

Monitoring mass-media during the election campaign for 2014 Parliamentary elections (general conclusions)

Report no. 2

8 – 31 October 2014



The monitoring occurs under a project financed by National Endowment for Democracy (SUA), the US Embassy to the Republic of Moldova and East-European Foundation (from the financial resources provided by the Swedish Government via the Swedish International Cooperation and Development Agency (Sida) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark /DANIDA).

The opinions herein belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect the point of view of the financers.

I. General information

1.1 Objective of the project: monitoring and informing the public opinion on the editorial conduct of mass-media institutions during the election campaign for Parliamentary elections in Republic of Moldova.

1.2 Monitoring period: 1 October 2014 – 30 November 2014.

1.3 Criteria for selecting mass-media institutions subject to monitoring:

Mass-media institutions were selected basing on the following objective criteria: a) form of ownership; b) geography; c) language of broadcasting. Thus, public and private mass-media institutions, with national, quasi-national and regional coverage, in Romanian and Russian languages, shall be subject to monitoring.

1.4 Monitored mass-media¹:

TV

Accent TV, Canal 2, Canal 3, Canal Regional, GRT, Jurnal TV, Moldova 1, N4, Prime TV, ProTV Chişinău, TV7, Publika TV

Radio

Radio Moldova, Radio Noroc, Radio Plai, Russkoie Radio, Vocea Basarabiei

Print press

Jurnal de Chişinău, Komsomolskaia pravda v Moldove, Moldova Suverană, Nezaavisimaia Moldova, Panorama, Timpul, Vesti Gagauzii, Ziarul Naţional

Online portals

Deschide.md, Jurnal.md, Moldova24.info, Moldova.org, Newsmaker.md, Noi.md, Omg.md, Politik.md, Realitatea.md, Unimedia.info

1.5 Object of monitoring

TV

- A. Electoral news items from the main informative edition of the day;
- B. Electoral shows (one from each TV channel);
- C. Paid electoral advertising;
- D. Electoral debates.

Radio

All news programs, debate shows and advertising during prime-time. The monitoring interval: from 6.00 a.m. till 1.00 p.m. and from 5.00 p.m. till 8.00 p.m., on a daily basis.

Print press

The entire publishing content of monitored periodicals, including advertising.

Online portals

The entire editorial content of websites, including advertising. As for video materials posted on the website, these will only be mentioned, without monitoring their content.

¹ In alphabetical order

1.6. Team

The project is implemented within the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, by the Association of Electronic Press (TV monitoring), Association of Independent Press (print and online media monitoring), and Independent Journalism Centre (radio and online media monitoring).

2. Methodological framework

The content analysis of media institutions was performed basing on several indicators allowing for the quantification and qualification of electoral news/ shows, frequency of protagonists of various categories, journalists' compliance with professional norms.

Categories of protagonists:

- Public officials;
- Politicians;
- Experts;
- Ordinary citizens;
- Others.

Categories of institutions:

- Presidency;
- Parliament;
- Government;
- Local public administration;
- Political parties.

Quantitative analysis:

- Frequency of occurrence of political stakeholders: a) direct interventions; b) mentioning/appearance;
- Duration of occurrence of political stakeholders: a) direct interventions; b) mentioning/appearance;
- Number of electoral news/shows;
- Number of conflict-type electoral news items;
- Number of protagonists in electoral news/shows;
- Parity of genders among protagonists.

Qualitative analysis:

- Context of presenting political stakeholders in news: a) positive; b) negative; c) neutral.
- Journalist's attitude towards the political stakeholders in the show: a) favouring b) disfavouring, b) imPatrial;
- Number of sources in conflict-type news items: a) a single source; b) two or more sources;
- Compliance with the principle of imPatriality in news: a) biasness; b) unbiasedness.

3. General conclusions 18-31 October 2014

- The manner in which some of the monitored television channels cover Parliamentary elections in their main daily news program does not contribute to a correct information of voters, the news being produced mainly to promote one or another candidate than to provide the voters with complex and relevant information about the election process and competitors;
- Each third electoral piece of news of conflicting nature was produced basing on a single source, being thus misbalanced;

- In 16% of news items, TV reporters displayed a Patrial attitude, which stands for a deviation from professional deontology;
- From all the categories of electoral news protagonists, politicians had the greatest visibility, and experts – the most reduced one. Women-protagonists in electoral news from TV continue to have an insignificant place (22%);
- *TV Moldova 1, Canal Regional* and *GRT* generally maintained a balance of the presence of stakeholders who are monitored in electoral news during the reference period;
- *Prime TV, Publika TV, Canal 2* and *Canal 3* ensured the greatest number of appearances in electoral news to the representatives of Democratic Party from Moldova, displaying them mainly in a positive context and massively favouring this electoral competitor. Thus, *Publika TV* related mainly about the Democratic Party's activities in its news (74 appearances, including 38 times in a positive context, and the other in a neutral context). During the main news programme from *Prime TV*, Democratic Party was mentioned 75 times, including 60 times – in a positive light. On *Canal 3* and *Canal 2*, the same party was repeatedly a detached leader in terms of visibility in positive and neutral context, overpassing all the other competitors taken altogether;
- *Jurnal TV* has also publicised Democratic Party most frequently, but mainly in a negative light (33 times out of the total number of 41 appearances). Other electoral competitors were also described negatively (Liberal Democratic Party from R.Moldova, Party of Communists from R.Moldova, Socialist Party from R.Moldova, Liberal Party, PPP- “Patria” Political Party), but having a much reduced frequency as compared to Democratic Party which is disfavoured by Jurnal TV;
- *Accent TV* showed visible preference for several monitored stakeholders, which they publicised more frequently in a negative manner, disfavoured them (Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party), whereas a single competitor was shown in a negative light – Socialist Party.
- *Pro TV Chişinău* ensured a relatively balanced visibility of personalised and institutionalised stakeholders in the electoral context;
- *TV 7* publicised most frequently the following electoral competitors: Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Liberal Party, Party of Communists, Liberal Reformative Party and Socialist Party. Liberal Democratic Party and also Democratic Party were shown predominantly in a positive and neutral context;
- on *TV N4*, the Liberal Democratic Party was displayed only positively or neutrally, and the negative context was reserved to Democratic Party and Party of Communists;
- The national public broadcaster *Radio Moldova* and the private radio station *Vocea Basarabiei* have been actively involved in covering the election campaign in their news, *Radio Moldova* disseminating an imposing number of electoral education materials. The fewest news items bearing a direct or indirect electoral nature were spread by the national-coverage radio channel *Noroc*. At the same time, *Radio Noroc* was the only radio station which launched the electoral debates on November 20;
- Most news items from *Radio Moldova* and *Vocea Basarabiei* ensured the diversity of sources. The news items from *Vocea Basarabiei* distinguished themselves by including numerous citizens and experts, as well as by ensuring a greater presence of female sources. *Radio Noroc, Radio Plai* and *Ruskoie Radio* registered gaps at this chapter, resorting mainly to politicians and state officials as sources;
- The top chart of the most publicised protagonists from the 5 monitored radio stations counts representatives from the Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party and Liberal Party, who had the majority of interventions and mentioning in positive and neutral context. Grounding on the frequency and context of their appearance in news, we conclude a slight tendency for favouring the Democratic Party and Liberal Party at *Radio Moldova*, and massive favouring of Liberal Democratic Party at *Vocea Basarabiei*. The radio station *Plai* favoured the Democratic Party via its increased cases of reporting about representatives of this electoral competitor mainly in the positive light, as well as reporting about the Minister of Economy, who follows to be re-included on the

Democratic Party's electoral list. *Russkoie radio* slightly favoured the Democratic Party, namely by distributing numerous positive materials about the Minister of Economy, exponent of the Democratic Party;

- The great majority of the monitored radio stations registered problems as regards the balance of controversial news items;

- Most online mass-media subject to monitoring have covered the campaign in materials of both direct and indirect electoral nature. While documenting themselves, the portals opted for politicians and state officials, to the detriment of experts and ordinary citizens, and the proportion between male and female sources was much more inclined towards the male ones;

- Only 35.6% of conflictual news items from online media were covered professionally, as all parties of the conflict were quoted. *Newsmaker.md* is the single portal which had a well-balanced attitude in mirroring all materials on a controversial subject. As for the portals *Politik.md*, *Omg.md* and *Realitatea.md*, these registered the highest discrepancy between the number of conflictual news items presented in a rather balanced manner and the number of conflictual news items which represented the perspective of a single party, i.e. news items were rather misbalanced;

- Most of the analysed portals gave the floor to numerous stakeholders both from the governmental arch, as well as from Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary opposition. Based on the frequency and context of protagonists' occurrence in news of direct or indirect nature, one can not assert that the massive favouring of any of the electoral competitors has been registered. Simultaneously, the portals *Realitatea.md* and *Deschide.md* highlighted a massive disfavouring of the Liberal Democratic Party, and a more subtle disfavouring of Socialist Party and "Patria" Political Party. As for *Unimedia.info*, a slight favouring of Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party is noticed. *Moldova24.info* distinguished itself through a great disfavouring of Liberal Democratic Party and favouring of Democratic Party, as well as a slight favouring of "Patria" Political Party. *Noi.md* presented the main parties in different contexts (positive and neutral, as well as negative): Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Communist Party and Liberal Party, as well as Socialist Party and "Patria" Political Party. *Jurnal.md* disfavoured Democratic Party (103 negative coverages and 10 neutral appearances), and more seldom – Liberal Democratic and Communist Parties. *Omg.md* depicted Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party in a negative light, whereas *Politik.md* reported about the main political stakeholders in various contexts, with more inclination towards the negative and neutral contexts;

- The majority of portals registered gaps regarding the compliance with professional principles for ensuring pluralism and equilibrium of sources, as well as impartiality and objectivity. The most numerous problems of this kind were registered at *Moldova24.info*;

- The portal *Newsmaker.md* covered electoral news items in an impartial way, i.e. the opinion of the journalist has not been directly or indirectly expressed in the published text; the portals *Realitatea.md*, *Unimedia.info* and *Moldova.org* had few cases of biased coverage of electoral issues, although not in all the cases had the materials been balanced. Most biased materials were published by *Jurnal.md* (55.5% of the total amount of texts), *Omg.md* (55.5%) and *Politik.md* (40.6%).

- The majority of monitored newspapers cover the election campaign through the perspective of the electoral sympathies/dislikes of the publishers, which is frequently to the detriment of citizens' objective information;

- 55% of the published materials over this period in the newspapers subject to monitoring were biased, i.e. the journalist's opinion could easily be perceived by the readers;

- In most of the cases, male politicians were the newspapers' sources of information, being followed by state officials of various categories, citizens and experts;

- *Nezavisimaia Moldova* is the publication which proves the maximum number of deontology problems: all articles with controversial subjects mirrored a single point of view, being thus misbalanced, and all texts reporting about elections, with a single exception only, were biased, since

they exposed (and) the opinion of the journalist. The newspaper massively favours the Communist Party and criticizes the absolute majority of the other electoral competitors, especially Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Liberal Reformativ Party, Liberal Party, as well as Socialist Party from R.Moldova and “Patria” Political Party;

- In its content, *Moldova Suverană* disfavours the Socialist Party which is illustrated more in a negative context (in some cases - neutrally), as well as “Patria” Political Party. At the same time, the newspaper sympathises with Liberal Democratic Party which is mainly covered neutrally or positively;

- During the reference period, *Jurnal de Chişinău* did not mirror any electoral competitor in a positive light, and Liberal Reformativ Party, Liberal Democratic Party, Communist Party and Democratic Party were the most publicised competitors both in a neutral and negative context;

- *Komsomolskaia pravda v Moldove* reported about the electoral competitors mainly in a neutral way, and the most publicised were Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Liberal Party, Socialist Party, Communist Party and “Patria” Political Party. The newspaper posted more commercial materials, especially promotion articles and lay-outs of Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, “Patria” Political Party, Socialist Party;

- *Timpul* mirrored the electoral competitors in a different context - Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party and Liberal Party being the most publicised ones, and mainly in a neutral context. The electoral competitors Socialist Party and “Patria” Political Party are more frequently discussed in a negative context;

- *Panorama* disfavours certain parliamentary parties (Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party and Communist Party), and the electoral competitor Christian Democrat Popular Party is the single competitor mirrored in a positive background, as well as favoured given the extensive surface of direct intervention (a two-page interview with Iurie Roşca);

- *Vesti Gagauzii* briefly covered the electoral campaign during the reference period, and displayed preference towards the Socialist Party in one of its published articles;

- *Ziarul Naţional* favours the Liberal Democratic Party, as this electoral competitor is mirrored mainly in a positive and neutral background. Parties such as Democratic Party, Liberal Reformativ Party and Liberal Party were described positively in more seldom cases. Instead, the Communist Party, Socialist Party and “Patria” Political Party almost every time appeared in a negative and disfavoured context.

Note:

Monitoring reports shall be translated and posted on the following websites: www.alegeliber.md, www.api.md, www.media-azi.md, www.apel.md