

Monitoring of Mass Media in the Electoral Campaign for the Election of the Bashkan of TAU Gagauz Yeri

Report no. 1
9 – 25 October 2006

PREPARED BY ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT PRESS AND
INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM CENTER

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1. General data

1.1 Project goal: monitoring of and informing the public opinion about the behavior of mass media in the electoral period for the election of the Bashcan of TAU (Territorial Administrative Unit) Gagauz Yeri.

1.2 Monitoring period – 9 October 2006–17 December 2006 – covers the electoral campaign with two ballots.

1.3 Criteria of selection of media institutions subject to the monitoring:

- Type of ownership (public and private)
- Audience/ impact
- Language of coverage

1.4 Monitored mass media:

TV

Moldova 1, NIT, TV Găgăuzia

Radio

Radio Moldova, Radio Găgăuzia

Print media

Nezavisimaya Moldova, Vesti Gagauzii (Comrat), Znamya (Ciadâr-Lunga), Stolitsa (Comrat), Panorama (Vulcănești).

1.5 Monitoring schedule

TV

Monday-Friday

06:30 – 09:00 and 17:00 – 22:30

Saturday-Sunday

06:30 – 22:30

Radio

Monday-Sunday

06:00 – 24:00

1.1 Methodological framework

The monitoring methodology was developed by Oxford Media Research for the projects monitored by the international organization Global Campaign for Free Expression (GCFE) “Article 19”. The characteristic features of this methodology are the following: 1) use of a broad spectrum of quantitative indicators, including the type, duration, topic, circumstances of coverage, subjects of news, frequency and duration of appearance of certain individuals in the newscasts, sources of news. 2) the qualitative component is more developed than in other methodologies, which allows to establish the partiality of the monitored station/newspaper in covering the events. This is done through quantitative methods, which include the evaluation of the context and factors influencing the behavior of mass media: each news is subject to a content and context evaluation to determine

if it favors one or another party or political entity. A positive or negative content and/or context does not necessarily indicate the biasness or partisanship of the station broadcasting the news. It is possible that the news favor or disfavor one of the subjects and, nonetheless, be equidistant and correct from a professional viewpoint. Only when there is a tendency to favor or disfavor one of the subjects for a certain period of time, it is considered to be dealing with an imbalance.

1.7 Team

The project is carried out by the Association of Independent Press (API), in partnership with the Independent Journalism Center (IJC), within the project “Monitoring of mass media in the electoral campaign for the election of the bashkan of TAU Gagauz Yeri”.

2. Candidates registered by the Central Electoral Commission of TAU Gagauz Yeri for the election of the bashkan (as at 25 October 2006):

Gheorghii Tabunșic, independent
Alexandr Stoianoglo, independent
Nicolai Dudoglo, independent
Mihail Formuzal, independent

3. General conclusions

From the very beginning of the electoral campaign, the radio and TV stations as well as the periodicals subject to the monitoring, have shown a clear tendency of favoring the current bashkan Gheorghie Tabunșic, avoiding to disfavor directly any of the candidates.

Tabunșic’s opponents are disfavored indirectly, little reference being made to them during newscasts and in the public newspapers, and also the central power being engaged in the electoral campaign on the side of Gh. Tabunșic. The monitored stations have broadcasted news in which the central authorities praise the Gagauz authorities, speaking about the investments in Gagauzia, efficient monitoring of the autonomy, preparation for the cold season etc.

Gh. Tabunșic is also favored through the non-critical coverage of his activity as governor of TAU Gagauz Yeri, such as the preparation for the cold period of the year, gasification and water supply, funding of some projects, such as the Chadyr-Lunga Cathedral, the building of Comrat University, development of a Gagauz Government program aimed at reducing unemployment and migration etc., participation in various events – a motocross, the Wine Festival in Gagauzia, various social-cultural actions etc.

The other registered candidates are usually presented in connection with their registration at CEC.

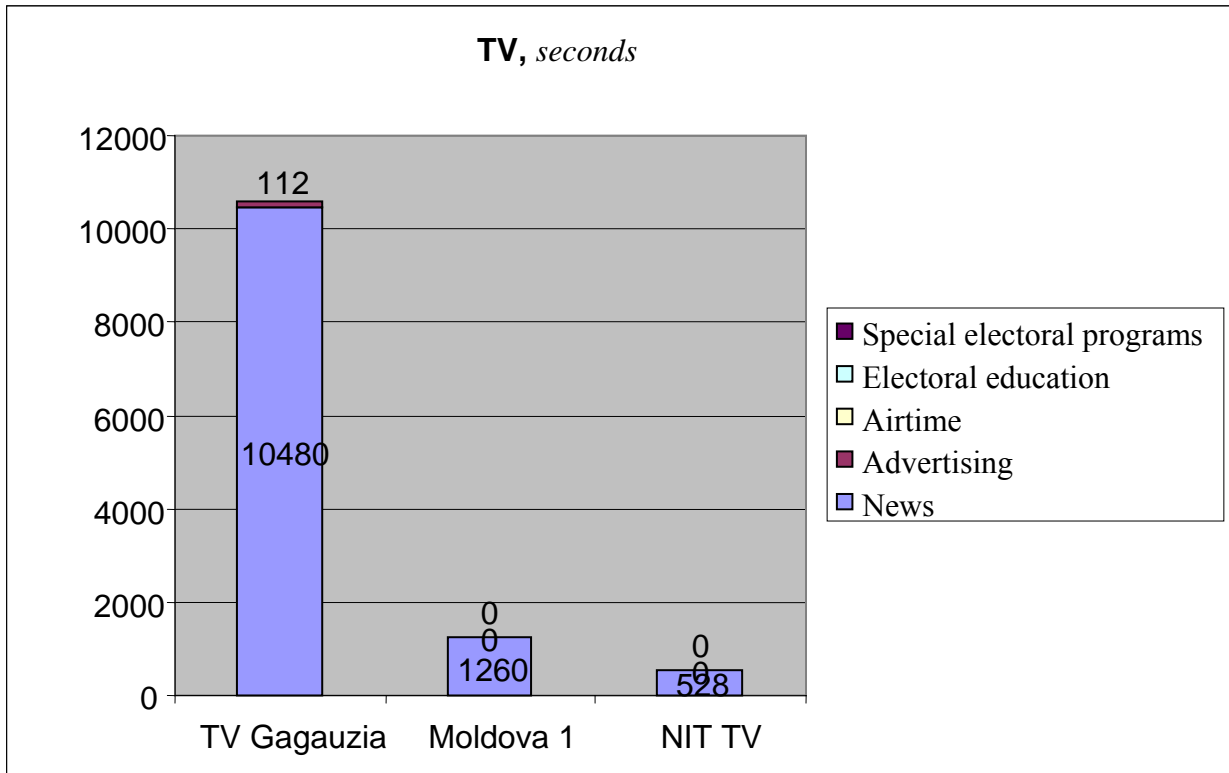
Special electoral programs are missing on the monitored radio and TV stations

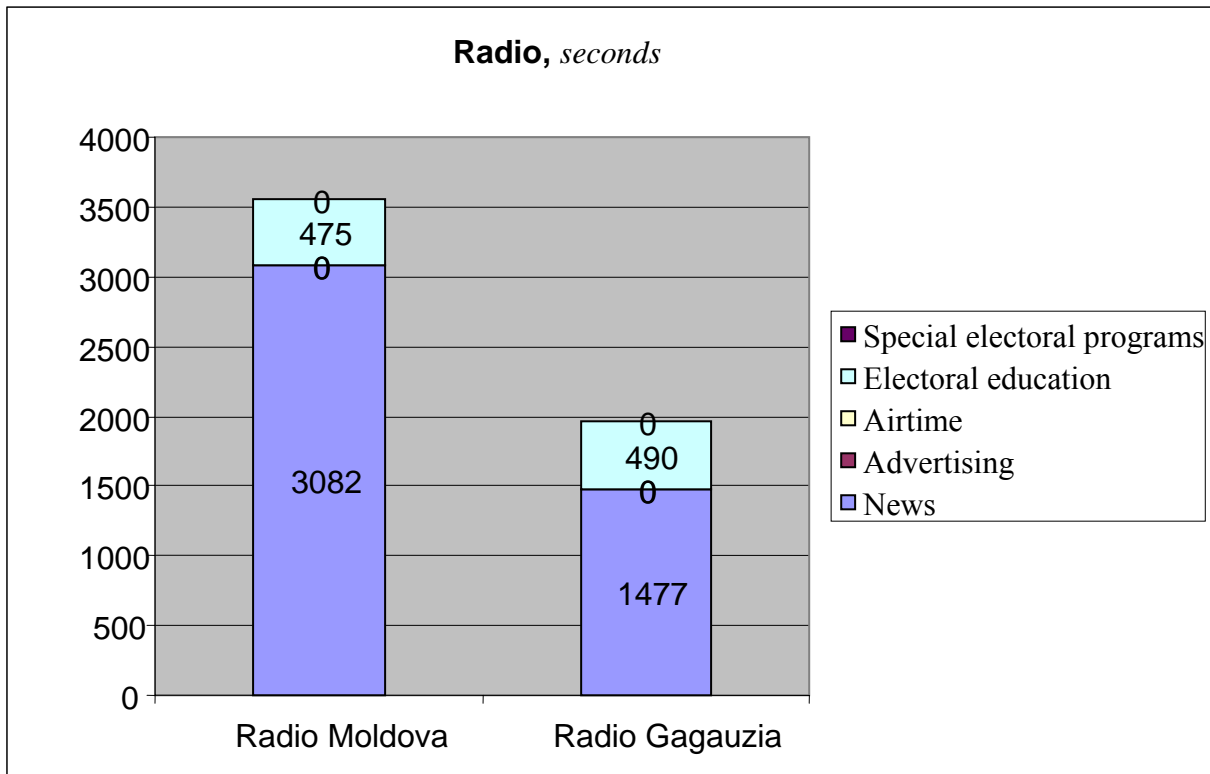
4. Monitoring data

4.1 Involvement in the electoral campaign

Radio and TV

The largest amount of electoral news is obviously broadcast by TV Gagauzia. Radio Moldova and Radio Gagauzia distinguish themselves through the attention paid to electoral education. Special electoral programs and advertising were missing during the first period of monitoring, except for some announcements on the Radio and TV Gagauzia about the meeting of a candidate with the electors.





4.2 Candidates mentioned in newscasts, frequency and context of coverage

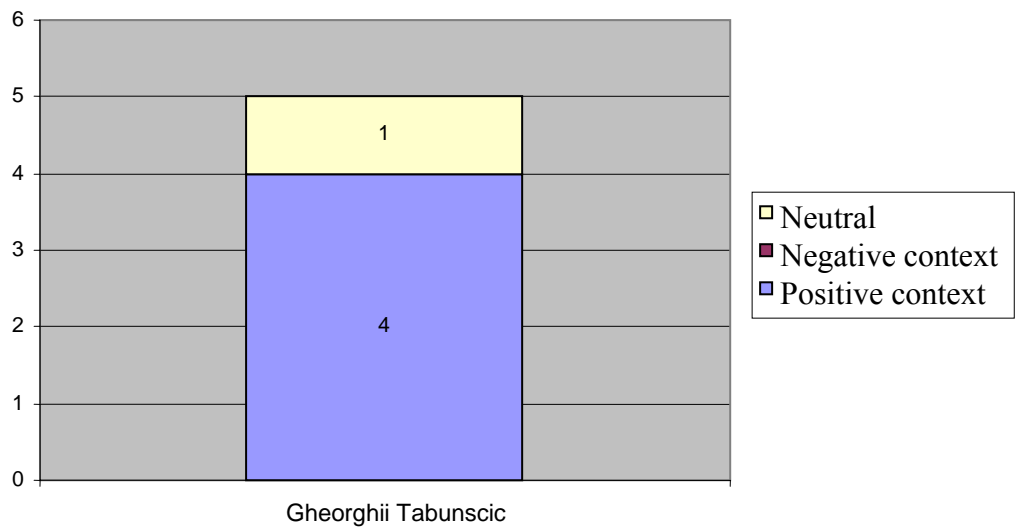
TV

Moldova 1 broadcasted a neutral piece of news about the beginning of monitoring of the electoral campaign for the bashkan election. Other two pieces of news, broadcast in Russian and Romanian, contained President Voronin's assessment of the current leadership of Gagauz Yeri and information about the allocation of money for Chadyr-Lunga hospital and reconstruction of Chişinău-Comrat route, indirectly favoring the current bashkan.

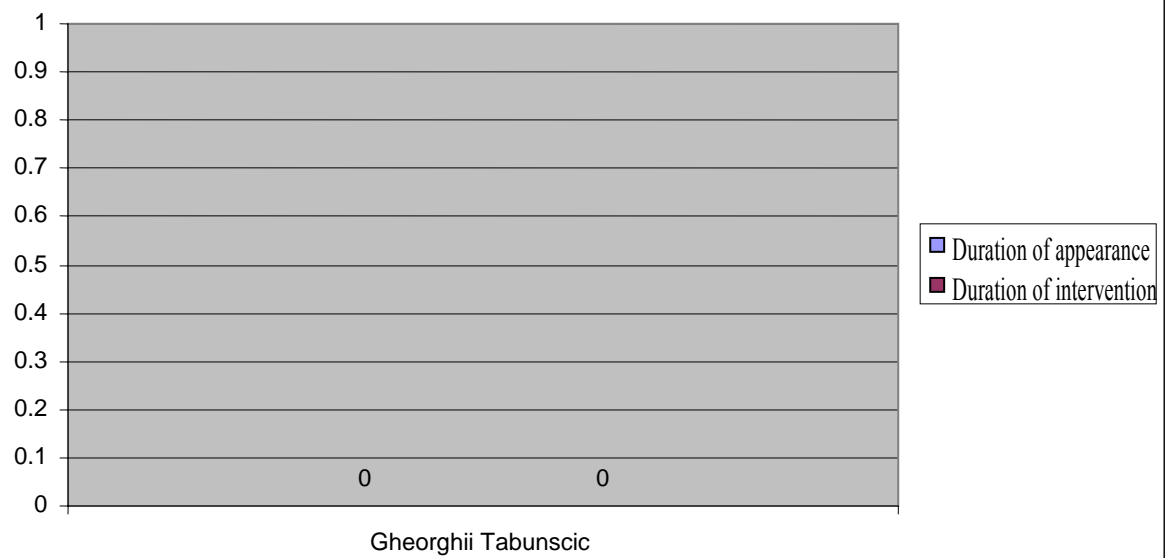
TV Gagauzia obviously favored the same candidate in terms of both amount of news, and appearances in the air and direct interventions. In comparison with Tabunşic, the frequency of references to the other candidates was minimal. NIT also ignored Tabunşic's opponents.

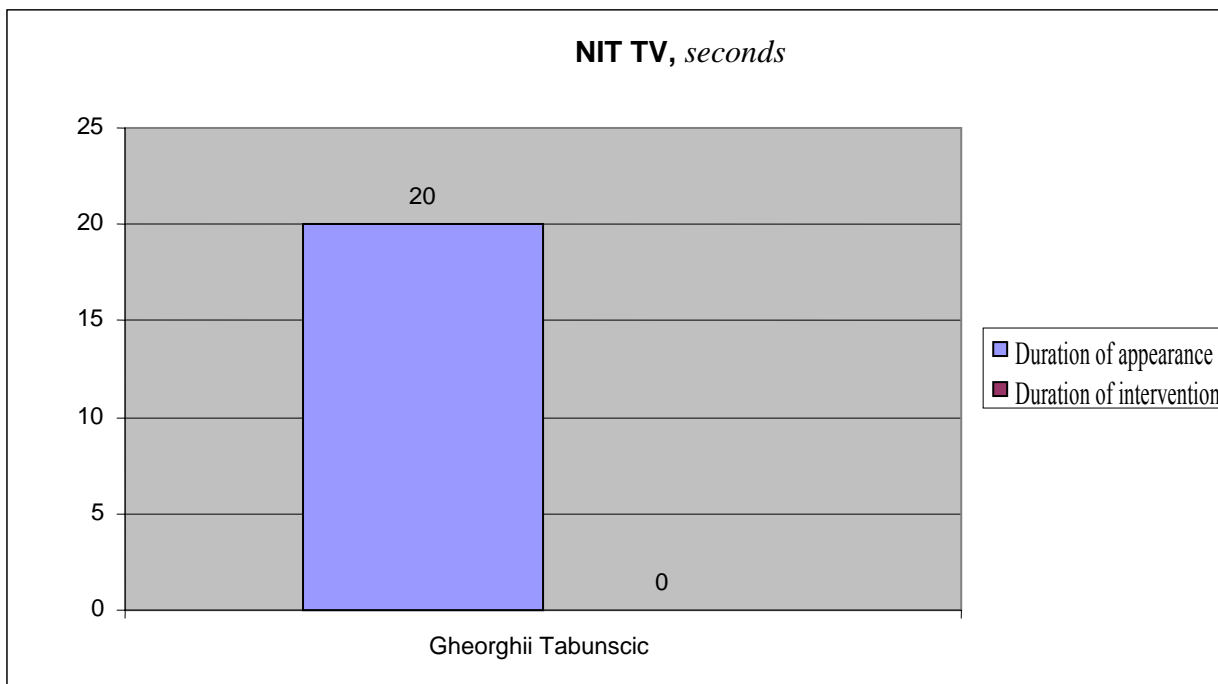
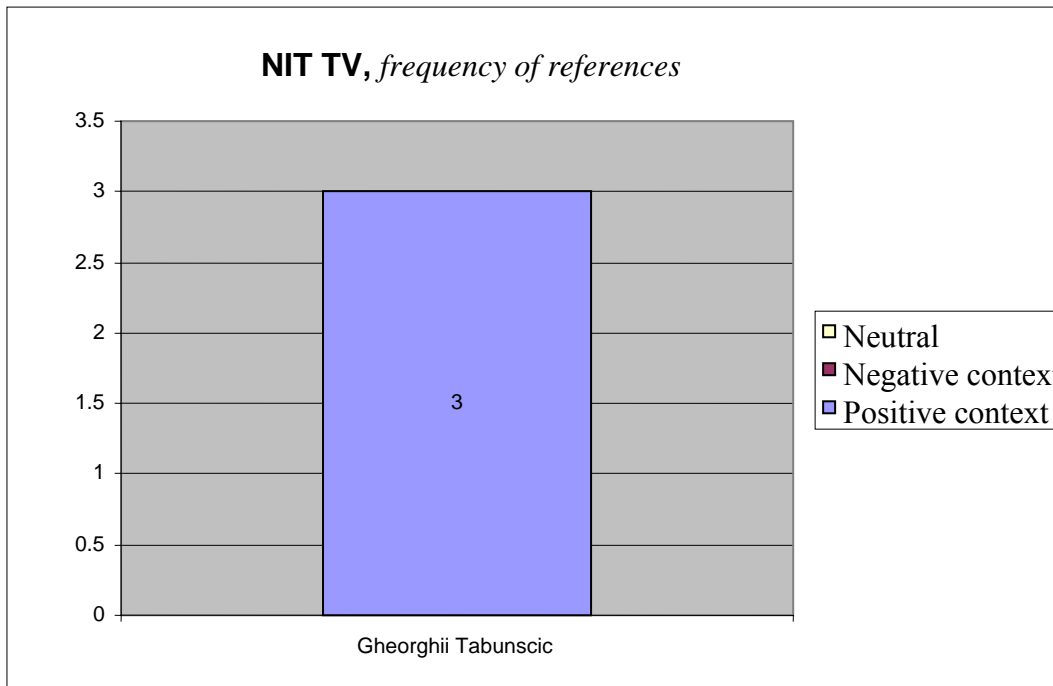
Also, only the current bashkan enjoyed appearances on TV (NIT and TV Gagauzia) and direct interventions (TV Gagauzia).

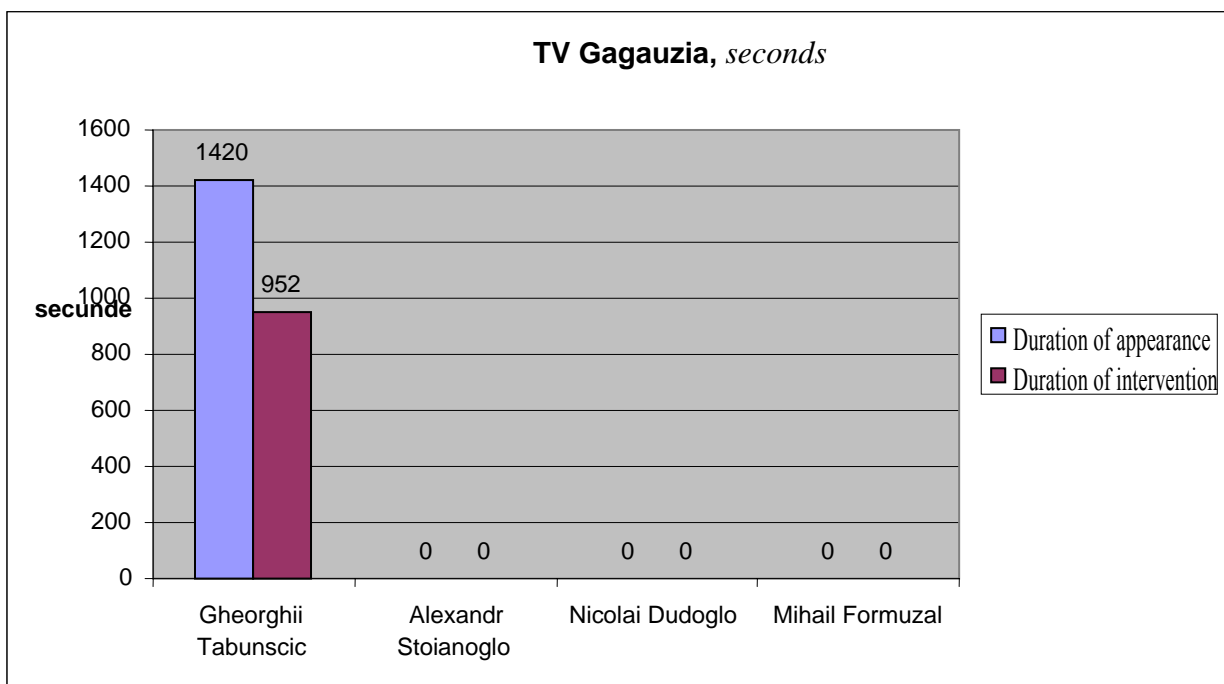
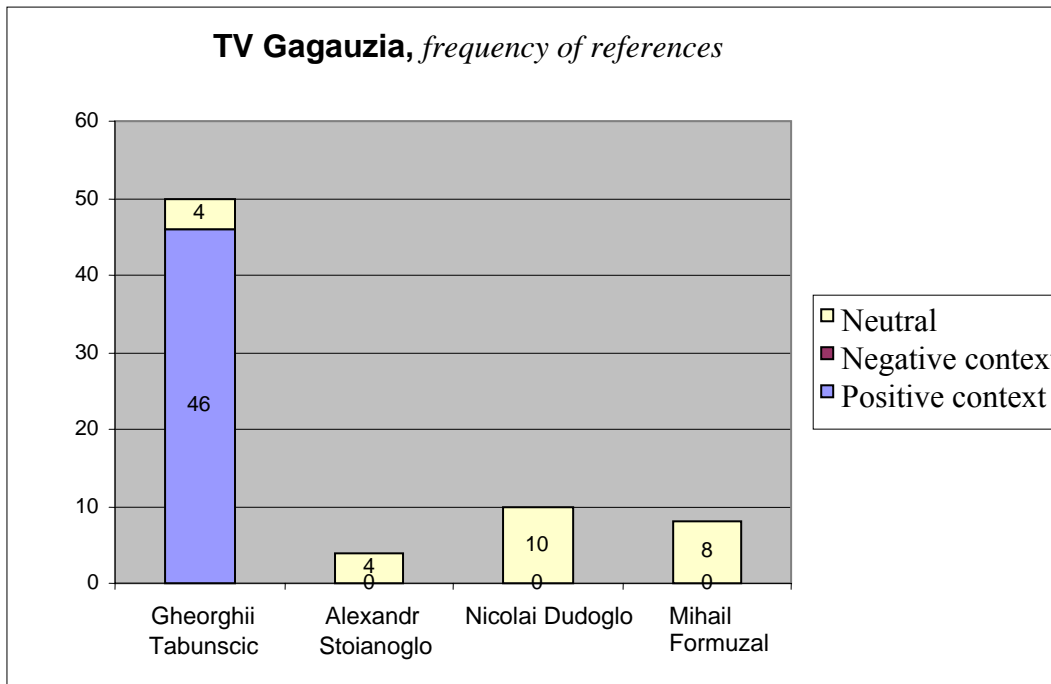
Moldova 1, frequency of references



Moldova 1, seconds

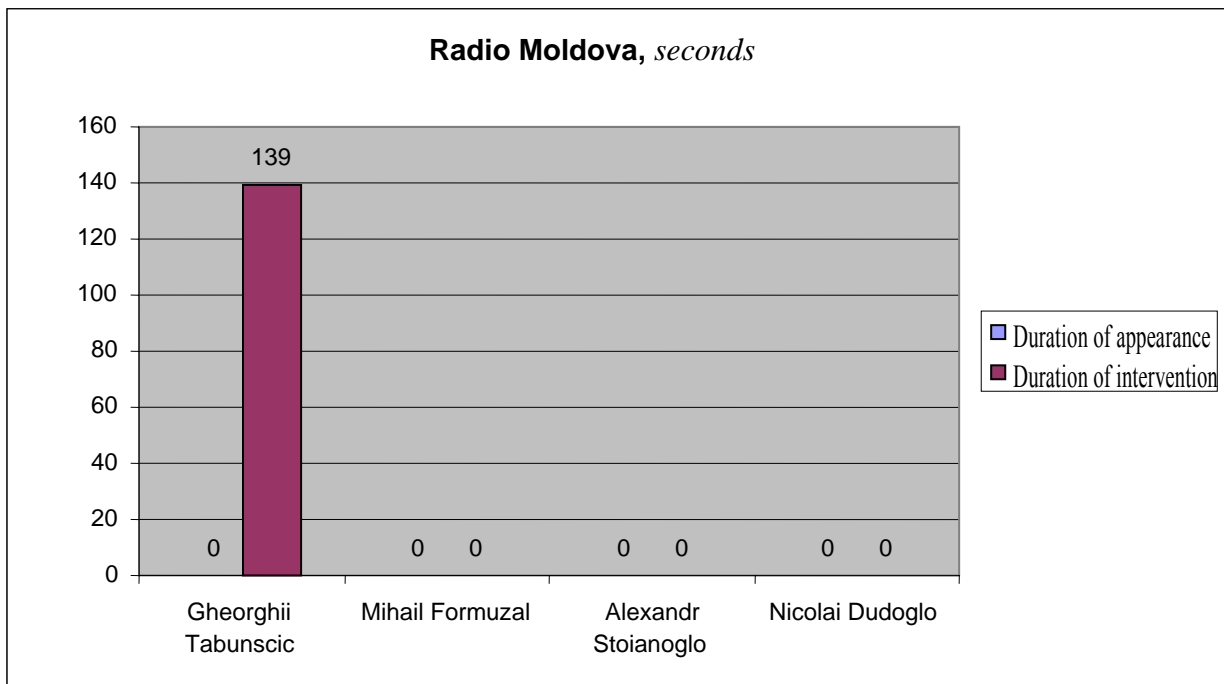
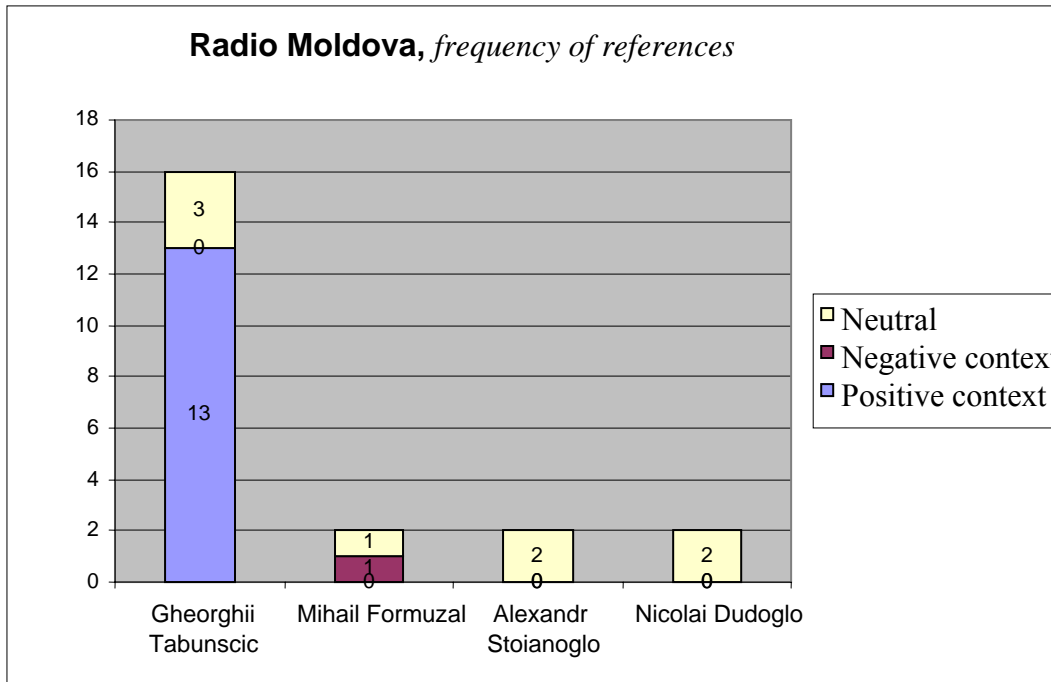


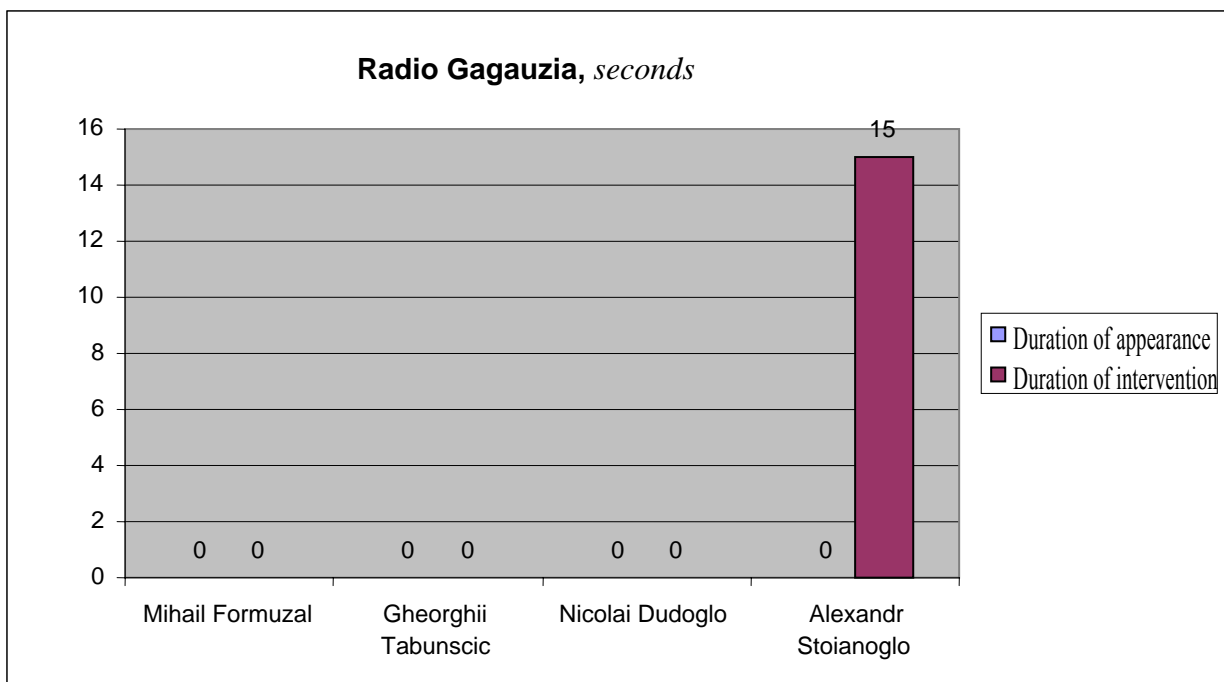
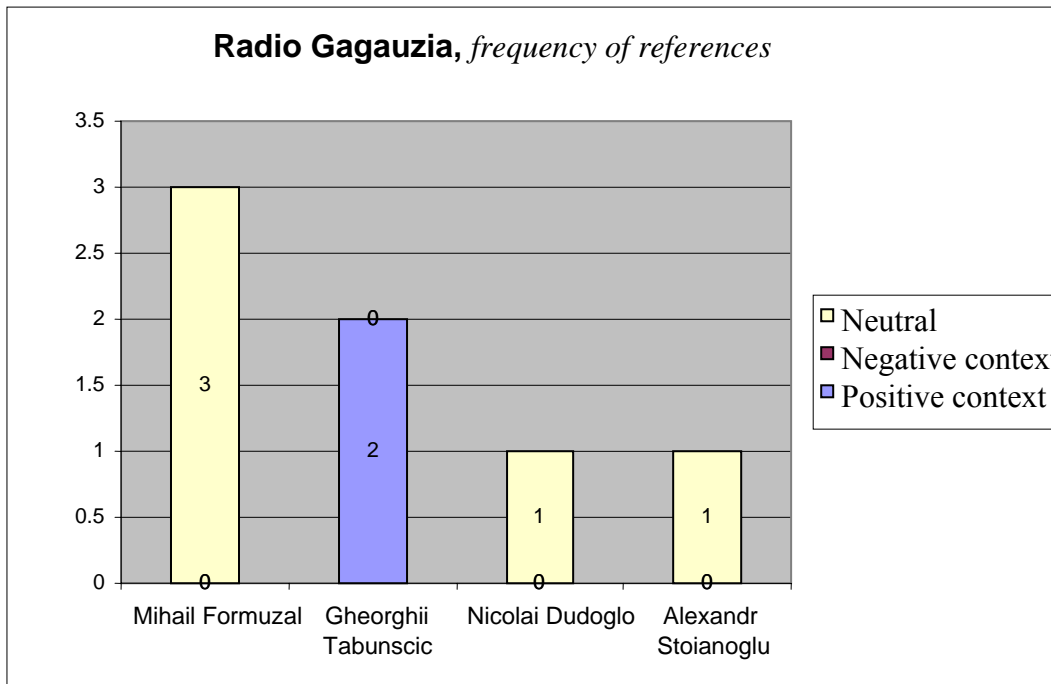




Radio

The electoral news broadcast by Radio Moldova made references mainly to Gheorghe Tabunșic, in positive contexts, also providing direct interventions. The other candidates were mentioned twice, neutrally, except for Formuzal. Radio Gagauzia also favored the current bashkan, providing 10 seconds of direct intervention to Aleksandr Stoianoglo.



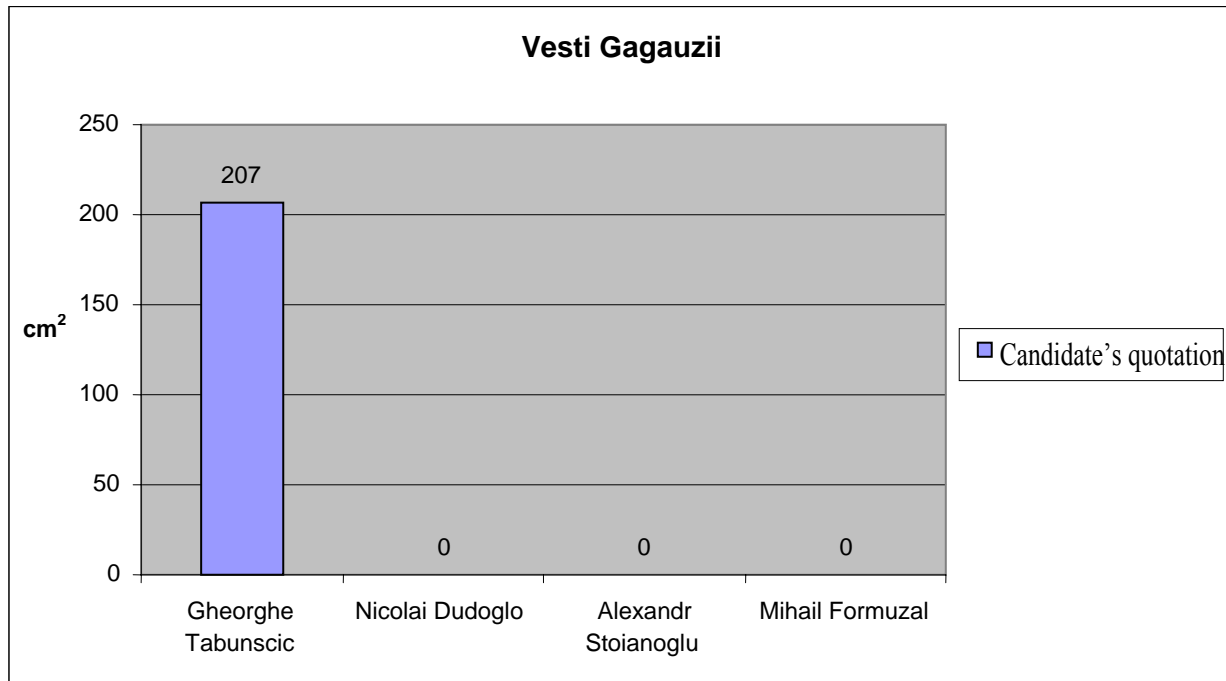


Print media

The most covered electoral competitor in the period 9–25 October 2006 by the monitored print media was the current bashkan of Gagauz Yeri Gheorghe Tabunscic. He benefited from favorable articles in the local public newspapers “Vesti Gagauzii” (Comrat), “Panorama” (Vulcănești) and “Znamea” (Chadyr-Lunga) as well as in the national newspaper “Nezavisimaya Moldova”.

“Vesti Gagauzii” published at least 2 pictures of the current bashkan in each issue. The newspaper also published speeches delivered by Gheorghe Tabunșic within local events. In the monitored period, he was quoted on the pages of “Vesti Gagauzii” on an area of 207 cm², whereas the other 3 candidates – 0 cm².

On the other hand, the municipal newspaper “Stolitsa Comrat” (Comrat), which came out only once in the monitored period, on 25 October, favored the independent candidate Nicolai Dudoglo, current mayor of Comrat.

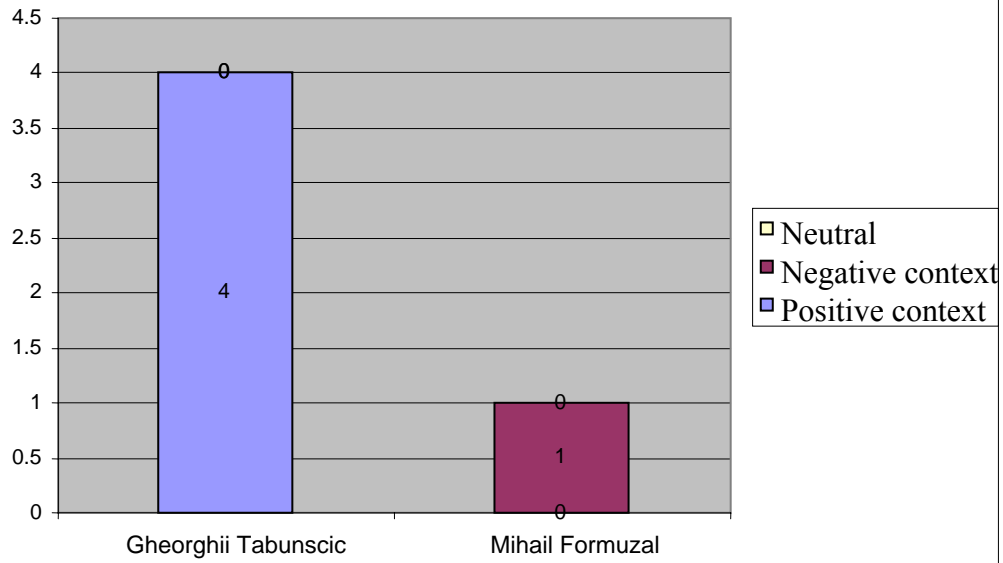


“Stolița Comrat” of 25 October inst., dedicated 7, out of 12, pages to the local elections to be held on 3 December 2006. The newspaper published on the front page the electoral program and biography of the independent candidate Nicolai Dudoglo, and on the second page – statements in favor of Nicolai Dudoglo, both articles being “paid for from the candidate’s electoral fund”. The newspaper also published a two-page interview with the current mayor of Comrat, without marking it as advertising.

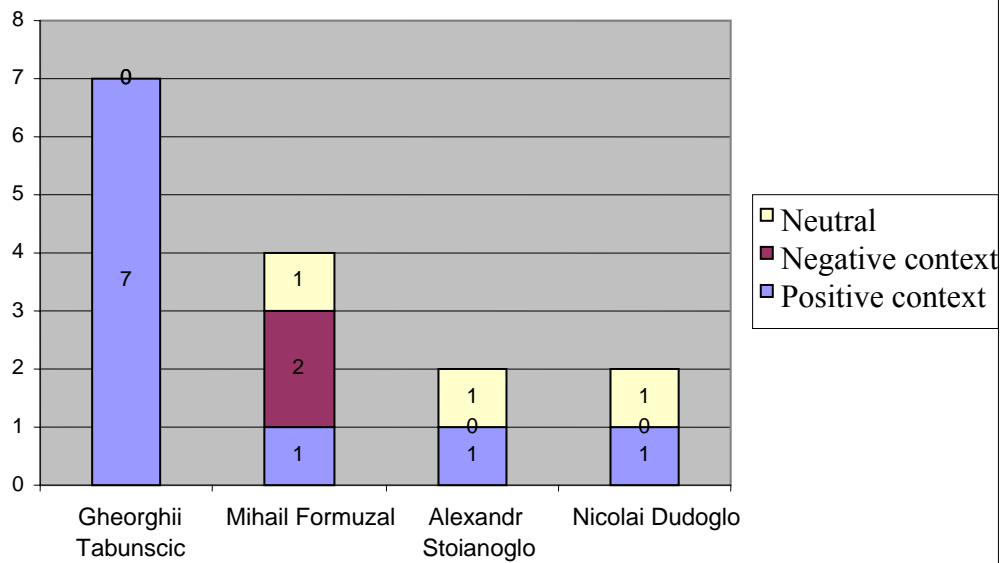
The independent national daily “Nezavisimaya Moldova” wrote the least about the election of autonomy’s bashkan, but favored Gheorghe Tabunșic in all the news. For example, in its issue of 18 October 2006, the newspaper published on the front page the Declaration of the Central Committee of the Communist Party about the elections in Gagauzia, which says that “CPRM will support the candidature of Gheorghe Tabunșic to the position of bashkan of Gagauz Yeri”.

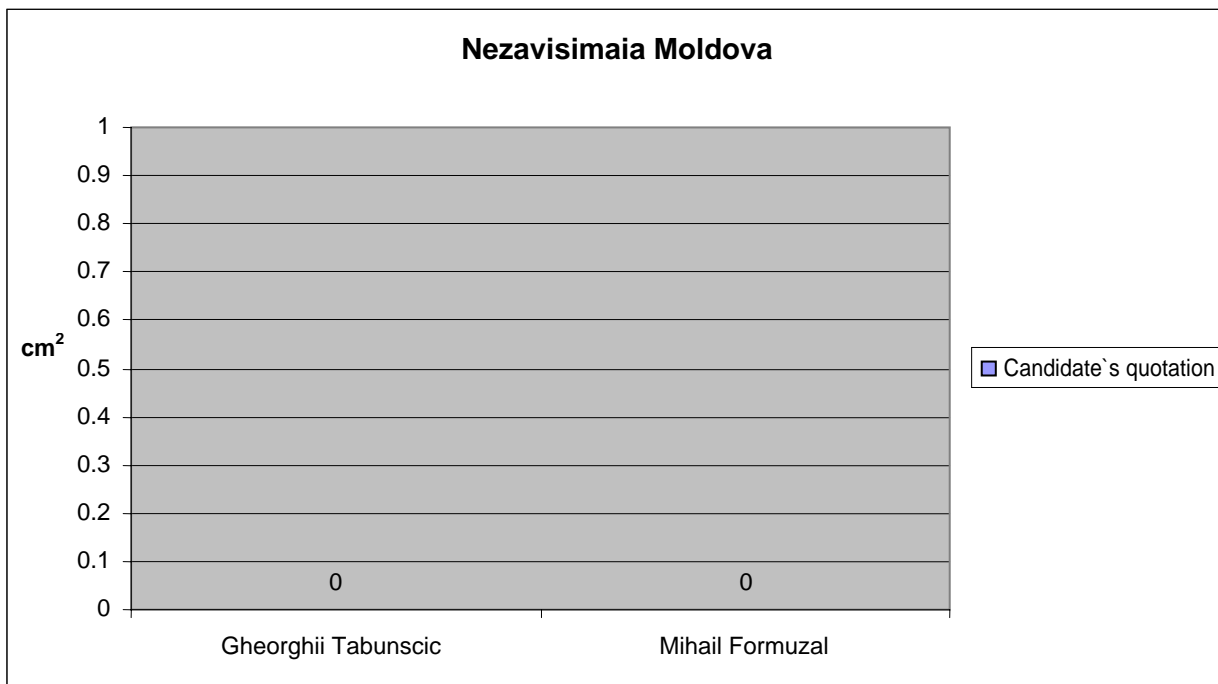
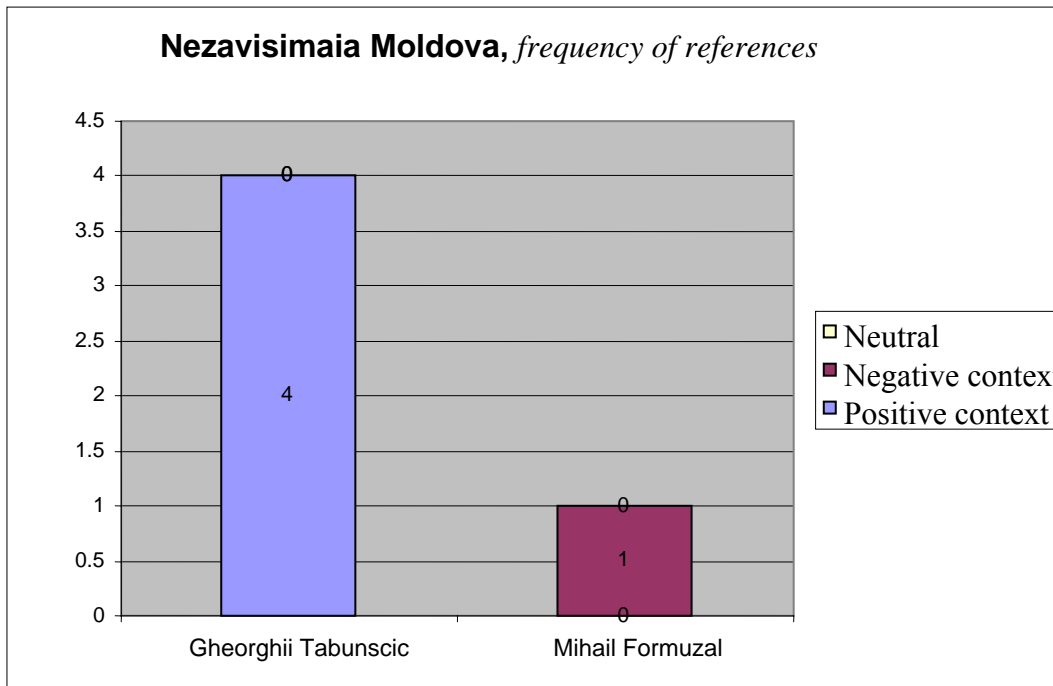
Overall, it was established that the newspapers tend to promote the positive image of a candidate overlooking the others. There were no critical articles about any of the candidates. “Nezavisimaia Moldova” and “Znamea” presented the independent candidate Mihail Formuzal in a negative content, indirectly.

Nezavisimaia Moldova, *frequency of references*

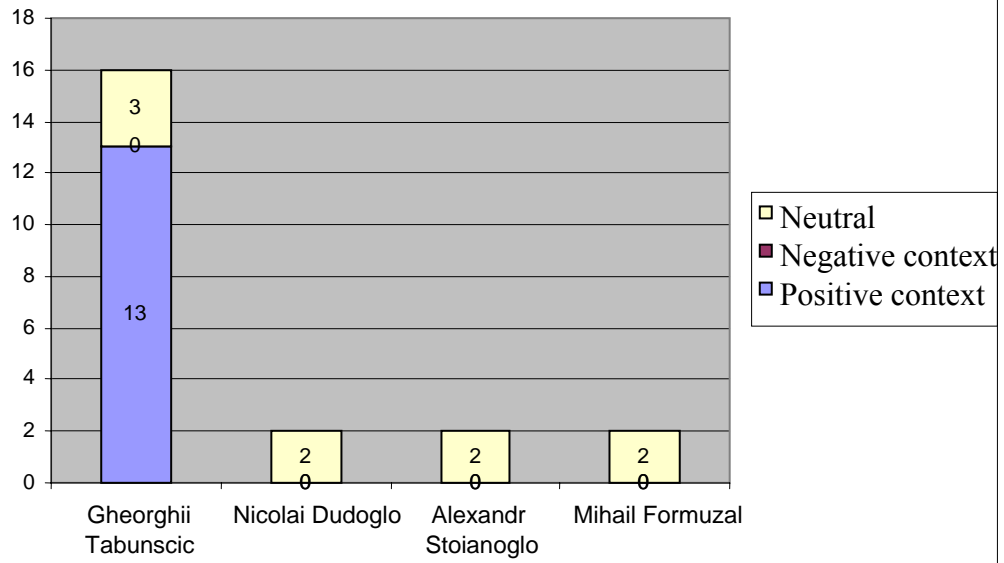


Znamea, *frequency of references*





Vesti Gagauzii, frequency of references



Vesti Gagauzii

