

Why are we proposing this research?. The act of voting is a core element in the functioning of Democracy. We are regularly voting in elections for choosing the mayor of our city, the president of our region or the composition of our parliament; we are voting for taking decisions in Referendums, to decide the future development of corporations in business meetings or to take community decisions in social participation processes. Even if voting systems are not easy to change (as we could see on the failed Polish elections of May 2020), there is a debate on how to introduce technology to make the electoral process easier to manage. At the end of the 90s, the idea that we were going to be able to vote using the internet was generalized and there was a wave of optimism towards the benefits that the internet could bring to our democracies. So far, it did not happen as expected. Many countries tried and tested internet or electronic voting systems, but few of them put them in place in real electoral contexts. Amongst them Estonia, Switzerland, Norway, Canada or Australia. Amid the reasons for this lack of success, the lack of trust in internet voting systems has been commonly raised.

But recently, Covid-19 pandemic placed elections between a rock and a hard place. We could see how up to 64 countries had to postpone elections between March and June 2020. In other cases, the normal development of elections caused a new peak in the number of cases of infections (for example, in the elections in Surinam in May 2020). As a result, the debates on how to preserve democracy became reignited again. Many countries rushed to propose alternative ways of casting votes and, in this context, internet voting has been brought up again as a possible mid- to long-term alternative solution.

We are proposing this research in order to better understand the dynamics of creation of trust and distrust towards internet voting, as a way to contribute to this debate and help to have better and more robust electoral systems, able to face possible future challenges like that Covid-19 is posing.

What do we want to achieve?. We want to understand how the discourses of trust and distrust towards internet voting systems are created and disseminated and which impact they have in the process of proposition and implementation of such systems.

How we will do it?. We aim to compare 4 countries at different stages of development of implementation of internet voting: **1) Poland:** Internet voting has never been implemented, but there has been a recent heated debate on the suitability of different voting systems; **2) Norway:** Internet voting was proposed, tested and implemented in local elections, but then withdrawn due to lack of trust related issues; **3) Switzerland:** Internet voting has been in use for several years at cantonal level but it is currently in stand-by due to the detection of vulnerabilities in the system; **4) Estonia:** Internet voting is in place since 2005, with raising levels of use and trust in the system. We will develop case studies in each one of the aforementioned countries using two main ways of gather information: **1) Discourse analysis and interviews with sociopolitical actors** in order to map the discourses of trust and distrust towards internet voting; **2) Quantitative experiments** (QMethodology) with citizens to check how the discourses of trust and distrust on internet voting are being adopted by citizenry.

What do we expect to get?. Our expectations are related to two particular fields. On one hand, we want to enrich the research on electoral innovation and internet voting. We strongly believe that a better understanding of trust and distrust dynamics will contribute to the debate on implementation of technology for governance and can help to electoral administrations to take informed decisions. Connected with this second element, mutually reinforcing, we aim to create a set of recommendations, in collaboration with an international organization, to improve the processes of modernization of democratic systems.