

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

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23 – 30 November 2014¹



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

¹ The integral report will be posted on the following websites: www.alegeliber.md, www.api.md, www.media-azi.md, www.apel.md

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-media²:

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

²

In alphabetical order

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.

1.6. 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).

1.7 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) favoring b) disfavoring, b) impartial;
- Number of sources in conflict-type news items: a) a single source; b) two or more sources;
- Compliance with the principle of impartiality in news: a) biasness; b) unbiasedness.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS 23-30 NOVEMBER 2014

TV:

- During the last week of the electoral campaign, 11 out of 12 monitored TV channels (exception: *GRT*) broadcast a significantly higher number of electoral news items as compared to the previous periods. *GRT*, through its reduced number of electoral news and through the extremely low number of protagonists, did not provide the regional public with a complex and sufficient information about Parliamentary elections;
- As compared to the previous periods, the situation slightly improved as regards the number of sources in conflict-type news and compliance with the principle of impartiality;
- Broadly speaking, just as the last time, the monitored TV channels ensured a certain level of equilibrium while reporting in their electoral news about two categories of protagonists: state officials and politicians;
- Throughout the entire monitoring period, 4 TV channels – *Prime Tv*, *Publika Tv*, *Canal 2* and *Canal 3*, have massively publicized a single electoral competitor – Democratic Party, placing it in a positive context and showing preference for it;
- Similar to the previous periods, 2 TV channels – *Accent Tv* and *Jurnal Tv*, have massively reported about the Democratic Party, disfavoring it and placing it in a negative light;
- *Tv7* and *N4* have somehow favored the electoral competitor Liberal Democratic Party and its leaders;
- **General conclusion: the monitored television channels did not change their editorial policies during the last week of election campaign, and a good deal of TV channels continued to show preference for certain electoral competitors and/or disfavor others, to the detriment of voters' adequate information;**
- During 23-28 November 2014, 11 out of 12 monitored TV channels broadcast altogether 40 electoral shows, during which 17 electoral competitors were mirrored out of the total number of 25. Most electoral competitors were presented at the show *Politica* from *TV7* (10), and the least – at the debate show *În profunzime* from *Pro TV Chişinău* (1);
- The presenters proved a partial attitude towards the personalized protagonists and/or electoral competitors 53 times, being signaled 11 cases of favoring and 42 cases of disfavoring attitude towards the protagonists;
- 11 out of 12 monitored TV channels broadcast paid electoral advertising for 13 electoral competitors;
- Five electoral competitors (Liberal Democratic Party, Party of Socialists, „Patria” Political Party, Liberal Party and the independent candidate Oleg Cernei) posted paid advertising on the same TV channels as in the previous reporting period, while three other competitors (Party of Communists, Liberal Reformative Party and People’s Party) completed their list of TV channels for posting paid electoral advertising;
- The highest visibility achieved via the electoral video clips was achieved by the Democratic Party, whereas the lowest – by Electoral Bloc – Customs Union and „People’s Force” Party;
- Over this period, no cases of breaking the rules for posting paid electoral advertising on TV have been signaled.
- 6 out of the 12 monitored TV channels broadcast electoral debate shows, which were attended, cumulatively, by representatives of 20 electoral competitors;
- In most of the cases, the presenters had an appropriate conduct in relation to the electoral competitors. Still, deviations in this sense were registered at the national public television channel. The presenters of electoral debates from *Moldova 1* continued to ignore the principle of equidistance and correctness even in the last days of the election campaign, adopting a rather disfavoring attitude towards the electoral competitors.

Radio:

- In the last week of the campaign, some radio broadcasters (*Radio Moldova, Vocea Basarabiei*) allocated space for covering election-related events both in news programs and electoral education clips, as well as during debates and electoral advertising, while others limited themselves only at emitting electoral education clips and electoral competitors' advertising (*Radio Noroc, Radio Plai*). The most numerous and diverse news items were spread by the national public broadcaster *Radio Moldova* (207), whereas the least – by radio station *Noroc* (28). *Radio Moldova* highlighted itself through a great number of electoral education clips (134), and organization of debates involving a big and diverse number of electoral competitors;
- The monitored stations reflected the campaign by means of simple materials, and the proportion of conflict-type news was low (approx. 5%). A good deal of controversial news was misbalanced (57%), and the authors' attitudes were correct and unbiased in the great majority of cases (97%). The most balance-free materials were registered at *Vocea Basarabiei* and *Ruskoie radio* (7 and, accordingly 5);
- Most radio stations quoted mainly state officials in relevant news items, except for *Vocea Basarabiei* and *Radio Moldova*, which ensured a higher diversity of sources. At the same time, in terms of gender proportion of quoted sources, a massive imbalance may be concluded to the detriment of female sources (10% versus 90% male sources);
- *Radio Moldova, Vocea Basarabiei* and *Ruskoie radio* ensured access for a bigger number of electoral competitors both in news and debate shows, while *Radio Noroc* and *Radio Plai* gave the floor to a low number of competitors, failing to cover the election campaign in news;
- In terms of the frequency and context of electoral competitors' occurrences, it may be stated that no clear favoring or disfavoring of any electoral competitor may be found at *Radio Moldova* and *Ruskoie radio* ;
- The radio station *Vocea Basarabiei* continued to favor the Liberal Democratic Party through the great number of direct interventions and references in a positive context;
- The other radio stations subject to monitoring – *Radio Noroc* and *Radio Plai* – did not have enough news addressing the electoral competitors to allow for the assessment of their conduct.

Online:

- The number of direct or indirect electoral materials, published by the 10 monitored portals during the week 23-30 November 2014, increased considerably, being almost double as compared to the previous week (1160 electoral news items on a surface exceeding 2 million signs). Among the portals with the most relevant materials, one may count: *Realitatea.md* (152), *Deschide.md* (150), *Politik.md* (135) and *Unimedia.info* (129).
- The amount of electoral education materials also augmented, overall being published 35 of this kind, most of them on *Realitatea.md* (11) and *Moldova 24.info* (10);
- The majority of portals preserved the tendency to reflect the parties in conflict-type articles in a misbalanced manner. Thus, more than 71% of the totals of 153 controversial materials have quoted a single source of the conflict. The highest rate of misbalanced news from all conflict-type materials was registered at *Noi.md* (36 out of 38 news items addressing a conflict were misbalanced – 94.7%), *Jurnal.md* (94.1%), *Deschide.md* (65%), *Moldova 24.info* (73.9%) and *Moldova.org* (88%, note: at this portal, the number of materials involving conflict situations was smaller);
- The great majority of materials (81.7% of news, except for electoral education materials) were impartial, as for the rest – the author's opinion was obvious. All materials posted on *Unimedia.info* were impartial, with one exception only. The portals *Omg.md, Noi.md, Politik.md* and *Jurnal.md* registered the biggest discrepancies between the number of

impartial materials and those which conveyed the opinion/position of author towards the approached subject.

- In terms of information sources, online portals resorted most frequently to politicians (40.8% out of the 872 sources), experts (25.8%) and state officials (16.7%), the weight of ordinary citizens being much smaller;
- Just as in the previous periods, electoral news was strongly imbalanced in terms of gender proportion, the great majority of quoted sources being male (91.6%). The best indicator to display the genders was scored by *Jurnal.md* (27 female sources or 21.4% of the total). The portal *Moldova24.info* did not have any female source during the reference period;
- The majority of portals covered mainly topics about the Parliamentary parties from the governing coalition or Parliamentary opposition, whereas the extra-Parliamentary parties and independent candidates were mirrored less or not reflected at all;
- In terms of the allocated space, frequency and context of direct occurrences and references to the protagonists, the portal *Deschide.md* registered a slight favoring of the Liberal Party;
- *Moldova.org* showed preferences for Liberal Reformative Party and Democratic Party through the big number of interventions and positive references;
- The materials published by the portal *Moldova 24.info* highlight the dislike towards the Liberal Democratic Party and preference for „Patria” Political Party, through the big number of direct interventions and frequent mentioning, as well as allocated space;
- *Noi.md* favored the electoral competitor Party of Communists through the frequent mentioning, mainly in neutral and positive context, and also due to the great space for direct interventions. Simultaneously, the electoral competitors „Patria” Political Party and Party of Socialists were rather disfavored, due to the great number of presentations in a negative context;
- *Jurnal.md* showed preference for the Liberal Reformative Party by mirroring it almost exclusively in a positive context and due to the increased surface given for direct interventions of this electoral competitor’s representatives, just as for the independent candidate Oleg Cernei. Like the entire period of monitoring, the Democratic Party appeared in a negative context almost each time (53 times). In a mainly negative context, but much more seldom as the Democratic Party, was the electoral competitor „Patria” Political Party covered, and sometimes Liberal Democratic Party, Party of Socialists and Party of Communists;
- *Omg.md* continued to report only about several electoral competitors, massively favoring „Patria” Political Party via the surface allocated for direct interventions /quotes and appearances in neutral and positive context. At the same time, the Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party, and more seldom the Party of Communists, were vehemently criticized and disfavored through frequent occurrence in negative circumstances;
- *Newsmaker.md* displayed preference for „Patria” Political Party by frequently publicizing it (46 occurrences, including 10 in a positive context and 34 in a neutral one) and a huge space for direct interventions;
- *Politik.md* favored the electoral competitors „Patria” Political Party, People’s Party and Party of Socialists, by the great number of appearances in mainly positive context and by the surface allocated for direct interventions;
- No clear tendencies for favoring or disfavored any electoral competitor were noticed at the other portals.

Newspapers:

- During the last week of the election campaign, the 8 monitored newspapers published 136 articles which addressed the elections either directly or indirectly, with a surface exceeding 63 thousand sq.cm., these quantitative indicators being the highest from all the monitored weeks. The most numerous relevant materials appeared in *Moldova Suverană* (28) and

- Nezavisimaia Moldova* (26), while *Vesti Gagauzii* had only 2 relevant articles which did not address any of the electoral competitors;
- 75% of articles were ordinary news (102 items per total), and 30 approached a controversial issue in the context of elections;
 - Neither this week have the newspapers dealt with the electoral education of their citizens, overall being published even less materials of this kind as compared to the previous weeks - only 4, including 2 – in *KP v Moldove*;
 - The deontological principle of balanced coverage of all parties involved in the conflict was totally neglected by the newspapers, *Ziarul Național* being the single publication which reported on controversial issues in a relatively balanced way. All the other news presented a only one opinion/perspective when addressing a conflict (except for *Vesti Gagauzii*, which did not have such materials). The situation remains serious in the case of newspaper *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, which presented all the 22 conflict issues publicized this week in a misbalanced manner;
 - Less than half (47.7%) of articles on electoral topics were impartial, the rest addressed the elections and the electoral competitors from the author's perspective and his/her opinion was obvious. Also, similarly biased were all the 25 articles on election topic, published in *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, 9 out of 15 articles published in *Panorama*;
 - Overall, the newspapers have quoted 135 sources, mainly experts (41) and politicians (40). Ordinary citizens were rarely quoted, only 26 times and most frequently in *KP v Moldove* and *Nezavisimaia Moldova*;
 - The principle of gender equality was neglected by the monitored newspapers to a great extent, just as in the previous monitoring periods: only 14% of sources (19 out of 135) were women, and *Moldova Suverană* and *Vesti Gagauzii* quoted no female source in their articles about the election campaign. Almost half of female sources occurred in *KP v Moldove*;
 - In terms of the number of occurrences and references to electoral competitors in articles, the surface assigned to them and context of presentation, one may conclude that, during the week 23-30 November 2014, the newspaper *Moldova Suverană* continued to favor the electoral competitor Liberal Democratic Party, which was 12 times reported about and each time in a favorable manner. Electoral competitors „Patria” Political Party and Party of Socialists, however, were disfavored, being depicted only in a negative context (15 and, accordingly, 14 times);
 - *Timpul* showed preference for the electoral competitor Liberal Party which was mentioned in multiple cases in positive situations. Party of Socialists and Party of Communists were reflected, on the contrary, in a negative background, being thus disfavored, just as „Patria” Political Party;
 - During the reporting period, *Panorama* clearly showed preference for the electoral competitor Party of Renaissance (Rom-Rus: „Renaștere-Vozrojdenie”) which occurred 7 times in a positive context and was provided a relatively bigger space for direct interventions (quotes). On the other hand, the Democratic Party was considerably disfavored, being frequently presented in a negative context;
 - *Nezavisimaia Moldova* carried on their massive favoring of the Party of Communists, which was almost exclusively covered in a positive context (out of 27 occurrences - 26 being in a positive context, plus direct interventions of this party's leader on a surface of 2720 sq.cm). The Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Liberal Party, and more seldom the Party of Socialists and „Patria” Political Party, on the contrary, were disfavored by being presented in a negative context almost every time;
 - *Ziarul Național* massively disfavored „Patria” Political Party by frequently mirroring it in a negative light (15 times). The electoral competitor Liberal Democratic Party enjoyed an

opposite editorial treatment, being the single party which was presented in a positive context;

- *Jurnal de Chişinău* did not favor any electoral competitor, whereas the Party of Socialists and „Patria” Political Party were mainly mentioned in a negative context;
- *KP v Moldova* reported about all the electoral competitors only in the neutral context, whereas *Vesti Gagauzii* practically did not refer to the electoral competitors at all.