothesis is that more transparency, stronger responsibilities for online platforms, and better cooperation between election authorities can help protect democratic processes. The findings show that the EU has published guidelines for elections under the Digital Services Act and that the AI Act introduces transparency duties for certain AI-generated content (European Commission, 2025, 2026). However, further action can improve fast responses during elections, consistent implementation, and access to reliable information. Therefore, the EU should improve election response systems, support clear labels for AI-generated content, and strengthen cooperation between election authorities, online platforms, and fact-checking organisations. These actions must also protect freedom of expression.



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1. AI-Generated Political Disinformation and Election Security



AI tools make it easier to create fake videos, audio recordings, and images that look real. These materials can show political candidates or events in a false way. During elections, misleading content can spread quickly. This can make it harder for voters to find correct information and may reduce trust in democratic debate.

The main problem is not the use of AI itself. The problem is using this technology to mislead people and influence political processes. Therefore, the solution should not be to ban all AI content. Instead, people should be able to identify misleading content and understand where information comes from.

The European Commission has published guidelines under the Digital Services Act to reduce online risks during elections. In 2025, it also published an election toolkit for national regulators. The toolkit covers risks from AI-generated content, incident response, and the monitoring of election risks (European Commission, 2025).

These actions show that the EU recognises the problem. However, rules must be applied consistently, and authorities need to share information quickly during elections.

2. Existing EU Policies and Areas for Improvement

The EU has several policy tools to address misleading AI content and online election risks. The Digital Services Act provides a framework for very large online platforms and search engines to reduce systemic risks related to elections. The Commission's election toolkit also supports cooperation between national regulators and platforms, risk monitoring, and responses to incidents during elections (European Commission, 2025).

Article 50 of the AI Act introduces transparency duties for certain AI-generated content. Under these rules, some AI-generated or manipulated content must be marked, and certain AI-generated texts about matters of public interest must be disclosed. These transparency rules started to apply on 2 August 2026 (European Commission, 2026).



The European Commission is also developing guidance on the fair, transparent, and responsible use of AI in electoral processes under the European Democracy Shield. This work aims to support existing legal duties and encourage political actors to share good practices (European Commission, n.d.).

These policies provide an important foundation. However, effective rules also need practical implementation. Authorities must respond quickly during elections, citizens need to recognise misleading content, and platforms must manage risks effectively. Therefore, the EU should improve practical and coordinated systems that support existing policies.

3. Policy Recommendations to Strengthen Election Security

First, the EU should improve fast response systems for election periods. National election authorities, Digital Services Coordinators, and online platforms should have clear communication channels. Fast reviews of suspicious content may help reduce the spread of false information. However, actions must be transparent and must not be used to silence political opinions.

Second, transparency about AI-generated political content should improve. Platforms and relevant content providers should follow existing rules on labelling and disclosure. The EU should also support media literacy to help citizens recognise fake content. These activities should be accessible and available in different languages, especially during elections.

Third, the EU should improve cooperation between election authorities, fact-checking organisations, researchers, and online platforms. Joint training, information sharing, and reviews after elections can help show which actions work best. Throughout this process, the EU must protect personal data, freedom of expression, and political diversity.

In conclusion, the EU can reduce the risks of AI-generated political disinformation by applying existing rules more effectively and improving coordination during elections. The goal is not to limit political debate. It is to help citizens access reliable information and make decisions freely.



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