

# **Online Media Monitoring in the Election Period and Campaign for 2020 Presidential Elections**

Final Report  
15 September – 14 November 2020

(general conclusions)



National Endowment *for* Democracy  
*Supporting freedom around the world*

The monitoring takes place within a project implemented by the Association of Independent Press (API) and funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (USA). The opinions expressed therein belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect the point of view of the donor.

## I. GENERAL DATA

**1.1 Objective of the project:** monitor and inform the public about the editorial behaviour of (online) media in the pre-election period and during the campaign for the 2020 presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova.

**1.2 Monitoring period:** 15 September 2020 – 14 November 2020.

**1.3 Criteria for selecting the media outlets to be monitored:**

The portals were selected based on the following criteria: a) relevance; b) fame/audience; c) broadcasting language; d) geography. We are thus monitoring national portals and one regional portal, in Romanian and Russian, known and indicated as sources of information by different groups of consumers, with some present in the top positions of online audience measurement surveys.

**1.4 Portals monitored (in alphabetical order):**

Actualitati.md<sup>1</sup> (Russian), Agora.md<sup>2</sup> (Romanian), Aif.md<sup>3</sup> (Russian), Gagauzinfo.md<sup>4</sup> (Russian), Kp.md<sup>5</sup> (Russian), Newsmaker.md<sup>6</sup> (Russian language version), Noi.md<sup>7</sup> (Romanian language version), Realitatea.md<sup>8</sup> (Romanian), Sputnik.md<sup>9</sup> (Romanian), Timpul.md<sup>10</sup> (Romanian), Unimedia.info<sup>11</sup> (Romanian), Vedomosti.md<sup>12</sup> (Russian).

For Aif.md, Kp.md and Vedomosti.md, the editorial content of the portals is compared with the content of the newspapers *Argumentî i faktî Moldova*, *Komsomolskaia pravda v Moldove* and *Moldavskie vedomosti*, accordingly, published by the same companies, to identify eventual editorial differences.

**1.5 Subject-matter of monitoring**

The entire editorial content, without the publicity marked accordingly.

**1.6. The team**

The project is implemented by the Association of Independent Press (API) within the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections.

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<sup>1</sup> Founded by **Iuri Vitneanski**, PSRM member, currently vice praetor of Botanica district of Chişinău

<sup>2</sup> Founded by Interakt Media SRL (administrator – **Irina Ghelbur**)

<sup>3</sup> Electronic page of the newspaper *Argumentî i Faktî Moldova*, published by Exclusiv Media SRL, company founded by the MP from PSRM **Corneliu Furculiţă**

<sup>4</sup> Founded by Iusivmedia SRL (administrator – **Iulia Cîlcic**)

<sup>5</sup> Electronic page of the newspaper *Komsomolskaia Pravda v Moldove*, published by “Komsomoliskaya Pravda-Basarabia” SRL (administrator – **Serghei Ciuricov**), company’s founder – Exclusiv Media SRL, a company founded by the MP from PSRM **Corneliu Furculiţă**

<sup>6</sup> Founded by NEWSMAKER SRL, a company founded by **Vladimir Soloviov** (administrator – **Olga Cenuşa**)

<sup>7</sup> Founded by MLD Media SRL, a company with six shareholders, including companies of the businessman **Vasile Chirtoca**, PSRM councilor in Chişinău Municipal Council

<sup>8</sup> Founded by HB MEDIA SRL (administrator – **Dumitru Țira**)

<sup>9</sup> Branch of Sputnik International Press and Radio Agency, founded by the Russian state company Rossia Segodnea (Sputnik Moldova director – **Vladimir Novosadiuc**)

<sup>10</sup> Founded by the Periodical Publication *TIMPUL de dimineaţă*, founded by **Constantin Tănase** (administrator – **Silviu Tănase**)

<sup>11</sup> Founded by Miraza SRL (administrator – **Olesea Banari**)

<sup>12</sup> Electronic page of the newspaper *Moldavskie vedomosti*, founded by “Moldavskie vedomosti” SRL (administrator – **Victor Ciobu**)

### 1.7 Methodological framework

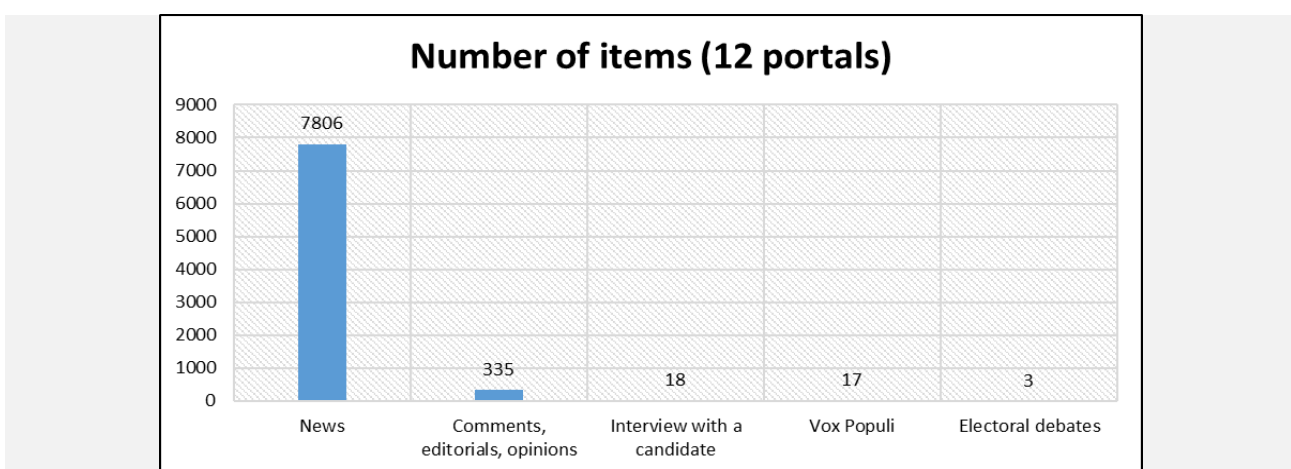
The monitoring is based on the methodology developed by Oxford Media Research Centre for the monitoring projects of the international organization Article 19: Global Campaign for Free Expression. The same methodology was used for monitoring media outlets in the election period and campaign for the 2016 presidential elections.

The methodology provides for measuring and review of the following indicators: 1) *quantitative*, including type, duration, topic of coverage, protagonists and news sources, frequency and duration of live appearance of election candidates, and 2) *qualitative*, establishing the context of presentation of the candidates in the media reports. Each news item or opinion is subject to a content and context evaluation, to determine if it favours or disfavors one or another election candidate. A positive or negative news content and/or context does not necessarily show bias or partisanship of the media outlet that airs the news. It is possible for the news to favour or disfavour one of the subjects and, yet, be professionally unbiased and correct. **When assessing the context, only the frequency of items that directly or indirectly favour or disfavour the election subjects is measured.**

## II. DATA ANALYSIS

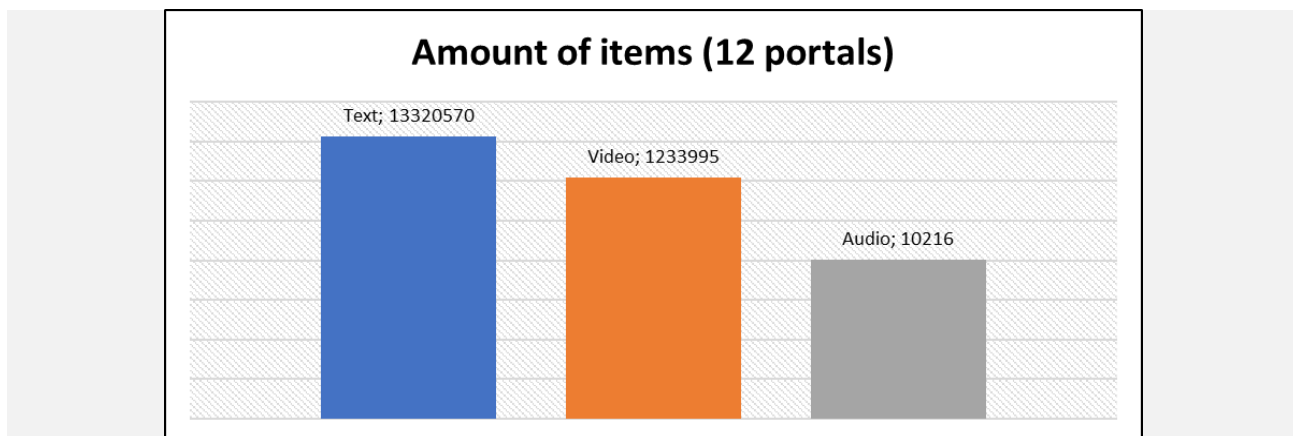
### 2.1 General trends

Between 15 September and 14 November 2020, the 12 online media outlets monitored published a total of 8,179 items that directly or indirectly concerned the campaign for the presidential elections. Over 95% of the media products were news (7806) that referred to the candidates for the position of president, the political parties they represented, the work of the Central Election Committee (CEC), the voting rules in the country and in the diaspora, the day of the first round of elections, the campaign for the second round, the voting by the citizens on the left bank of the Nistru River, electoral actions, etc. Other 335 items, or a little over 4% of the total number, were published in the form of comments, editorials or other opinion stories, and one per cent of the products was divided among interviews with a candidate (18 cases), Vox Populi polls (17 cases), and electoral debates (3 cases).

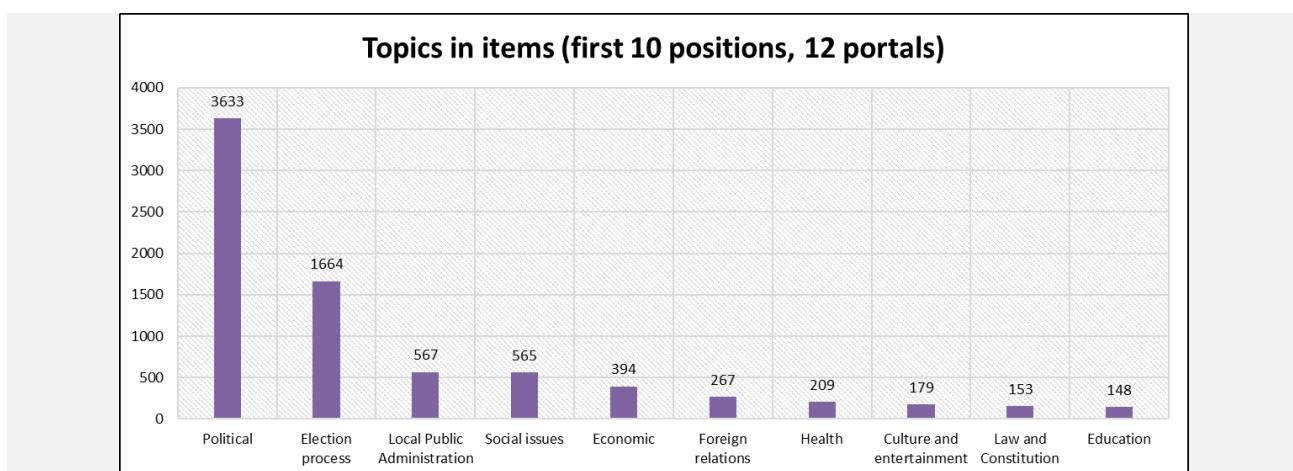


**Noi.md**, in the period monitored, permanently published the largest number of media products with a political and electoral character – 1543 items in total. On the other hand, the regional publication **Gagauzinfo.md** cumulatively had the lowest number of such stories (121). The other 10 outlets quantitatively covered the period and the campaign for the presidential elections as follows: **Aif.md** – in 1031 items; **Agora.md** – in 845; **Actualitati.md** – in 827; **Unimedia.info** – in 688; **Kp.md** – in 663; **Sputnik.md** – in 583; **Realitatea.md** – in 578; **Newsmaker.md** – in 573; **Vedomosti.md** – in 548; and **Timpul.md** – in 179 of its relevant stories. At the same time, **Noi.md** published the largest number of news with election character (1504); **Vedomosti.md** – the most comments, editorials or other opinion stories (85); **Newsmaker.md** – the most interviews (8), presenting all the candidates for the supreme position in the state in this format. Not in the least, **Agora.md** published the most Vox Populi polls (6), while **Newsmaker.md**, **Noi.md** and **Realitatea.md** published the three electoral debates.

At the same time, most of the stories (8145) were published in text format: they were accompanied by video images or published only in this format in 1139 cases. In 36 cases, the texts were completed by or were published in audio format. The amount of the items monitored was thus quantified in characters (text) and seconds (videos and audios) as follows:

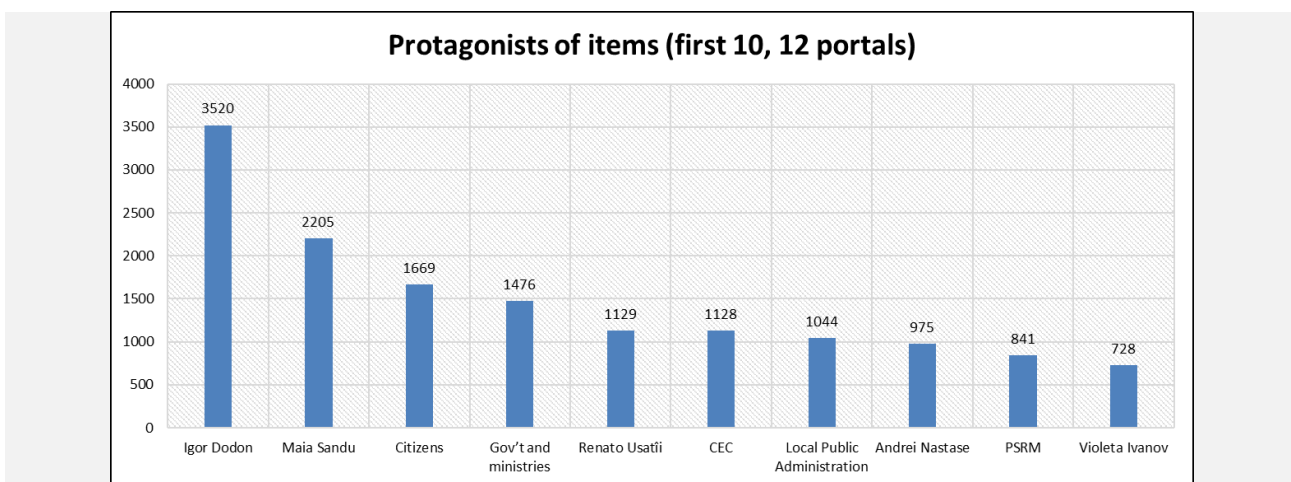


In cumulation, the 12 online media outlets paid the most attention to the political area in an electoral context, publishing 3633 stories on this topic, or over 44% of the total. Half as little was written about the election process as a whole (1664 stories or a little over 20%). Accordingly, other thematic areas in an electoral context were covered less frequently, and namely: the work of the local public administration – in 567 stories; social issues – in 565 cases; economy – in 394; foreign relations – in 267; health – in 209; culture and entertainment – in 179; Law and Constitution – in 153; education – in 148; and other topics were approached even less frequently. Hence, education issues, for example, were covered 25 times less in an electoral context than the political area.



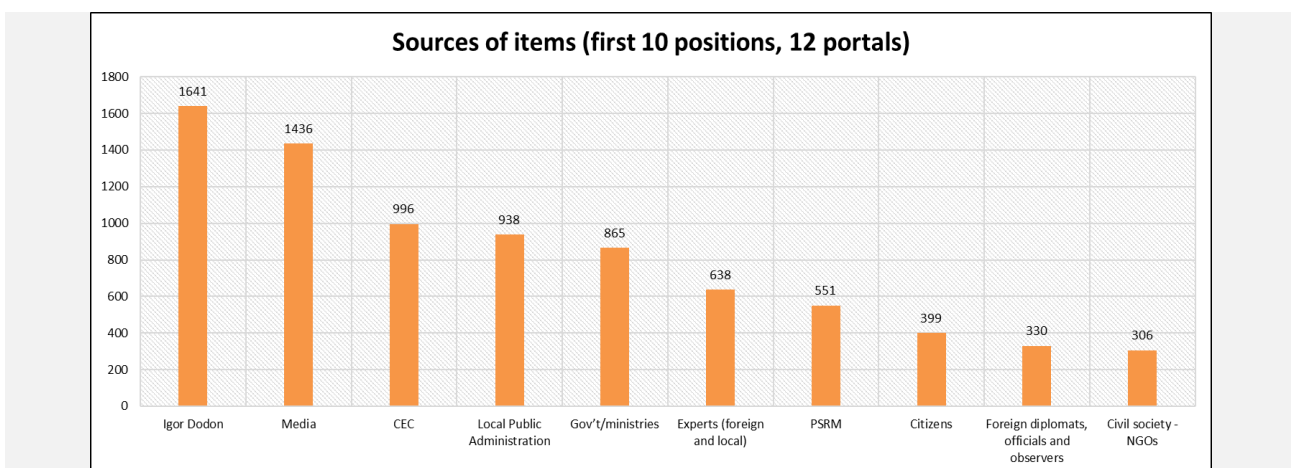
In the 9 weeks monitored, the 12 online media outlets together targeted 56 categories of protagonists in their relevant stories, including the 6 male candidates and the 2 female candidates registered for the presidential elections, institutions, citizens as well as the candidates who had not been registered for the election competition. As a whole, the independent candidate supported by the Socialists Party of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) Igor Dodon appeared as the protagonist of media products with an electoral character the most often (3520 times), being the first among all media categories. The candidate of the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) Maia Sandu positioned herself at a distance of over one thousand appearances, being the protagonist of 2205 election stories. Citizens ranked third, with 1669 such appearances, followed by the Government representatives (1476 cases). The first ten categories of protagonists also included the candidate of the Political Party "Our Party" (PN) Renato Usatîi (1129 times), the CEC representatives (1128 times), local public administration representative (1044 times), the candidate of the "Justice and Truth Platform" Party (PPDA) Andrei Năstase (975 times), the PSRM representatives (841 times), and the candidate of the "Șor" Party Violeta Ivanov (728 times). The other three candidates admitted

to the race for the presidential elections were the protagonists in the stories of the 12 publications as follows: the candidate of the Liberal Party (PL) Dorin Chirtoacă – 700 times; that of the "National Unity Party" (PUN) Octavian Țicu – 633 times; and that of the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM) Tudor Deliu – 612 times. Hence, Igor Dodon appeared almost 6 times more often as protagonist of the stories than Tudor Deliu did. Last but not least, the candidates for the position of president who had not been admitted to the election race were the protagonists of the stories concerned as follows: Andrian Candu – 256 times; Ion Costăș – 66 times; Serghei Toma – 58 times; Alexandr Kalinin – 55 times; Constantin Oboroc – 47 times; and Galina Cotorobai – 5 times.

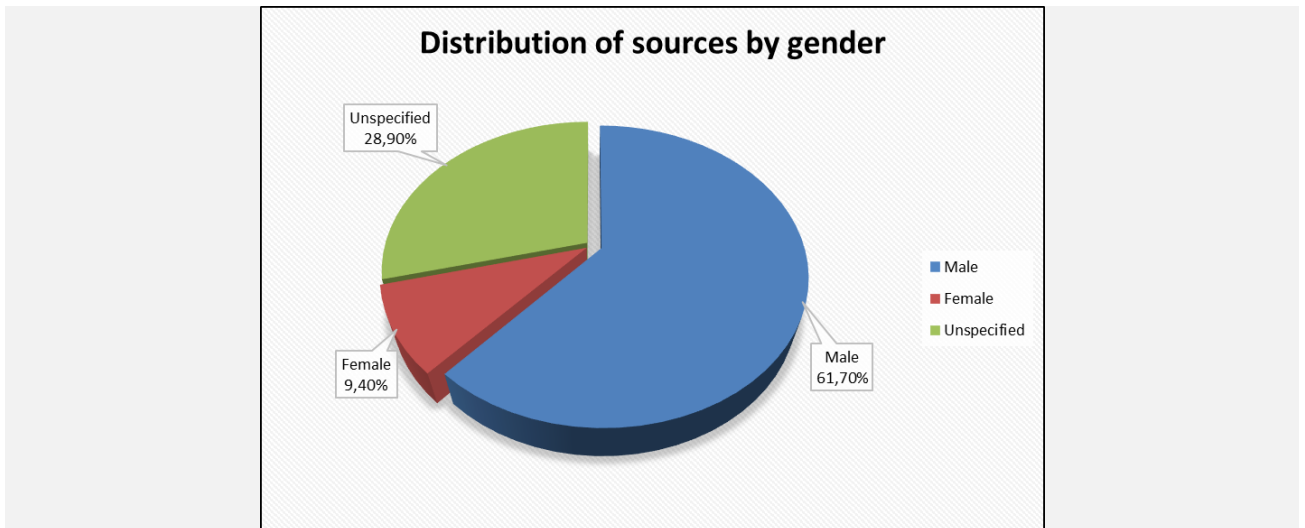


With reference to the sources, the 12 online publications in total quoted 10,655 sources from 53 different categories. The candidate Igor Dodon appeared the most often as a source of information, being quoted 1641 times. Other media sources followed at a short distance, with 1436 quotes, the podium being completed by the CEC representatives, quoted 996 times during the period monitored. In descending order, the representatives of local public administration (938 times), of the Government (865 times), the experts (638 times) or the PSRM representatives (551 times) were also quoted as item sources. The other candidates for the position of president had the capacity of information sources for the media stories as follows: Maia Sandu – 247 times; Andrei Năstase – 155 times; Renato Usatîi – 140 times; Dorin Chirtoacă – 87 times; Octavian Țicu and Violeta Ivanov – 75 times each; and Tudor Deliu – 31 times. Igor Dodon was thus quoted almost 53 times more often than Tudor Deliu.

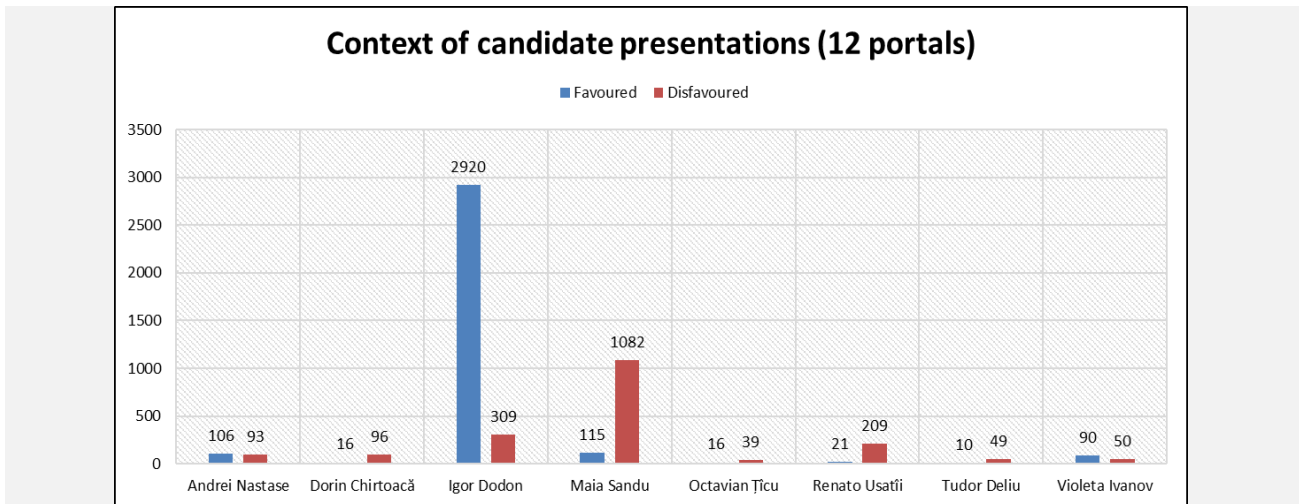
Of the candidates who had not been registered for the race, Andrian Candu was quoted 73 times in the relevant stories, and the other 5 candidates were sources in less than 10 cases.



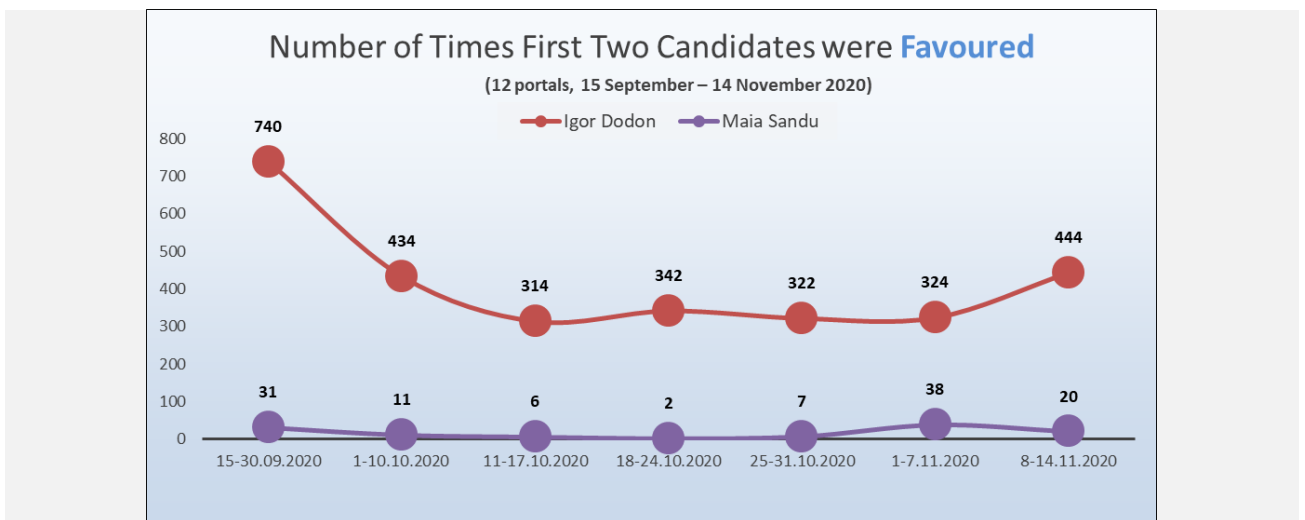
Throughout the monitoring period, the sources quoted strongly lacked balance in terms of gender, to the detriment of women. The proportion ranged from 54% to 67% for men and from 8% to 11% for women, with the specification that a significant number of sources remained unidentified in terms of gender. Overall, of the 10655 sources quoted in total, 6574 (or almost 62%) were men, 1002 (or 9.4%) were women, and in 3079 cases (or nearly 29%), the type of sources was not specified.



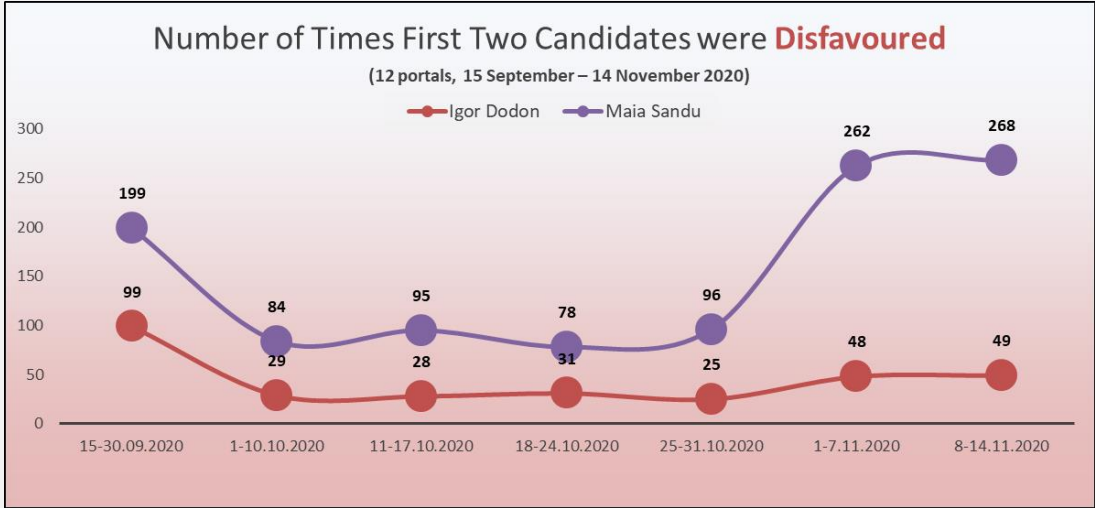
The candidates for the supreme position in the state enjoyed media coverage in neutral as well as in positive and negative contexts by the 12 media outlets monitored. The proportions, however, were different. The candidate Octavian Țicu thus appeared most often in a neutral context, or in over 91% of the items in which he was the protagonist. At the opposite pole, the candidate Igor Dodon enjoyed unbiased media coverage in a little over 8% of the cases in which he had the capacity of protagonist, he also having the highest visibility in the products of the online media outlets monitored. He was also favoured the most often (2920 times, which means over 83% of all cases in which he was the protagonist). In other 309 cases, Dodon was placed in rather unfavourable contexts. At the same time, the attitude towards the PAS candidate Maia Sandu was unfavourable in almost half of the stories in which she was concerned (1082 cases out of 2205 in which she was the protagonist), being most often placed in negative contexts among all candidates for the position of president. In other 115 cases, the candidate was rather favoured in the media stories, The other candidates registered for the election race appeared in favourable/unfavourable contexts in much smaller proportions, as follows: Andrei Năstase (106/93, which accounted for about 20% of the cases in which he was the protagonist); Dorin Chirtoacă (16/96 or 16% of the cases when he was the protagonist); Octavian Țicu (16/39 or about 9% of the cases when he was the protagonist); Renato Usatîi (21/209 or about 20% of the cases when he was the protagonist); Tudor Deliu (10/49 or almost 10% of the cases when he was concerned as the protagonist), and Violeta Ivanov (90/50 or 19% of the cases when she was the protagonist).



A quantitative analysis of the contexts in which the two candidates with access to the second round of the presidential elections, rated from the start with the most chances in this respect, shows that Igor Dodon was massively favoured in the 7 periods covered in the monitoring reports, with the highest number of placements in positive contexts (740) recorded between 15 and 30 September i.e. during the election period, and the lowest (314 times favoured) recorded in the campaign week of 11 to 17 October. In her turn, Maia Sandu appeared in rather favouring contexts 115 times, most often in the first week of the campaign for the second round (38 times), and most rarely in the week of 18-24 October 2020.



In terms of disadvantages, Maia Sandu held the lead in all periods subject to monitoring, their number significantly growing in the second round of the elections. Hence, the negative contexts in which she was placed, both in the news and in comments, with personal attacks, gender-based discrimination, derogation and discredit, attack on human dignity, etc. almost doubled compared to the first period (if there were 199 such cases in the election period, the figures reached 262 and 268 cases in the last two weeks), and tripled compared to the week in which the candidate was the least placed in unfavourable contexts (78 times in the period from 18 to 24 October). At the same time, the 309 cases that disfavoured Igor Dodon were divided as follows: the first period was marked by the most cases (99), while the week of 25 to 31 October, i.e. the one before the first round of elections, by the least cases (25). In Igor Dodon's case, too, the weeks between the two rounds were marked by double disfavouring by the media, as compared to the previous period. Most of it, however, was indirect disadvantaging of the candidate.



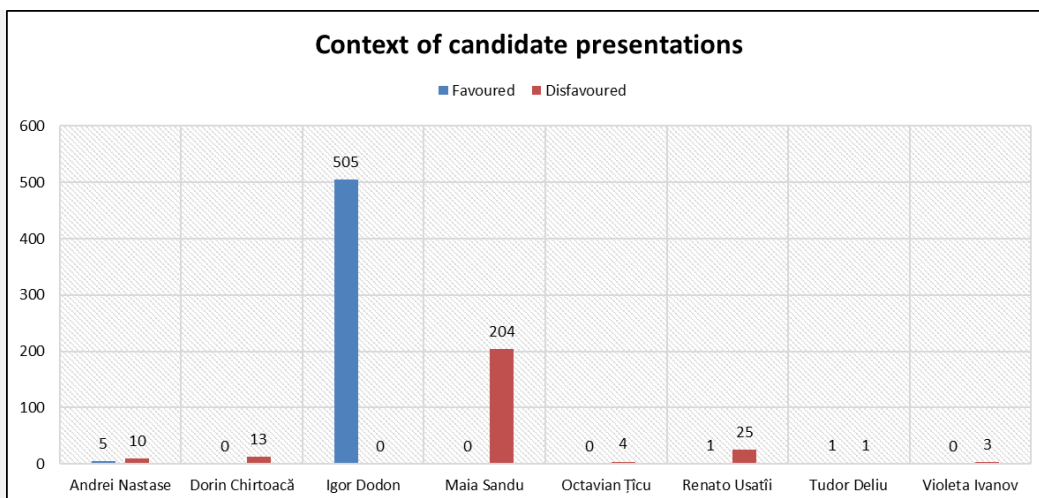
## 2.2 Editorial behaviour of publications



[Actualitati.md](http://Actualitati.md)

In all the 7 monitoring periods, most of the stories on political and/or electoral issues published by **Actualitati.md** had one source of information and an accentuated and obvious biased character in favour of the candidate Igor Dodon. He was covered exclusively in positive contexts, in all cases where he was directly targeted, as a protagonist (452 times) as well as in other 53 cases when he was indirectly favoured, being the only one that appeared in such a posture. On the other hand, the candidate Maia Sandu had a predominantly negative treatment, being disadvantaged 204 times (out of the 215 cases when she was the protagonist). Candidate Maia Sandu was constantly the target of a large derogation campaign through fake information, attacks, including hate speech elements, which constituted a serious violation not only of journalism ethics, but also of a number of laws, including the one on equal opportunities, or the one on non-discrimination.

The derogation campaign intensified especially in the second round of the presidential elections. **Actualitati.md** did not prove any of the false information pieces published, and never offered Maia Sandu the right of reply. The other male candidates and one female candidate appeared in neutral, positive and negative contexts in smaller proportions, Dorin Chirtoacă being placed in an unfavourable context in more than half of the stories in which he was the protagonist. None of the candidates appeared in neutral contexts only.

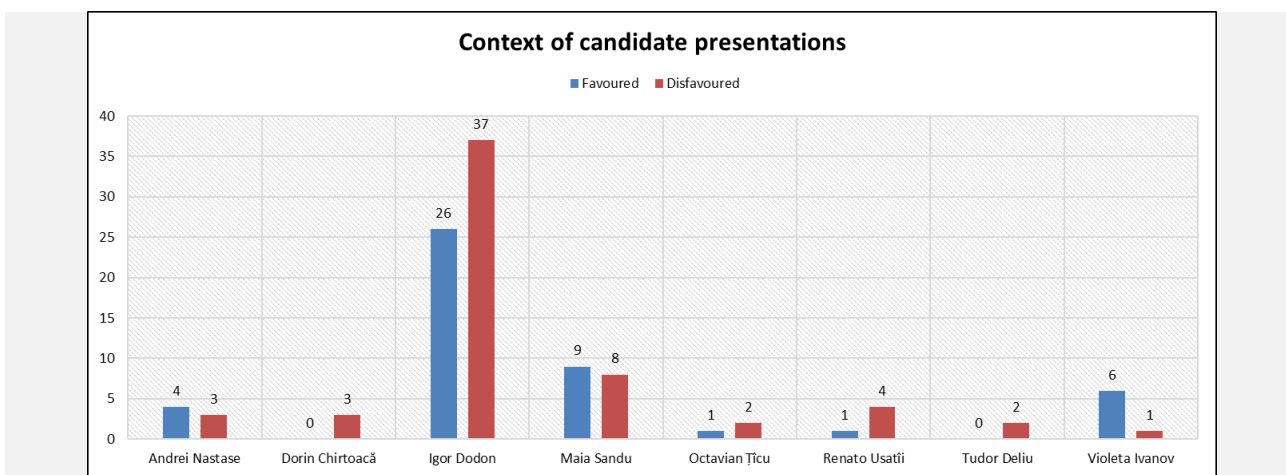


[Agora.md](http://Agora.md)

**Agora.md** covered the period and the campaign for the presidential elections in a relatively balanced and equidistant way, without interpretations of facts or statements, presenting the candidates mainly in neutral contexts, without favouring or disfavouring them. In most cases, the texts were unbiased in relation to the sources and the protagonists. However, no candidate appeared exclusively in neutral contexts. Candidate Igor Dodon, with the most

appearances as a protagonist, thus enjoyed 26 placements in rather favourable contexts and 37 times in unfavourable contexts. Candidate Maia Sandu had 9 appearances in rather favourable contexts and 8 in some rather unfavourable ones, and candidate Violeta Ivanov was 6 times favoured and one time disadvantaged. The other candidates were favoured/disadvantaged as follows: Andrei Năstase (4/3), Dorin Chirtoacă - 3 times disadvantaged; Octavian Țicu (1/2); Renato Usatii (1/4); and Tudor Deliu was rather disadvantaged twice. All cases of favouritism or disadvantage happened for the lack of a second source or indirectly, through third party statements.

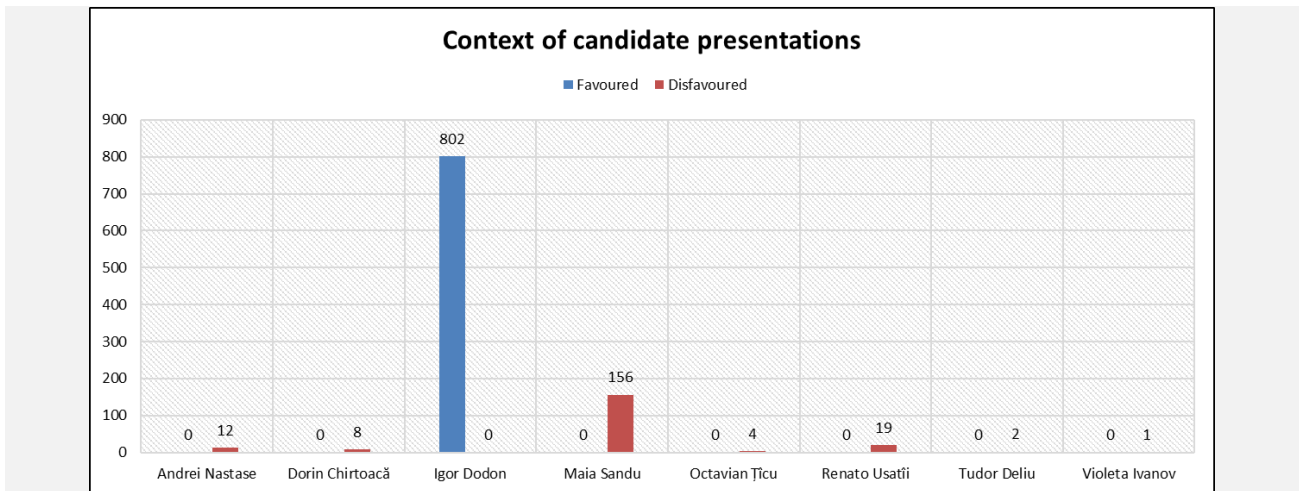
However, no obvious, sustained and continuous trend on **Agora.md** to favour or disfavour the candidates for the position of president was found during the monitoring.



**АРГУМЕНТЫ  
И ФАКТЫ** В МОЛДОВЕ

[Aif.md](http://Aif.md)

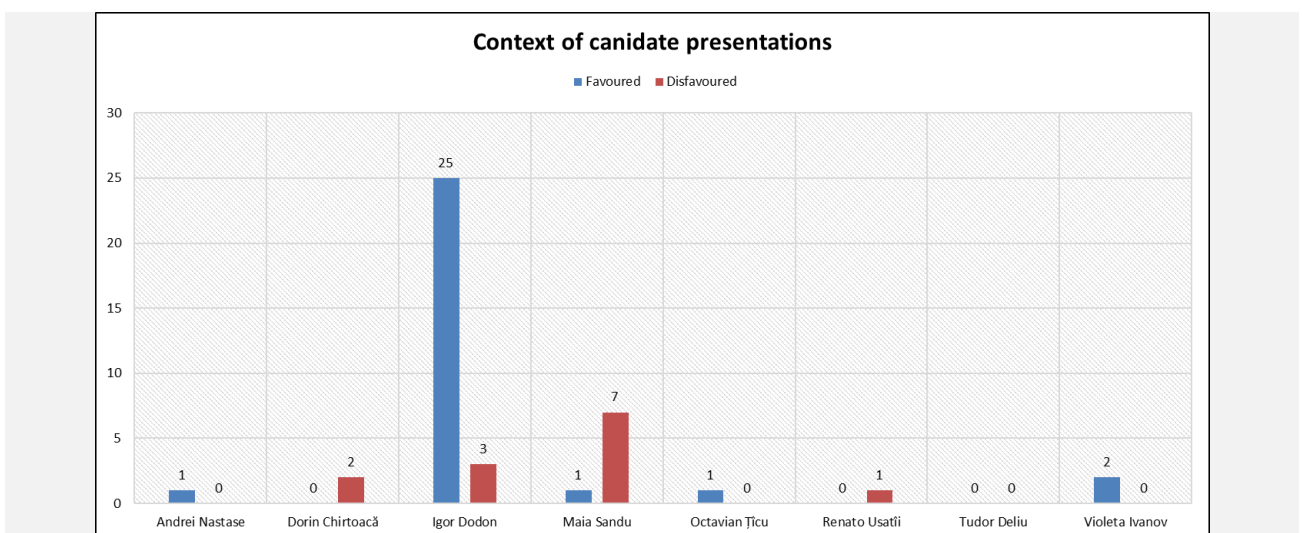
Between 15 September and 14 November 2020, **Aif.md** openly and massively promoted the candidate Igor Dodon, in both news and opinions. Igor Dodon was thus the only one who appeared in exclusively positive contexts, being favoured 802 times, including in all cases in which he was the protagonist (516) as well as in other 286 cases when he was indirectly concerned. On the other hand, Maia Sandu was the target of a constant media disfavouring campaign, including through personal attacks, unproven and unfounded allegations, fakes and derogations, without her opinion being presented at least once. Hence, Maia Sandu was placed in exclusively negative contexts 156 times, i.e. in most cases when she was the story protagonist. The other candidates appeared both in neutral or negative contexts, and never in positive ones. More precisely, Andrei Năstase had 12 placements in rather unfavourable contexts; Dorin Chirtoacă – 8; Octavian Țicu – 4; Renato Usatii – 19; Tudor Deliu – 2; and Violeta Ivanov – one such placement.



**Gagauzinfo.MD**

[Gagauzinfo.md](http://Gagauzinfo.md)

The regional publication **Gagauzinfo.md** covered the candidates for the position of president in a predominantly neutral context, exclusively in such a context appearing only the candidate Tudor Deliu. The other candidates were also placed in rather favourable or unfavourable contexts. Candidate Igor Dodon appeared the most often in favourable contexts (25 times out of 51 when he was the protagonist), and Maia Sandu was placed in unfavourable contexts more often than the others (7 times out of 32 in which she was the protagonist).



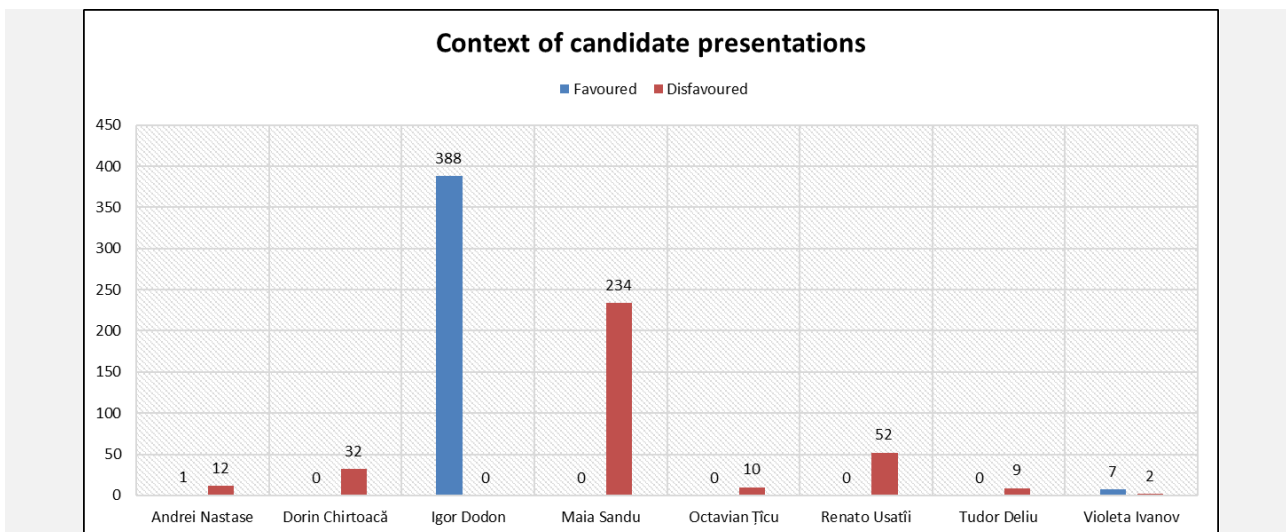
**КОМСОМЛЬСКАЯ ПРАВДА**

МОЛДОВА ▾

[Kp.md](http://Kp.md)

The **Kp.md** publication openly and substantially favoured the candidate Igor Dodon in all the 7 periods monitored, in both news and opinions by different authors, including foreign experts, MPs etc. Igor Dodon thus appeared in exclusively positive contexts, being favoured in 388 cases (being the protagonist in 269). Maia Sandu, on the other hand, was subjected to a

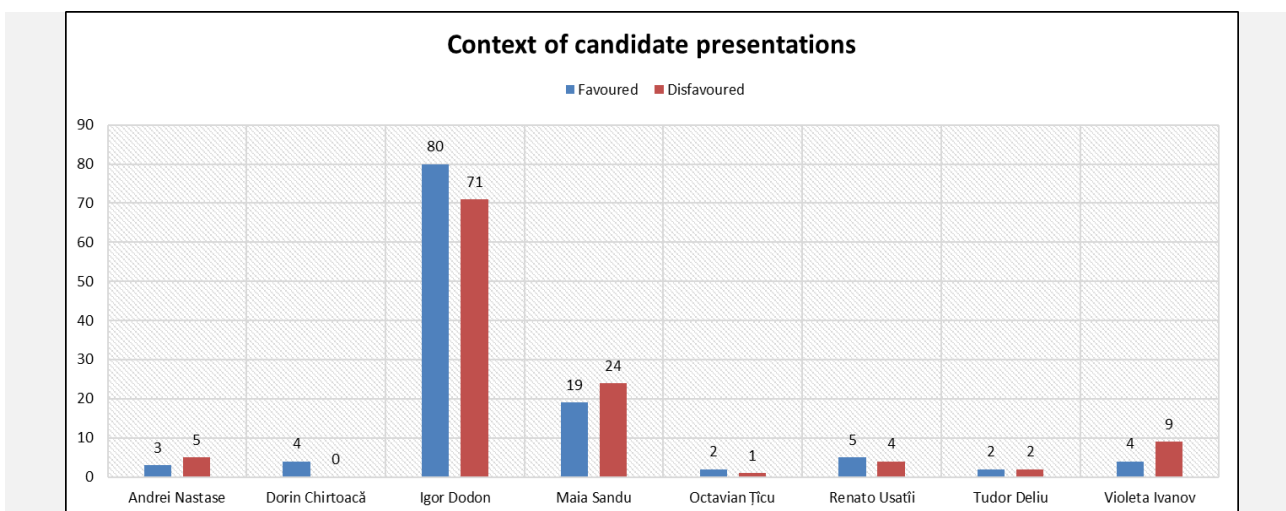
continuous campaign of criticism, derogation, attack, and discrimination on the grounds of gender, and allegations, without being granted the right of reply. This candidate was thus disadvantaged in 234 cases (being the protagonist of 256 stories), being placed in eminently negative, accusatory and offensive contexts. The other candidates never appeared in positive contexts, but only in neutral or negative ones, a more obvious disadvantage being noticed in the case of Renato Usatii, who was disadvantaged 52 times (almost half of the cases in which he was directly targeted) as well as of Dorin Chirtoaca, placed in negative contexts 32 times. Candidate Violeta Ivanov was rather favoured in 7 cases and disadvantaged in two.



**NewsMaker**

[Newsmaker.md](http://Newsmaker.md)

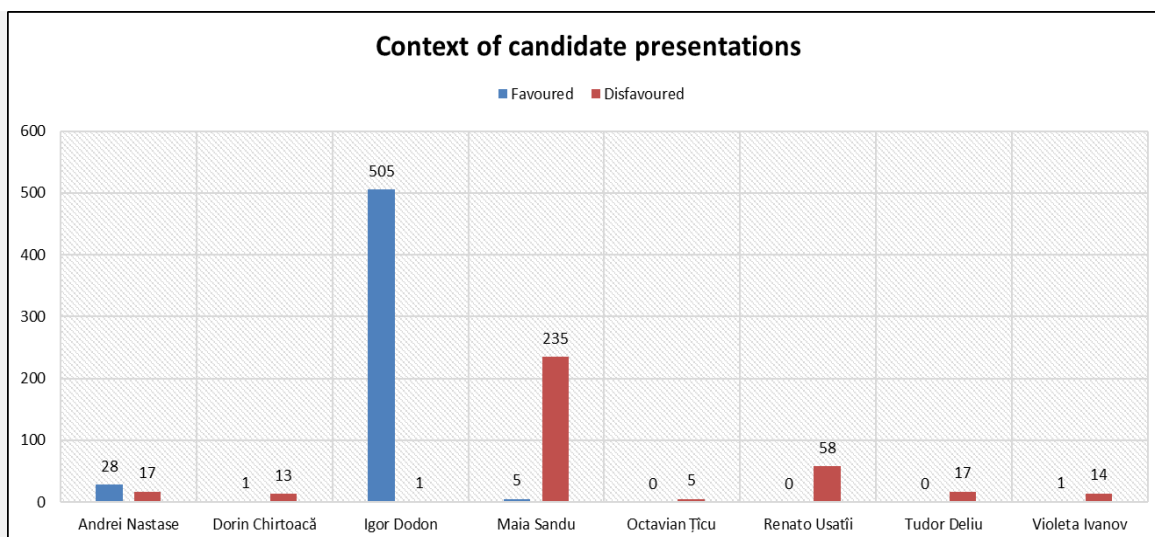
Between 15 September and 14 November 2020, **Newsmaker.md** generally covered the candidates for the position of president of the Republic of Moldova in an equidistant manner, most of the time presenting them in neutral context. However, none appeared only in neutral contexts. Igor Dodon was placed the most in either positive or negative contexts (80 and 71 times, respectively), followed by Maia Sandu (19 times versus 24 times). In most cases, the favouring/disfavouring was indirect. The other candidates had sporadic appearances in both situations. Even so, no bias by **Newsmaker.md** towards the candidates was found.





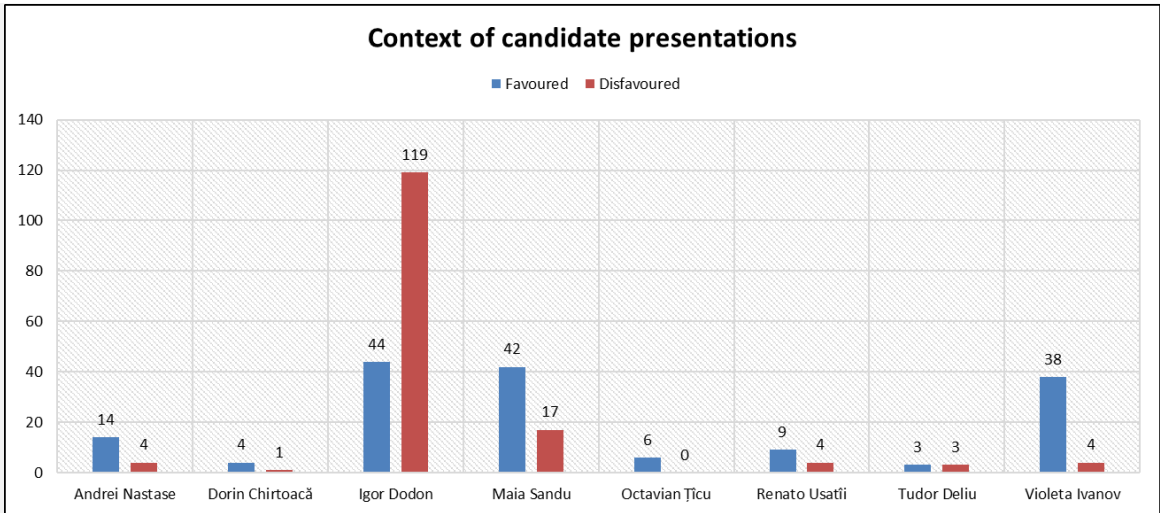
## [Noi.md](#)

From 15 September to 14 November 2020, **Noi.md** continuously favoured Igor Dodon, both in news and comments. The candidate supported by PSRM was placed 505 times in positive contexts (in 517 being the protagonist). One story indirectly disadvantaged him, by mentioning the candidate's name in a rather negative context. Maia Sandu, in her turn, was obviously disfavoured in most of the cases in which she was targeted (235 cases, in 379 being the protagonist). The disfavours took place through the texts of both news stories and comments, which included a number of serious statements and allegations without being proven or without presenting the candidate's opinion, and, in some cases, through fake photos. Maia Sandu was placed 5 times in contexts that indirectly favoured her. Other candidates were rather disadvantaged in a smaller or larger number of **Noi.md** stories, and Andrei Năstase also appeared in favourable contexts in a larger number of products (28) compared to the other candidates.



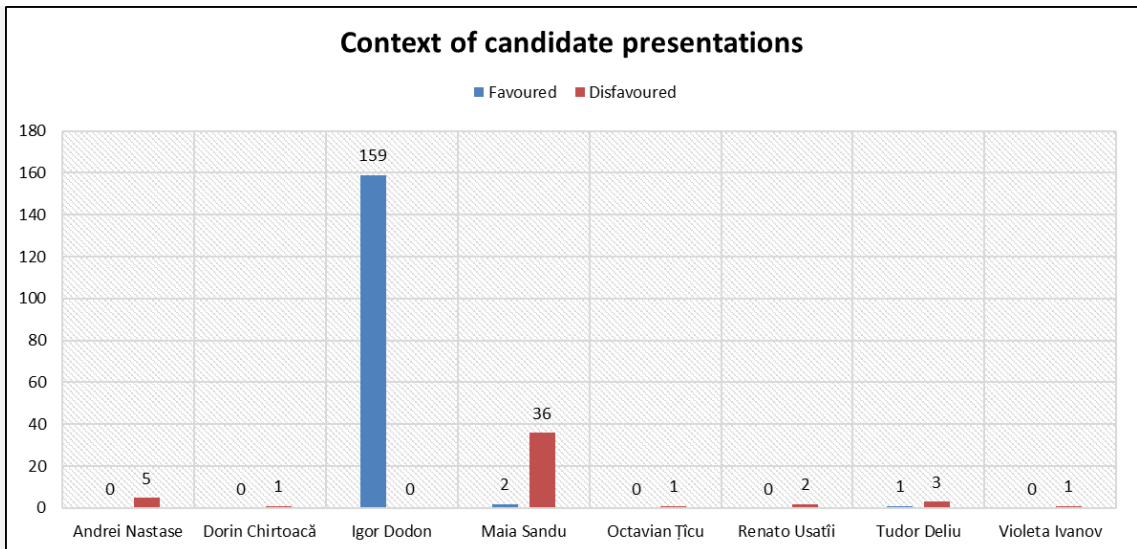
## [Realitatea.md](#)

From 15 September to 14 November 2020, the candidates for the position of president of the Republic of Moldova were covered by **Realitatea.md** both neutrally and positively, or negatively, without anyone appearing in neutral contexts only. Violeta Ivanov thus stood out with placements in favourable contexts in more than half of the cases in which she was the protagonist (38 out of 74), some stories with a clear advertising character of the candidate not being marked accordingly. She also was indirectly disfavoured in 4 cases. Igor Dodon was also disadvantaged in 119 cases and favoured in 44 (he being the protagonist of 274 stories). At the same time, Maia Sandu was placed in contexts that favoured her 42 times, and in some rather negative ones – 17 times. The other candidates were favoured/disfavoured fewer times compared to their appearances as protagonists.

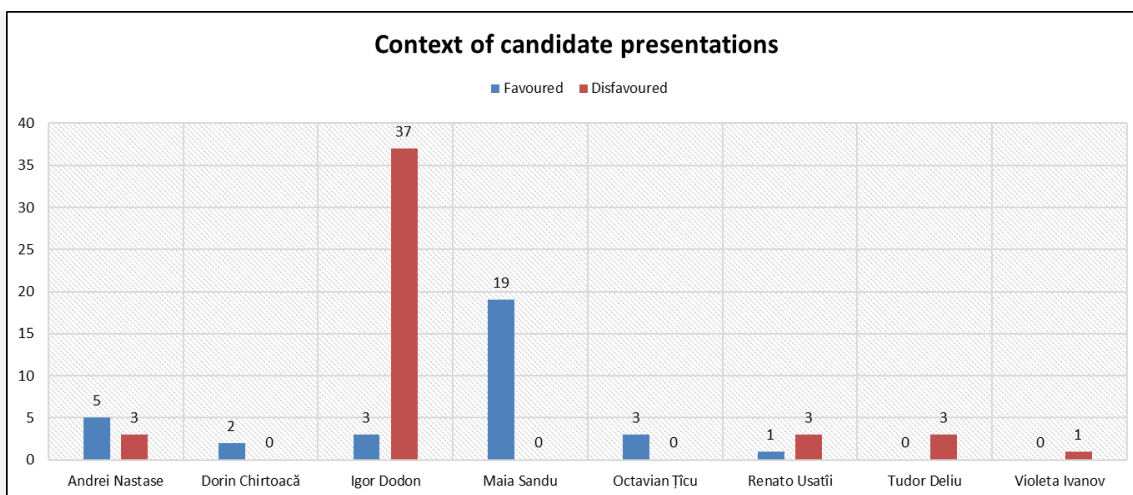


[Sputnik.md](https://sputnik.md)

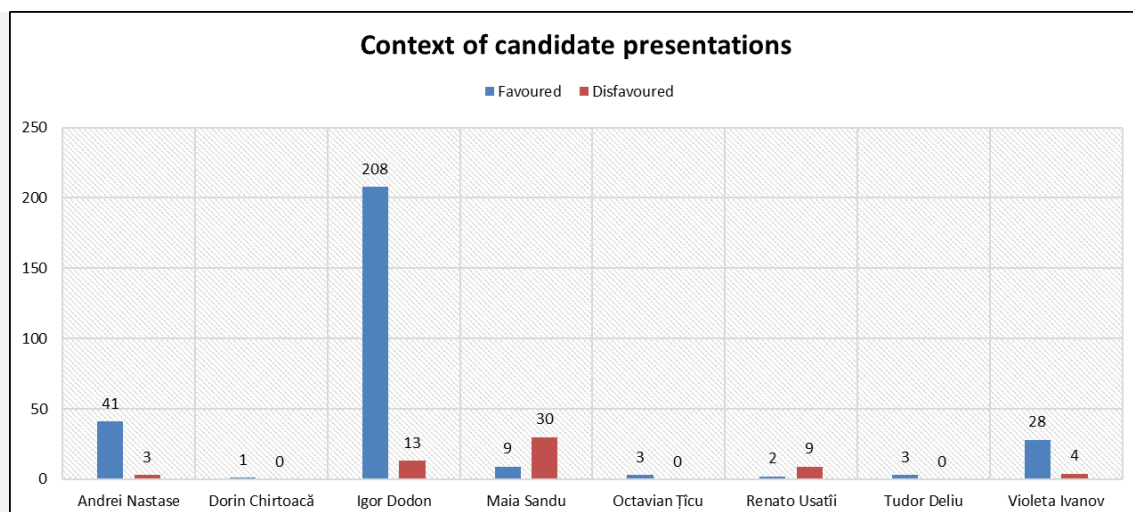
Between 15 September and 14 November 2020, the publication **Sputnik.md** covered the candidates for the position of president both neutrally and positively, or negatively. Neutral contexts prevailed for the five male candidates and the one female candidate, the rather favourable or unfavourable appearances being few in relation to the number of their appearances as media report protagonists. Candidate Igor Dodon, on the other hand, enjoyed a favourable attitude from the portal, being placed in positive contexts in half of the cases in which he was the protagonist (159 times out of 314), being, at the same time, the only one who was never disfavoured. At the same time, the candidate Maia Sandu was rather disadvantaged 36 times and favoured twice (being the protagonist in 215 cases).



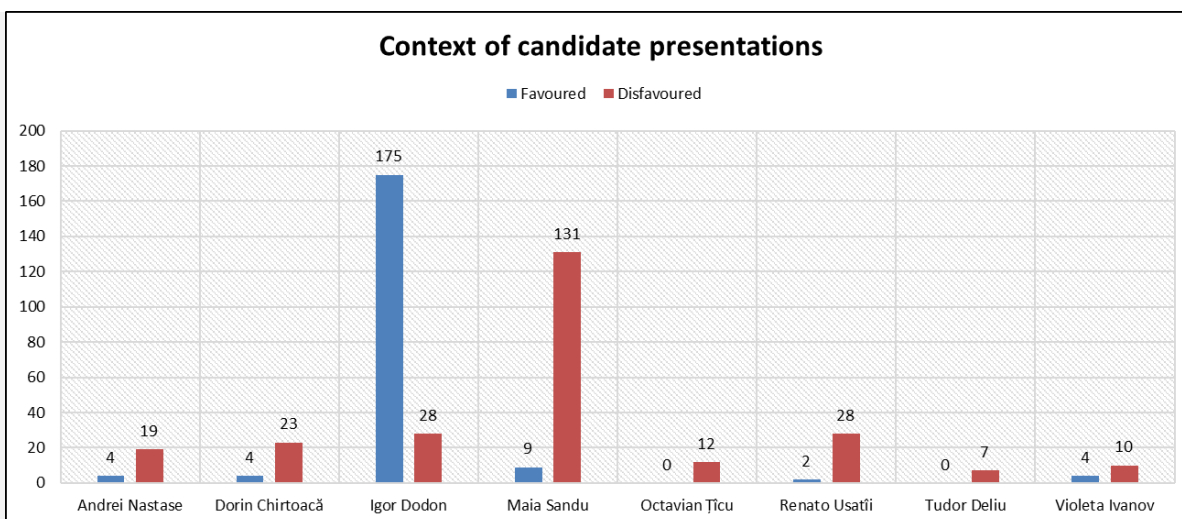
From 15 September to 14 November 2020, the candidates for the position of president were presented by **Timpul.md** both neutrally and positively, or negatively. We noticed, in particular, Igor Dodon who was placed more often in unfavourable contexts (37 times, which meant almost half of the number of cases in which he was the protagonist), also appearing 3 times in favourable contexts, and Maia Sandu, who was rather favoured in 19 cases (being the protagonist 47 times).



Between 15 September and 14 November 2020, the candidates registered in the election race were covered by **Unimedia.info** both in neutral and positive or negative contexts. In this connection, Igor Dodon had the most appearances in positive contexts that favoured him (208 cases, he being the protagonist 233 times), but also 13 indirect disadvantages. Maia Sandu was 30 times placed in rather unfavourable contexts, and Violeta Ivanov and Andrei Năstase were favoured more times than the other candidates.



During the reference period, the candidates for the position of president were presented both in neutral and in positive or negative contexts by **Vedomosti.md**. An obvious tendency of continuous favouring was noticed only in the case of Igor Dodon who appeared in positive light 175 times (out of 205 in which he was the protagonist) as well as in 28 cases that indirectly rather disadvantaged him. The other candidates had some rather positive appearances that indirectly favoured them, the disfavouring occurring more obviously and more frequently in all cases. The candidate Maia Sandu was disadvantaged the most often (131 times out of 182 in which she was the protagonist), appearing in rather positive situations 9 times. In this case, too, attacks, indictments, discriminatory wording and insinuations were used by the portal, without granting her the right of reply.



### 2.3 General conclusions:

- In the period from 15 September to 14 November 2020, the 12 online publications monitored covered the campaign for the presidential election mainly in their news stories and, less frequently, in their comments, Vox Populi polls, interviews and electoral debates.
- Most of the items were published in text format, but there were also video and audio items, to a lesser extent.
- **Noi.md** published the largest number of items relevant for the election context and **Gagauzinfo.md** – the least number of items.
- Most relevant items referred to the political area and half as often – to the election process. Only one outlet – **Gagauzinfo.md** – gave preference, as a whole, to subjects that concerned the election process in general.
- All 6 male candidates and the 2 female candidates registered for the election race as well as the candidates rejected by the CEC appeared as protagonists of the election items.
- The independent candidate supported by the PSRM Igor Dodon appeared the most often as the protagonist, while the PLDM candidate Tudor Deliu – the least often. Igor Dodon had almost 6 times more appearances in this capacity than Tudor Deliu did.
- All 6 male candidates and the 2 female candidates registered for the election race as well as the candidates rejected by the CEC appeared as sources of the election stories.
- Igor Dodon appeared as a source the most often, and Tudor Deliu appeared the least often. Igor Dodon was quoted 53 times more often than Tudor Deliu.
- The stories published by all 12 media outlets monitored strongly lacked balance in terms of gender, in favour of men.
- Igor Dodon had the highest visibility in the 12 online outlets monitored.
- Igor Dodon was the most often placed in a positive context that favoured him.
- Maia Sandu was the most often placed in a negative context that disfavoured her.
- Eight out of the 12 publications monitored favoured the candidate Igor Dodon.
- **Actualitati.md**, **Aif.md** and **Kp.md** had a similar editorial behaviour throughout the period monitored, with accentuated elements of bias, tendentiousness, lack of equidistance or journalistic fairness, and violations of the ethical norms. The three publications openly favoured and massively promoted the candidate supported by the PSRM Igor Dodon. The other candidates appeared quantitatively unbalanced in the stories of the three publications and in most cases were disfavoured, and even discredited, by a frequent use of personal qualifications and personal attacks, and without being offered the right of reply. Most often, the items disadvantaged the PAS candidate Maia Sandu. A real campaign of discredit, attack, derogation through fake information, insinuations, sexist headlines and wording, expressions inciting hatred, violence and discrimination was carried out by the three publications in relation to Maia Sandu, especially in the campaign for the second round of the elections.
- **Noi.md**, **Vedomosti.md** and **Sputnik.md** favoured Igor Dodon through the tone of their coverage and by presenting him in positive contexts. At the same time, Maia Sandu was obviously disfavoured, including through the opinions published as well as through the photographs that accompanied certain texts. Other candidates, including Andrei Năstase, Dorin Chirtoacă, Renato Usatîi and Octavian Țîcu were also disadvantaged in certain periods, especially in the stories published by **Vedomosti.md**.
- **Gagauzinfo.md** paid the least attention to the election campaign, and its news in most cases referred to the election process as a whole, with emphasis on the organization of

the elections in ATU Gagauz Yeri, but also to the candidate Igor Dodon, favouring him in most cases.

- **Unimedia.info** granted more space to Igor Dodon who most often appeared in positive contexts that favoured him. In addition, Andrei Năstase and Violeta Ivanov were promoted including in items with an obvious advertising character, but not marked accordingly, or marked as advertising but placed in the general news flow.
- **Agora.md** and **NewsMaker.md** had relatively balanced editorial policies, the authors of the stories being generally impartial to the sources and the protagonists, and the candidates for the position of president often presented in neutral contexts, as well as in positive or negative ones but without a clear tendency to favour or disfavour them.
- **Realitatea.md** covered the candidates for the position of president both neutrally and positively or negatively. Candidate Igor Dodon appeared most of the time in unfavourable contexts. Candidate Violeta Ivanov was promoted in stories with an obvious advertising character that were not marked accordingly.
- **Timpul.md** paid little attention to the election period and campaign, presenting the candidates in a selective manner. Igor Dodon was more often placed in unfavourable contexts, and Maia Sandu – more often in favourable contexts.

[Full report in Romanian](#)