

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

Report no. 2

October 25– November 1, 2006



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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 Bashkan 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 Gagauzia

Radio

Radio Moldova, Radio Gagauzia

Print media

“Nezavisimaya Moldova”, “Vesti Gagauzii” (Comrat), “Znamya” (Ciadir-Lunga), “Stolitsa Comrat” (Comrat), Panorama (Vulcanesti), “Nastoiascee Znamya” (Ciadir-Lunga).

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 piece of 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 favors or disfavors 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:

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

3. General conclusions

During the period October 26– November 1, 2006, as mentioned in the anterior report, the tendencies to favor the actual Bashkan, Gheorghii Tabunșic, are being preserved on the radio, television and in written press that are subject to monitoring. This favoring by means of news about the accomplishments of the existent administration is being doubled by the fact that there is a lack of any critical references to its address. One single exception: the independent newspaper „Nastoiășcee Znamea” (Ceadâr-Lunga), supporting the independent candidate Mihail Formuzal, the actual mayor of the town Ceadâr-Lunga, depicts Mr. Tabunșic in dark colors.

As well, the monitored audio-visual mass-media, except for Radio Moldova, carry on neglecting the other competitors.

The degree of involvement of national media in the electoral campaign is, naturally, much more reduced than that of regional media. The national coverage newspaper „Nezavisimaia Moldova” has not written anything about the local elections from Gagauzia. A possible explanation would be that, during this period, the central authorities abstained from any praise or compliments addressed to the actual administration of Gagauz Yeri.

From audio-visual channels only Radio Gagauzia provided the electors with electoral education shows. On any other radio and TV channels subject to monitoring, the electoral debates are missing.

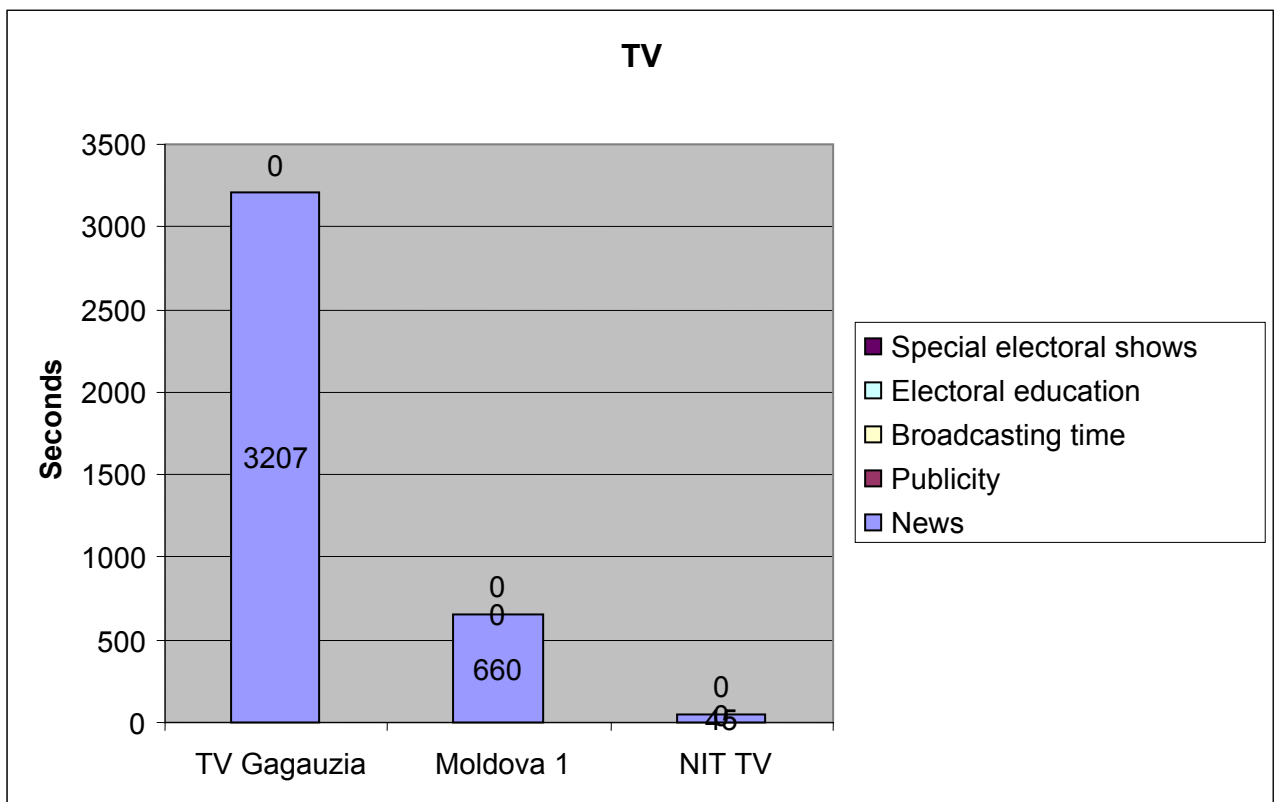
4. Data of monitoring

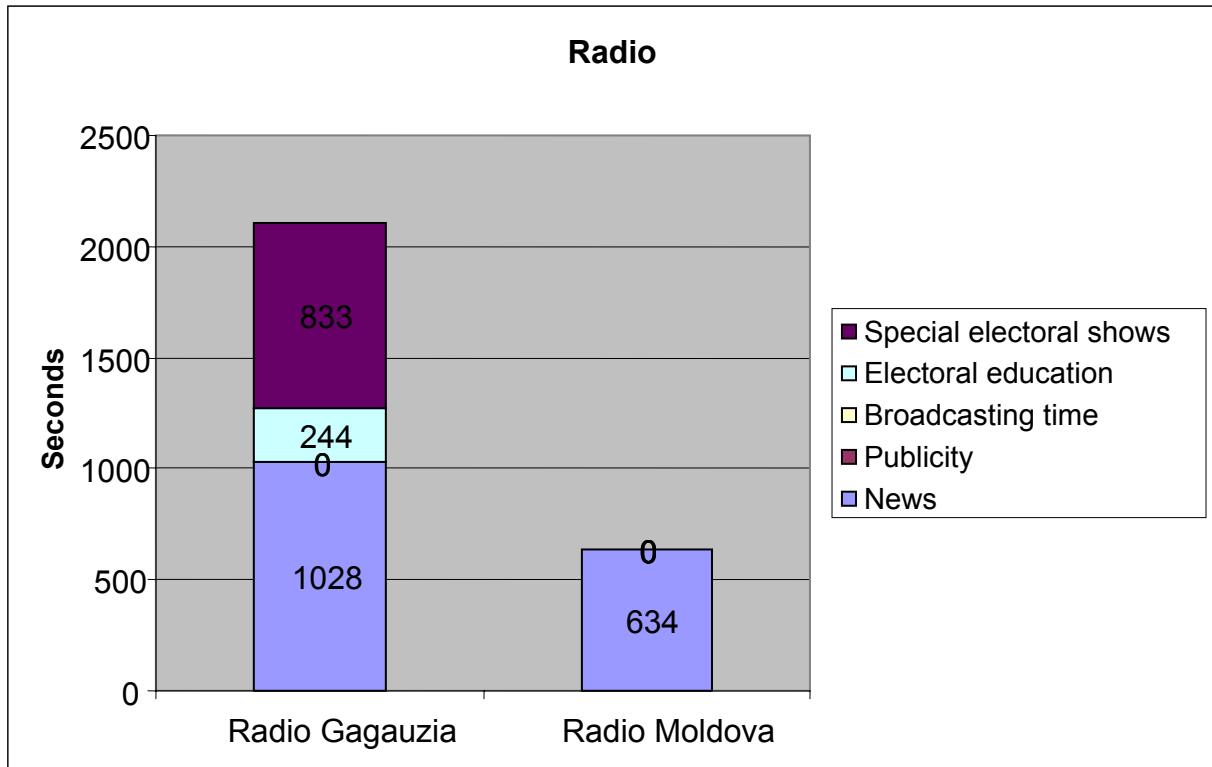
4.1 Involvement in the electoral campaign

Radio and Television

During the respective period, the involvement of TV Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova in the electoral campaign resumed to the broadcasting of several pieces of news. NIT broadcast only one single piece of news that indirectly concerned the elections from Gagauz Yeri. Further on, the biggest amount of electoral news is being broadcast by TV Gagauzia.

No other TV channel offered shows regarding debates, electoral education or electoral publicity to the viewers. Radio Gagauzia is the only channel that provided the electors with electoral education shows.

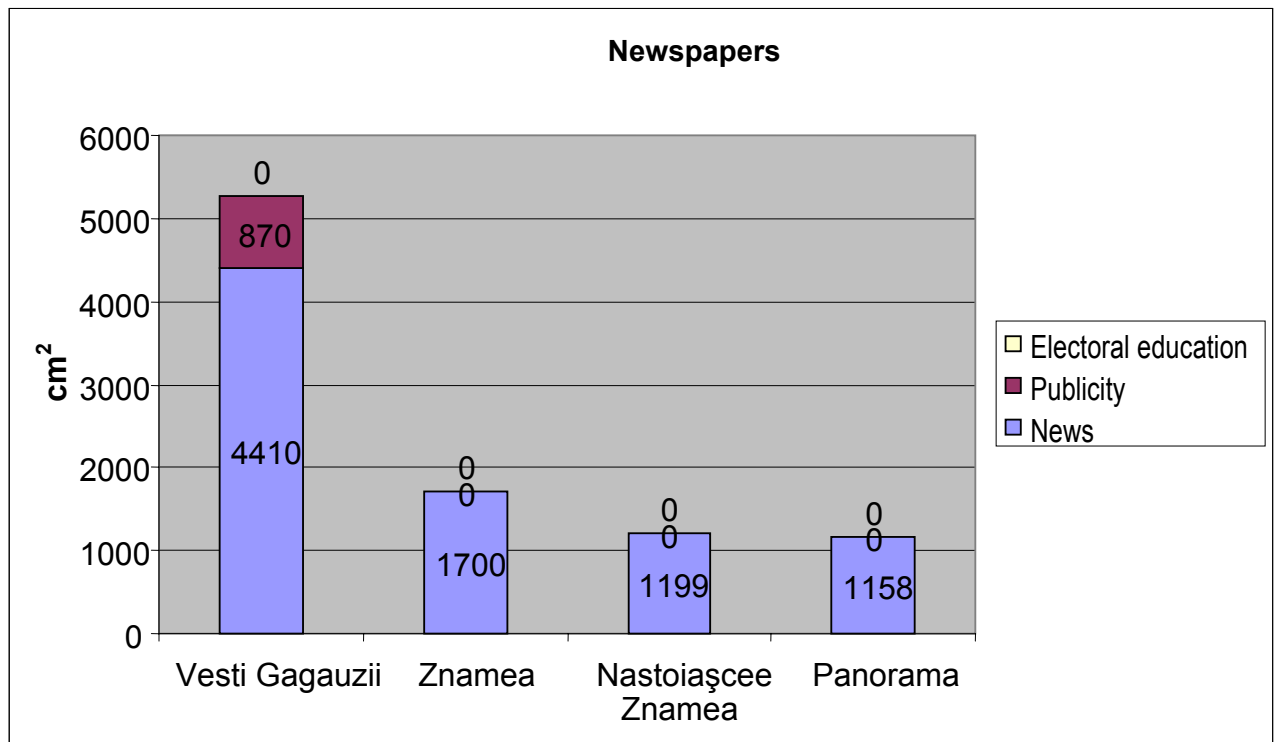




4.1.2 Newspapers

The newspaper „Vesti Gagauzii” provided 4410 sq.cm. of electoral news concerning the election of the bashkan and 870 sq.cm of electoral publicity. The newspapers „Znamea”, „Panorama” and „Nastoiășcee Znamea” wrote about the elections from December 3, 2006 on the utmost 1700 sq.cm. The discrepancies in figures are caused mostly by the bulk of the monitored publications - „Vesti Gagauzii” appears in 8 pages, while „Znamea”, „Panorama” and „Nastoiășcee Znamea” – appear in only 4 pages.

Except for “Vesti Gagauzii”, the subject-to-monitoring newspapers have not published any materials regarding electoral education and electoral publicity. The newspaper “Stolița Comrat” was not published throughout this period.

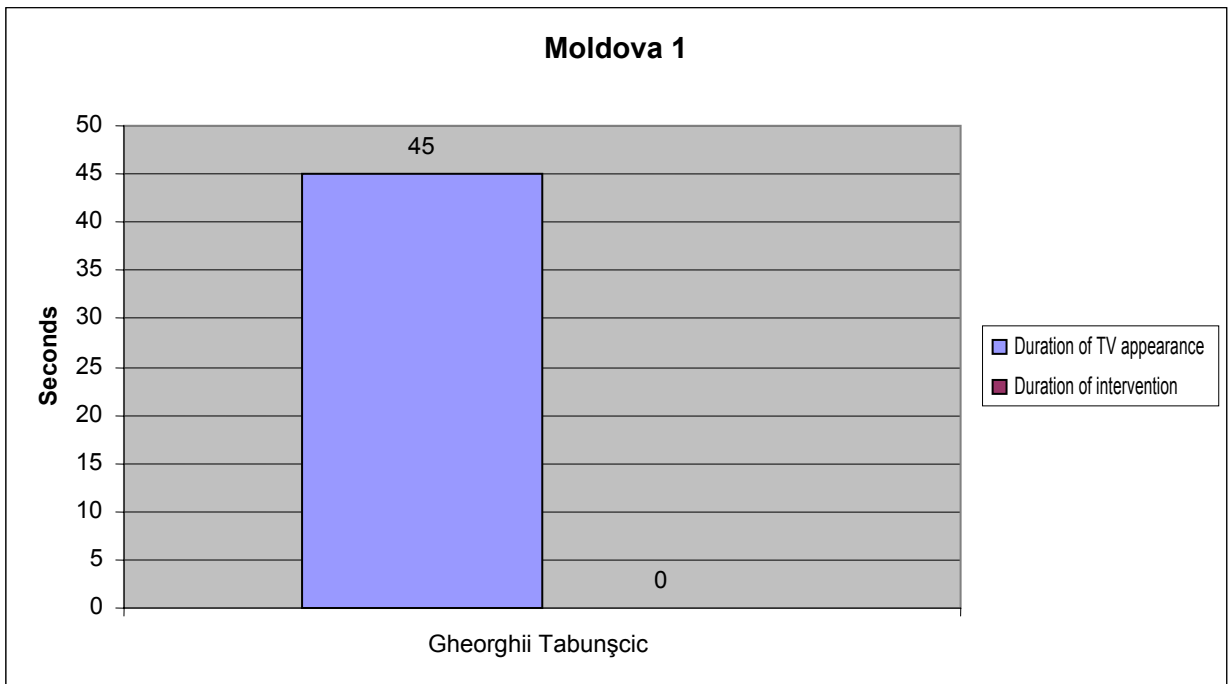
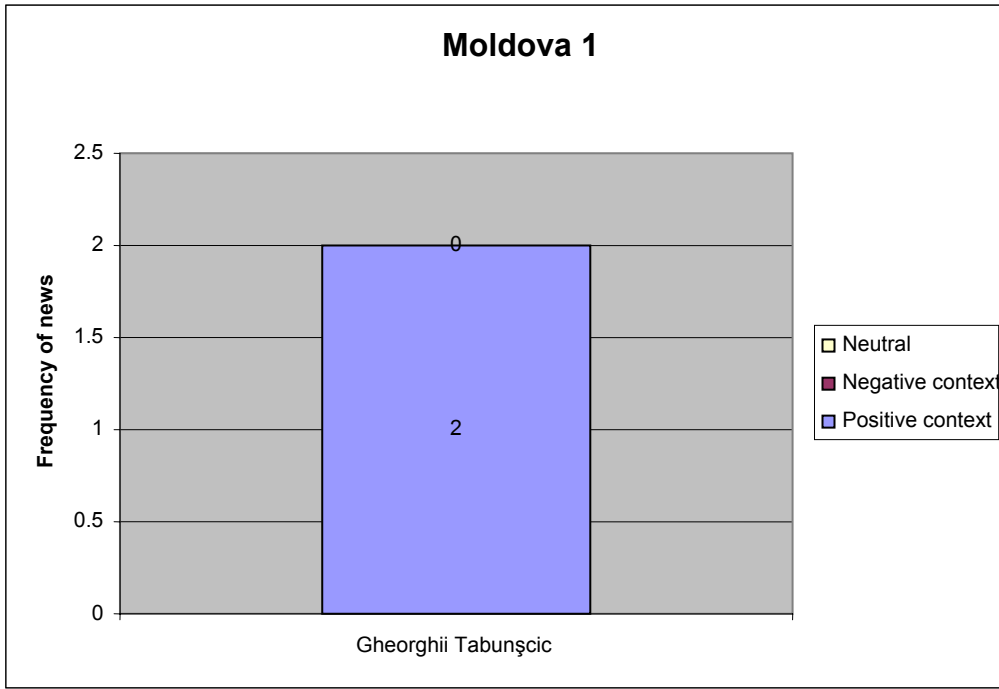


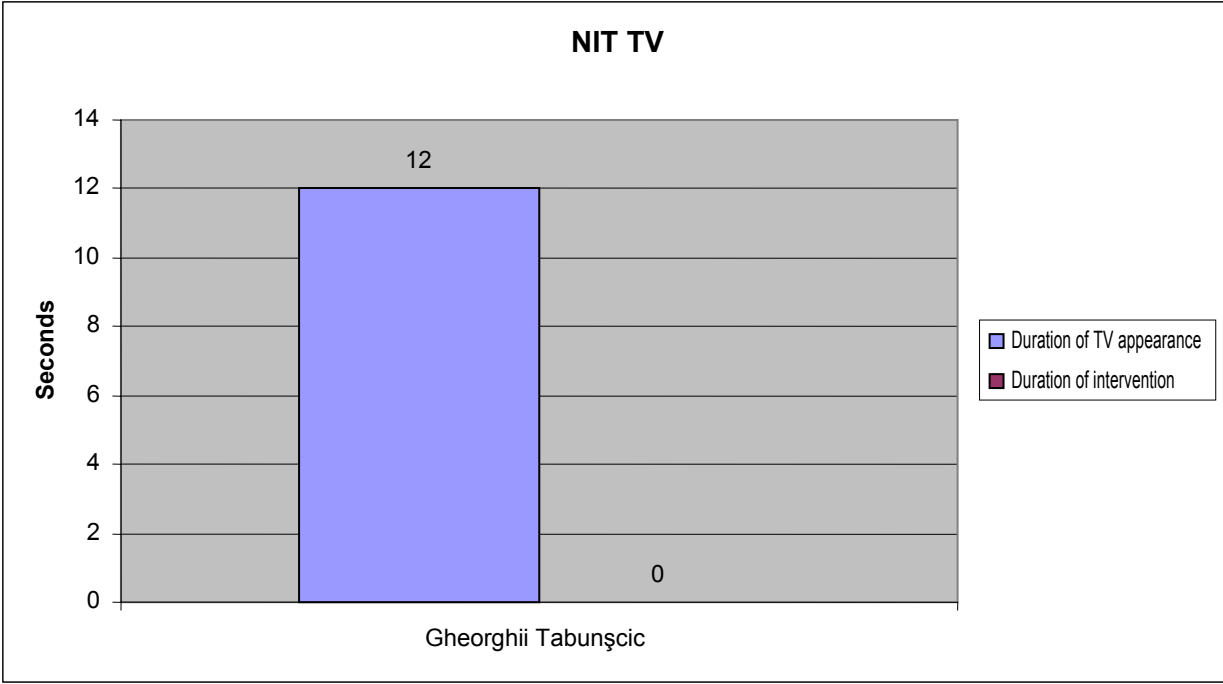
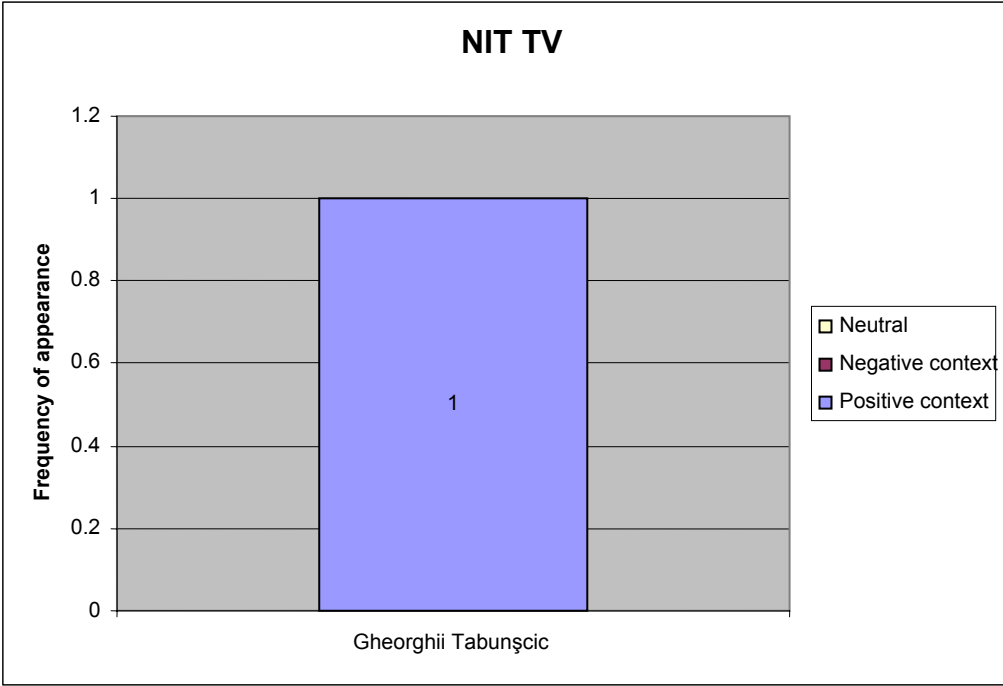
4.2 The candidates addressed to, either directly or indirectly, in newscasts, the frequency and context of media appearance.

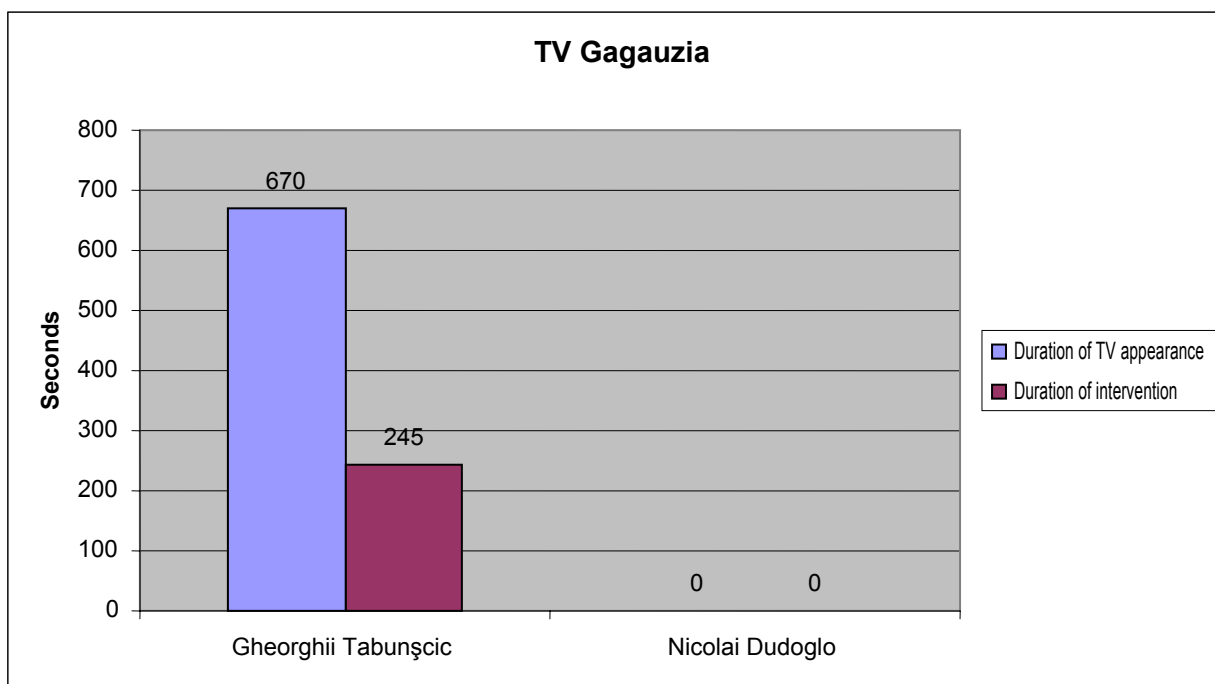
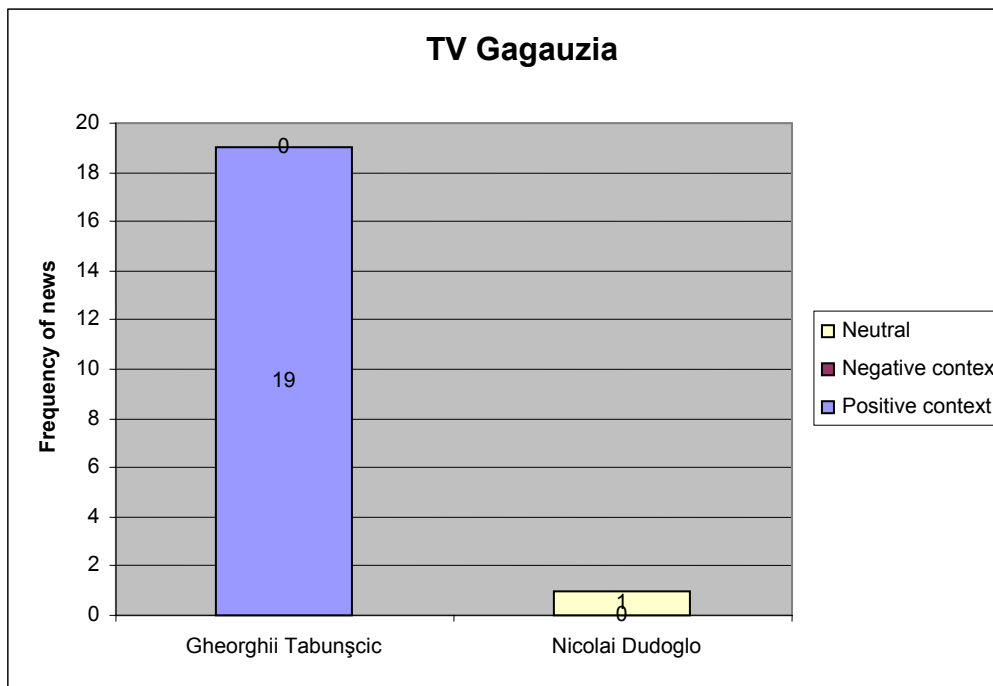
4.2.1 TV

The two pieces of electoral news broadcast by Moldova 1 during the monitoring period - reportage in Russian and Romanian languages, from the commissioning of a block of flats in Ciadîr-Lunga built through the mortgage method, were in favor of the actual bashkan who took part in the ceremony and appeared on the screen. The same reportage was presented only once by NIT.

G. Tabunşic was solidly favored (19 pieces of news) on TV Gagauzia. Unlike other electoral competitors, he benefited from appearances on the screen (670 sec.) and direct interventions (245 sec.). One of the counter-candidates, Nicolai Dudoglo, was approached in a neutral manner in a single piece of news, while the other candidates were completely ignored.







Examples of direct or indirect favoring of the candidate Gh.Tabunșic on TV Gagauzia:

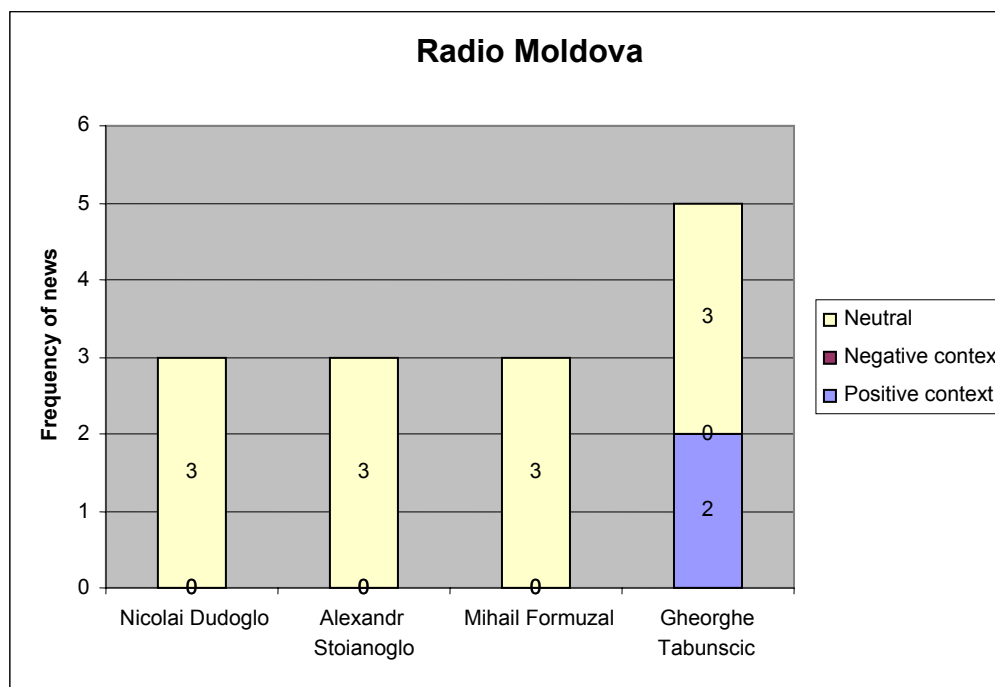
- Reportage about the efforts of Comrat administration to prepare the schools and kindergartens for the winter period;
- Reportage about the anniversary of the Ethnographic Museum from Beșalma, on this occasion the bashkan Tabunșic donated a computer to the respective Museum;
- Reportage from the commissioning of a block of flats in Ciadîr-Lunga, built through the mortgage method; Tabunșic attended the event and personally intervened in the show;
- Reportage about the opening of a technological station in Gagauzia, event attended by Gh. Tabunșic;

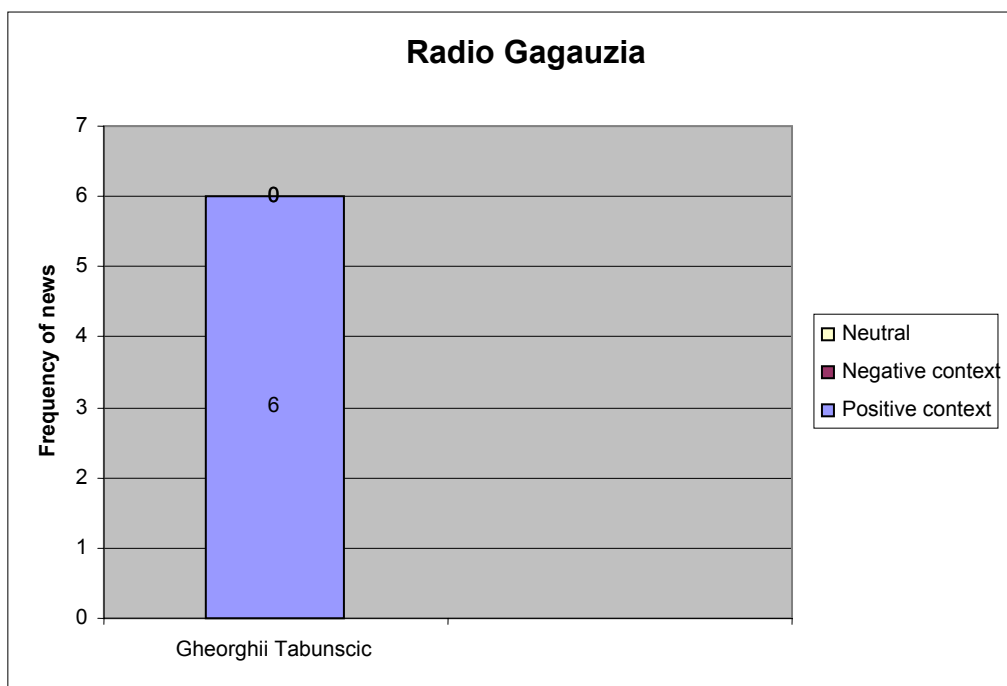
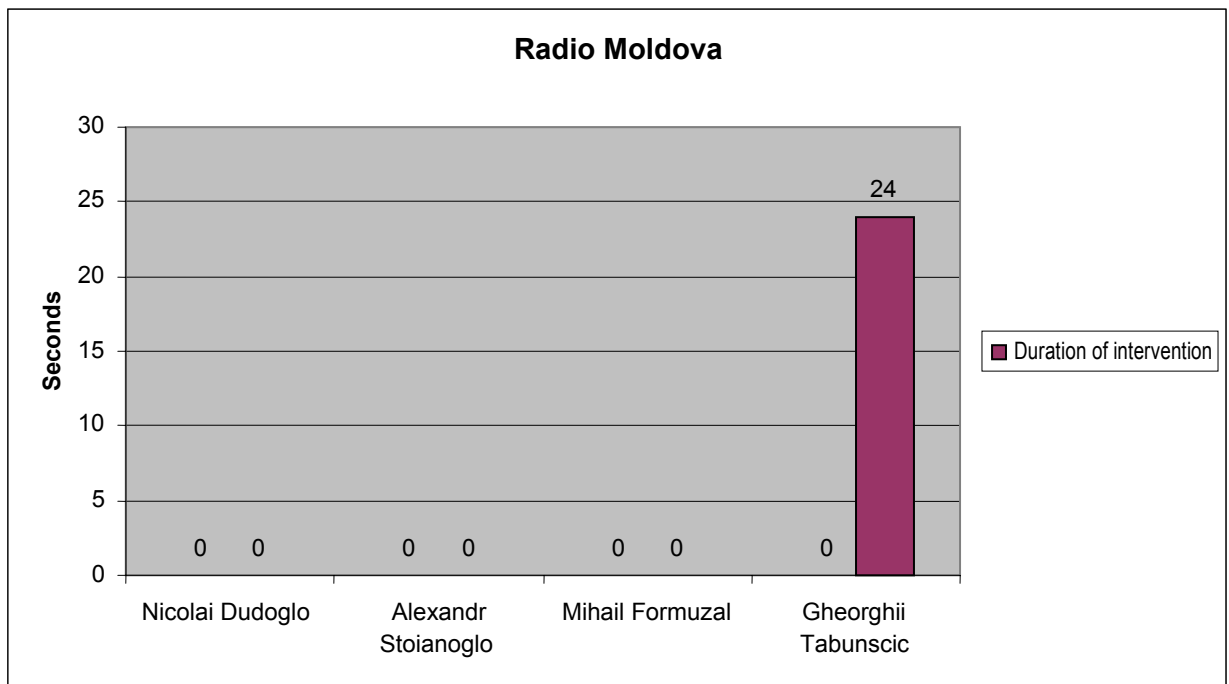
- Reportage about the meeting of Gh. Tabunșic with representatives from Greece, regarding the administration of the Greek grant in amount of 13 million lei
- Reportage about the meeting of Gh. Tabunșic with the Head of OSCE Mission from Moldova, in which discussions were held about the stabilization of the situation in Gagauzia over the last years;
- Reportages about the Bashkan Chess and Checkers Cup, broadcast during several days;
- Reportage from the session of the Veterans' Council Plenum from Republic of Moldova, during which an appeal was made to the Gagauz population to vote for Gh. Tabunșic.

4.2.2 Radio

Radio Moldova broadcast three pieces of news of neutral content making reference to all electoral candidates. Another reportage about the opening of a technological station in Gagauzia was also broadcast, including the personal intervention of Gh. Tabunșic, who attended the event, as well as another piece of news about the beginning of the computerizing process in schools from TAU Gagauzia, indirectly favoring the actual bashkan.

In its electoral news, Radio Gagauzia referred only to the activity of the actual bashkan.





Examples of direct or indirect favoring of the actual bashkan on Radio Gagauzia:

- Reportage about the opening of a technological station in Gagauzia; during the ceremony, the Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry states the successes of Comrat administration;
- Reportage about pilot projects regarding the modernization of hospitals from Ciadîr-Lunga, gratitude being addressed to the administration of Gagauz Yeri;
- Reportage from the commissioning of a block of flats in Ciadîr-Lunga, built through the mortgage method, in which the support of the TAU Gagauz-Yeri administration is mentioned;
- Reportages about the Bashkan Chess and Checkers Cup organized in Gagauzia, with reference to the concern of Comrat administration regarding the young generation.

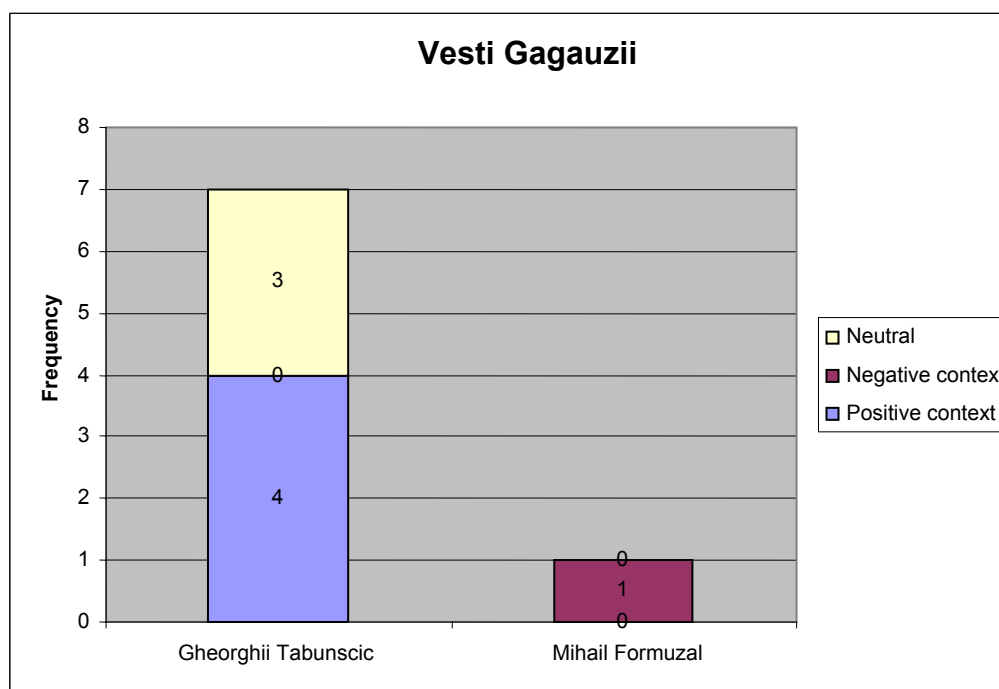
4.2.3 Written press

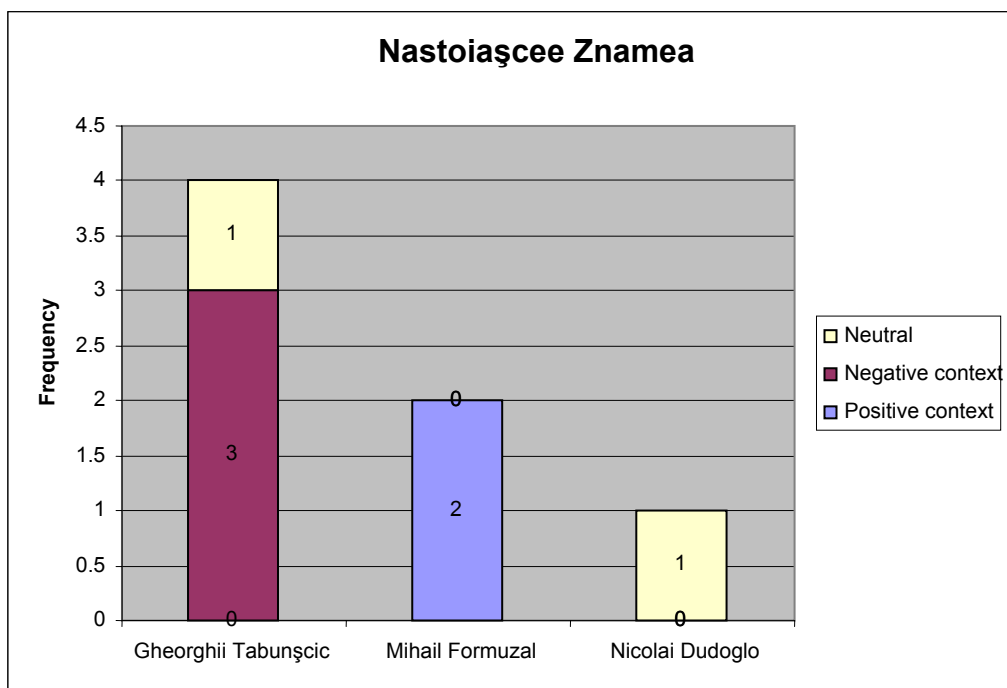
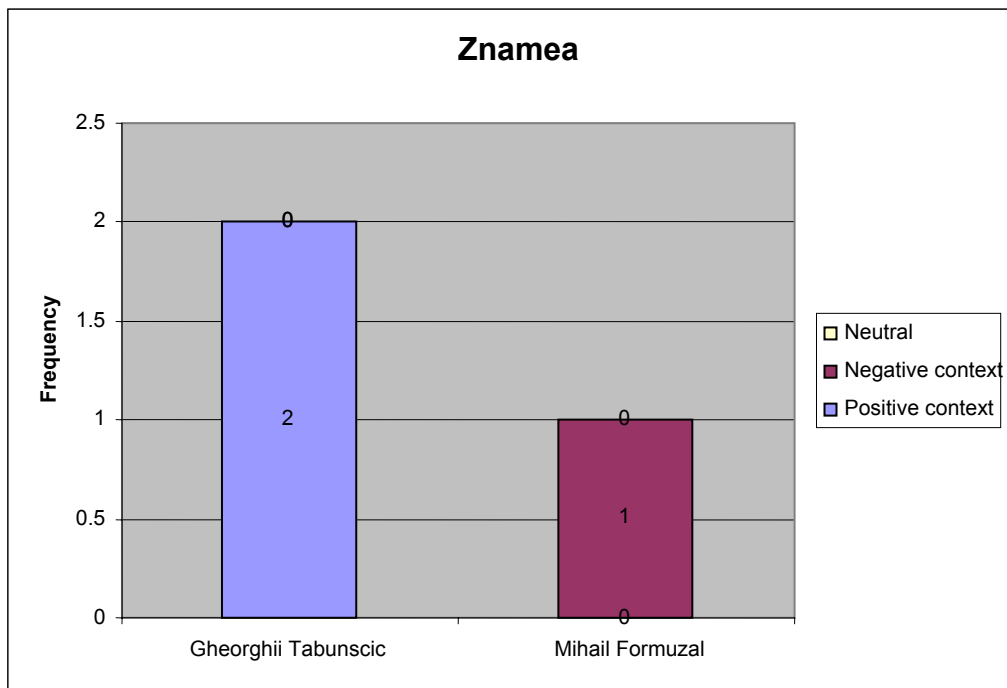
The electoral candidate benefiting from the most written media support over the period October 26 – November 1, 2006, remains to be the actual bashkan Gheorghii Tabunșic. He benefited from favorable articles in local public newspapers „Vesti Gagauzii” (Comrat), „Panorama” (Vulcanesti) and „Znamea” (Ceadâr-Lunga).

Still, „Vesti Gagauzii” did not publish the speeches held by Gheorghii Tabunșic during certain local events. (During the period October 9 – 25, 2006, the total area of Tabunșic’s intervention in the pages of „Vesti Gagauzii” constituted 207 sq.cm., while the intervention of the other 3 candidates– 0 sq.cm.). From all the other candidates, „Vesti Gagauzii” refers only to Mihail Formuzal but in a negative context.

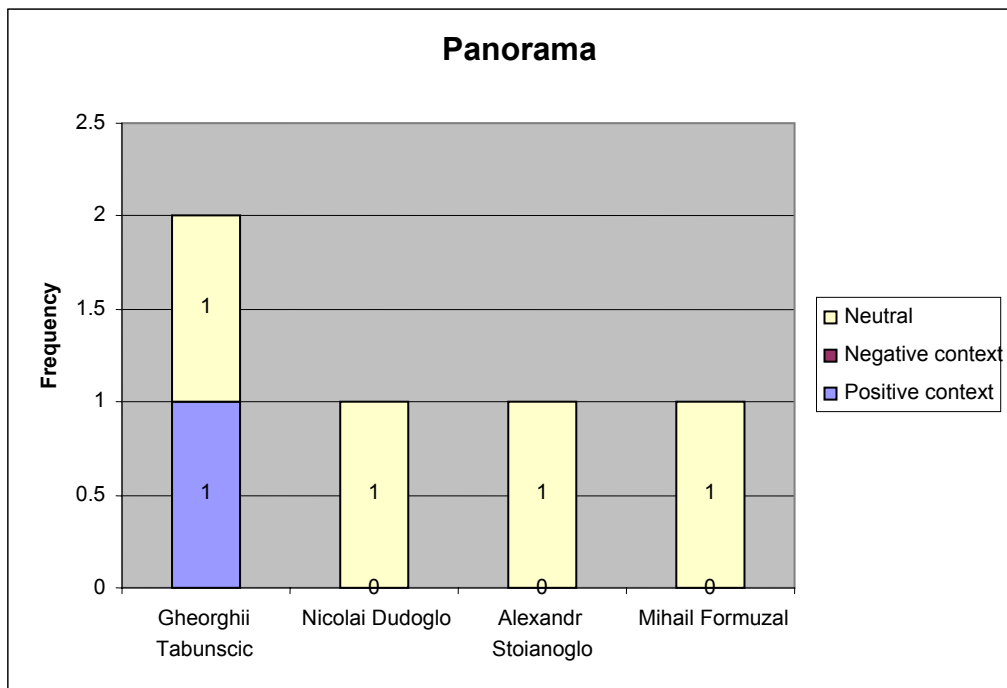
„Znamea” completely praised the success and accomplishments of the actual bashkan over the last 4 years of governing.

„Panorama” adopted a more balanced style, depicting the actual bashkan in bright colors only once while publishing his electoral program.





The independent newspaper „Nastoiășee Znamea” (Ceadr-Lunga), which was not subject to monitoring in the previous monitoring period, opted in favor of the independent candidate Mihail Formuzal, the actual mayor of Ceadr-Lunga town, presenting Gheorghii Tabunșcic in a negative light.



On the whole, exactly as in the previous period, the regional public newspapers avoid presenting the electoral candidates in a critical manner. The independent candidates, Nicolai Dudoglo and Alexandr Stoianoglo, were practically forgotten by the subject-to-monitoring newspapers. The actual mayor of Comrat was mentioned only once and in a neutral manner by the newspaper „Nastoiășcee Znamea”, while Alexandr Stoianoglo does not figure in any piece of news in the monitored newspapers.