

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

Final Report
1 October 2014 – 30 November 2014¹



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.

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

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.

²

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).

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 1 OCTOBER 2014 - 30 NOVEMBER 2014

TV:

- 8 out of the 12 monitored TV channels clearly favored and/or disfavored certain politicians and electoral competitors by means of electoral news via the main news programs of the day. In the case of 4 other TV channels, no clear tendency to show preference and/or dislike for a specific electoral competitor was shown. Thus, the great majority of television channels deliberately failed as regards their publicly announced intention (in editorial policy statements for the election campaign) to inform the voters correctly.
- *Moldova 1* has generally covered the election campaign in their news in a balanced manner. Nevertheless, the monitoring data indicate upon certain problems related to the small number of conflict-type news items; number of sources in conflict-type news; number of protagonists in news; equilibrium of protagonist categories in news and gender parity. *Moldova 1* slightly favored one state official (I. Leancă) via his number of occurrences and their context in electoral news;
- *Prime Tv, Publika Tv, Canal 2* and *Canal 3* presented the Parliamentary elections in an adequate manner to a great extent, in terms of electoral news items, number of protagonists on average per news item, number of impartial news items and approaches of state officials. At the same time, *Prime Tv, Publica Tv, Canal 2* and *Canal 3* visibly covered the election campaign in a misbalanced manner, on the following segments: frequency and context of politicians and electoral competitors' occurrences in news; frequency of direct interventions and duration thereof for each electoral competitor; equilibrium of protagonist categories in news and gender parity. *Prime Tv, Publica Tv, Canal 2* and *Canal 3* clearly favored one single electoral competitor – Democratic Party;
- *Pro Tv Chişinău* was the TV channel to cover the election campaign in the most balanced and adequate manner. Still, there are some problems associated to the equilibrium of protagonist categories and gender parity;
- *Tv 7* has, to a great extent, mirrored the Parliamentary elections in a correct manner, if to consider the number of electoral news, number of sources in conflict-type news, number of protagonists on average per news item, and the number of impartial news. At the same time, *Tv 7* presented the election campaign divided by segments: protagonists' occurrence and context exposed in news; frequency of electoral competitors' direct interventions and their duration; equilibrium of protagonist categories in news and gender parity. *Tv 7* openly showed preference for one single electoral competitor – Liberal Democratic Party;
- *Jurnal Tv*, to a great extent, covered the Parliamentary elections appropriately, if judging from the number of electoral news, number of conflict-type news, number of sources in conflict-type news, number of protagonists on average per news item, references to state officials and frequency of direct interventions of electoral competitors and their duration. At the same time, *Jurnal Tv* was rather misbalanced in covering the campaign on the following segments: number of biased news items; frequency politicians and electoral competitors' occurrences and context thereof in news; equilibrium of protagonist categories in news and gender parity. *Jurnal TV* was very obvious in disfavoring a politician (V. Plahotniuc) and an electoral competitor - Democratic Party;
- *N4* has adequately reflected the Parliamentary elections if referring to the number of electoral news items, number of sources in conflict-type news, number of protagonists on average per news item. Simultaneously, *N4* was rather misbalanced on the following sectors: number of partial news items; frequency and context of protagonists' occurrences in news; frequency of direct interventions and duration thereof for each electoral competitor; equilibrium of protagonist categories in news and gender parity. *N4* showed clear preference for an electoral competitor - Liberal Democratic Party;

- *Accent Tv*, generally speaking, mirrored the Parliamentary elections in a correct way if referring to the number of electoral news, number of conflict-type news, number of protagonists on average per news item, frequency of protagonists in electoral news, frequency and context of direct interventions of state officials. At the same time, *Accent Tv* covered the election campaign in a misbalanced manner on the segments: number of sources in conflict-type news; number of biased news; context of politicians and electoral competitors' occurrences in news; frequency of direct interventions and duration thereof for each electoral competitor; equilibrium of protagonist categories in news and gender parity. *Accent Tv* clearly disfavored two politicians (V. Filat and V. Plahotniuc) and two electoral competitors – Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party. At the same time, *Accent Tv* showed preference for two politicians (R. Usatîi and I. Dodon) and two electoral competitors – „Patria” Political Party and Party of Socialists;
- *Canal Regional*, broadly speaking, mirrored the Parliamentary elections in an appropriate manner, if judging according to the number of electoral news items, number of protagonists, number of protagonists on average per news item, gender balance in terms of category „experts”. Nevertheless, monitoring data reveal certain problems as regards the limited number of conflict-type news; number of sources in conflict-type news; number of biased news items; in certain cases – frequency of protagonists' occurrences in news; equilibrium of protagonist categories in news and gender parity as regards certain categories of protagonists.
- *GRT* properly reflected the Parliamentary elections, if referring to the number of impartial news items, frequency and context of protagonists' occurrences in news; frequency of direct interventions and duration thereof for each electoral competitor. *GRT* inappropriately mirrored the Parliamentary elections, if we were to consider the number of electoral news items; number of conflict-type news; number of sources in conflict-type news; number of protagonists, including politicians and, namely, electoral competitors; number of protagonists on average per news item; equilibrium of protagonist categories in news and gender parity;
- The 12 TV channels subject to monitoring have jointly broadcast 241 electoral shows, their number varying from 2 to 43 shows;
- The greatest number of electoral competitors were publicized during the show *Politica* from *TV7* (25), and the least – during the show *În profunzime* from *Pro TV Chişinău* (6);
- Democratic Party was the electoral competitor which benefited from the greatest number of direct interventions, and with the most numerous references under electoral shows;
- Party of Communists was the electoral competitor with the highest visibility, being mentioned during the shows at the monitored TV channels;
- Moderators of electoral show displayed a biased attitude towards personalized protagonists and/or electoral competitors for 190 times, signaling 34 cases of favoring and 156 cases of disfavoring attitude towards the protagonists;
- 11 of the 12 monitored TV channels spread paid electoral advertising;
- Both in terms of the number of TV channels which broadcast its advertising and duration of video clips, the Liberal Democratic Party had the highest visibility and Electoral Block – Customs Union and Party „Force of People” the lowest;
- 4 TV channels committed infringements for rules with regard to posting paid advertising on television.
- 8 of the 12 monitored TV channels broadcast electoral debate shows;
- In most of the cases, the moderators displayed an appropriate conduct towards the electoral competitors. Nevertheless, the TV channels *Moldova 1* and *Jurnal TV* registered deviations in this respect.

- National coverage TV channels *Canal 2* and *Canal 3* did not organize any debates, breaking, thus, the law which obliges them to do so, as well as Statements on editorial policy during the election campaign, approved by BCC, by which they committed to organize two debate shows each, during the period 01-15 November 2014;
- National coverage TV channels *Prime TV* and *Publika TV* broadcast electoral debate shows at inappropriate time (6.17, 6.20, 6.52, 10.15, 11.15, 12.15), limiting, thus, the number of potential TV viewers. Even if the legislation has not been infringed, the TV channels failed to adequately use the debates for the correct information of voters.

Radio:

- The monitored radio stations have covered the election campaign differently: certain radio broadcasters ensured space in news programs, in electoral education clips, as well as during debates and electoral advertising, others limited themselves to the broadcasting of electoral education clips and advertising;
- Most and diverse news were issued by the public broadcaster *Radio Moldova* (537), whereas the least – by the radio station *Radio Noroc* (127);
- *Radio Moldova*, *Russkoie radio* and *Radio Noroc* highlighted themselves through an imposing number of electoral education clips, as well as through a great number of advertising clips;
- National coverage radio stations *Radio Noroc* and *Radio Plai* have briefly covered the campaign in news and organized a reduced number of electoral shows, failing to bring enough information about electoral platforms of candidates to the voters;
- The majority of radio stations quoted mainly state officials and politicians in relevant news, except for *Vocea Basarabiei* and *Radio Moldova* which ensured a greater diversity of sources;
- In terms of gender balance of the quoted sources, a massive misbalance is registered to the detriment of female sources (12% female versus 88% male sources);
- In terms of the frequency and context of electoral competitors' occurrences, one may assert that *Radio Moldova*, *Radio Noroc* and *Russkoie radio* did not show any clear favoring or disfavoring of any electoral competitor;
- The radio station *Plai* favored the Democratic Party through its increased number of remarks brought to this competitor in news (82 or 66% of total number of remarks) mainly in a positive and neutral context;
- *Vocea Basarabiei* favored the Liberal Democratic Party by the great number of direct interventions and positive references to representatives of the electoral competitor (232 or 40% of the total number), from which 117 were mirroring a positive context;
- *Radio Moldova* and *Vocea Basarabiei* provided access to a great number of electoral competitors both in news and debate shows, while *Russkoie radio*, *Radio Noroc* and *Radio Plai* gave the floor to a limited number of electoral competitors.

Online:

- Online press subject to monitoring has actively engaged in covering the election campaign, focusing on various issues of direct or indirect electoral nature. The portals with the biggest number of materials relevant for monitoring are - *Omg.md* (625), *Realitatea.md* (621), *Noi.md* (620), *Jurnal.md* (501), *Politik.md* (496) and *Deschide.md* (469);
- The amount of electoral education materials in online media was very small– 86 per total, a good deal being published in the last week of the election campaign. Most of the electoral education materials were published by *Realitatea.md* (19), *Moldova24.info* (15) and *Unimedia.info* (14);
- The conflict-type materials were, to a great extent, misbalanced (73%). The portal with the best indicator for the equilibrium of controversial materials was *Newsmaker.md* (73.3% of

- such materials presented the opinions /positions of all parties involved), while the portals with the worst indicator of the equilibrium was *Politik.md* (only 13.4%) and *Omg.md* (only 15.6%);
- Each fourth material from online media was biased (24%), the author's opinion about the protagonists of materials being obvious. *Unimedia.info*, *Moldova.org*, *Realitatea.md* and *Newsmaker.md* had few problems as regards the impartial coverage of journalistic electoral issues, while *Omg.md* proved a biased attitude in 56.5% of articles, *Jurnal.md* – 49%, *Noi.md* and *Politik.md* – more than 30% of articles.
 - In terms of information sources, the monitored online portals resorted most frequently to politicians and state officials, the proportion of experts and ordinary citizens being much smaller. The news items were strongly misbalanced in terms of gender proportion, the great majority of quoted sources being male (91.8%!).
 - As regards the frequency and context of direct occurrences and references to the protagonists, the portal *Deschide.md* registered a slight disfavoring of the Liberal Democratic Party and „Patria” Political Party, which had the biggest number of occurrences and references in a negative context (62 and, accordingly, 50);
 - The portal *Moldova24.info* massively disfavored the Liberal Democratic Party (93 occurrences and references in a negative context) and showed preference for „Patria” Political Party (38 positive contexts and 69 neutral ones);
 - *Moldova.org* showed preference for the Democratic Party through the big number of interventions and positive references both of the representatives of Democratic Party, as well as members of the Government and Parliament on behalf of this party (31 positive occurrences and references);
 - The materials published by the portal *Realitatea.md* did not show any obvious preference for any electoral competitor. In comparison with other electoral competitors, the Liberal Democratic Party had most references in a negative context – 49;
 - In case of *Unimedia.info*, no massive favoring or disfavoring of any candidate for elections has been noticed. Electoral competitors who were most frequently mirrored in a positive context were: Democratic Party – 34 times and Liberal Democratic Party – 24 times.
 - *Noi.md* favored the electoral competitor Party of Communists through the frequent mentioning in neutral context (91 times) and positive one (43), and also due to the great space for direct interventions/quotations (more than 60 thousand signs, triple as compared to other candidates). At the same time, the Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Liberal Reformatory Party, „Patria” Political Party and Party of Socialists were more or less disfavored, scoring a big number of presentations in a negative context;
 - *Jurnal.md* massively disfavored the Democratic Party, which appeared in a negative light for 393 times during the monitoring period (92.7% of cases when being mentioned). Also, a mainly negative context was assigned to the Liberal Democratic Party (110 cases), Party of Communists (91), „Patria” Political Party (47), Party of Socialists (27);
 - *Omg.md* showed total preference for the electoral competitor „Patria” Political Party, via the surface allocated for direct interventions /quotes (more than 63 thousand signs, approximately four times more as compared to other electoral competitors) and appearances in positive context (74) and neutral one (100). Democratic Party was the most frequently criticized party by this portal, being reflected in a negative context (307 times or in 72.6% of cases when being reported about). A negative context was also assigned to Liberal Democratic Party, and more rarely – Party of Communists, Liberal Party, Liberal Reformatory Party and Party of Socialists;
 - *Newsmaker.md* slightly favored the electoral competitor Party of Socialists (20 occurrences in a positive context out of the 48 cases when being involved), and „Patria” Political Party

was provided with a surface for direct interventions/quotations exceeding 35 thousand signs, five times more as compared to other electoral competitors;

- *Politik.md* favored the electoral competitors: „Patria” Political Party (60 occurrences in a positive context out of the 109 cases when being involved, plus at least a double surface for direct interventions/quotations), Party of Socialists (from a total of 89 occurrences - 39 were in a positive context) and People’s Party (from a total of 72 occurrences - 35 were in a positive context, plus a big surface for direct interventions/quotations).

Newspapers:

- During the two months of monitoring, the newspapers being monitored published altogether 850 articles which addressed the Parliamentary elections either directly or indirectly. The most numerous relevant materials appeared in *Nezavisimaia Moldova* (179), *Moldova Suverană* (123), *Panorama* (122), *Timpul* (110) and *Komsomolskaia pravda v Moldove* (109), whereas the least – in *Vesti Gagauzii* (34);
- 81% of articles were ordinary news (689 items per total), and 133 approached a controversial issue in the context of elections. Half of the articles reporting about a conflict/accusations in electoral context belonged to *Nezavisimaia Moldova*;
- Newspapers were practically not interested in dealing with the electoral education of their citizens. Thus, for two months, the 8 newspapers subject to monitoring published only 28 articles of this kind, the most numerous – in *Jurnal de Chişinău* and *KP v Moldove* (8 articles each), whereas *Ziarul Naţional* did not publish any material related to electoral education;
- The deontological principle of balanced coverage of all parties involved in the conflict was complied with in 20% of such articles. An extremely serious situation was registered by the newspaper *Nezavisimaia Moldova* which had a misbalanced coverage of 62 out of the 66 controversial subjects;
- Only 44% 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. Thus, biasness existed in 92% (!) of articles on the election topic published in *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, 61% of articles from *Timpul*, 53% of articles from *Panorama*, 51% of articles published in *Moldova Suverană* and *Ziarul Naţional*;
- The newspapers quoted sources of various categories, most frequently politicians, as well as experts, state officials and citizens. Ordinary citizens were most frequently quoted by *Nezavisimaia Moldova* (62 times), mainly as regards their feedback or readers’ letters criticizing the governing parties;
- The principle of gender equality was neglected by the monitored newspapers to a great extent, only 15% of the quoted sources (132 out of 904) being women;
- 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 the newspaper *Moldova Suverană* massively favored the electoral competitor Liberal Democratic Party which was reported about in a favorable manner (from 67 references, 38 were in a positive context and 27 – in a neutral one). The other electoral competitors were reflected both neutrally and negatively, except for „Patria” Political Party and Party of Socialists, which appeared mainly in a negative light;
- *Timpul* showed preference for the electoral competitors Democratic Party and Liberal Party which were mostly mentioned in positive and neutral situations. Party of Socialists, „Patria” Political Party and Party of Communists, on the contrary, were reflected in a negative background, being thus disfavored;
- *Panorama* clearly showed preference for the electoral competitors: Party of Socialists and „Patria” Political Party, which were reported about mainly in a positive context and provided with relatively huge space for direct interventions (quotations). On the other hand,

the Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party were considerably disfavored, being frequently presented in a negative context, similar to the electoral competitor Party of Communists;

- *Nezavisimaia Moldova* served as the electoral agent of the Party of Communists, as this competitor was exclusively presented in a positive light (from a total of 155 occurrences, 132 were in a positive context, plus direct interventions of this party's leaders on a ten times bigger surface as compared to other competitors). At the same time, the Democratic Party was considerably disfavored, being presented almost each time in a negative context (220 times from the total number of 226). Other parties were also disfavored but with a more reduced intensity: Liberal Democratic Party, Party of Socialists, Liberal Party and Liberal Reformatory Party, and more rarely „Patria” Political Party, by frequently mirroring them in a negative context;
- *Ziarul Național* showed open preference for the Liberal Democratic Party, which it presented only in a positive or neutral context. „Patria” Political Party, Party of Communists and Party of Socialists, however, were substantially disfavored through their frequent mirroring in a negative context;
- *Jurnal de Chișinău* did not favor any electoral competitor, and Party of Socialists was disfavored by being frequently present in negative situations, this more seldom being the case of „Patria” Political Party;
- *KP v Moldove* slightly favored „Patria” Political Party, the latter being frequently presented in the newspaper both in neutral and positive context, and the surface assigned for direct interventions/quotations for this party's representatives was much bigger as compared to other electoral competitors;
- *Vesti Gagauzii* published very few articles on electoral topics, without disfavoring any electoral competitor. Nevertheless, slight preference was shown to the electoral competitor „Patria” Political Party.