

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

Report no. 5

18 November – 1 December, 2006



The “Free and Fair Election of the Governor of Gagauz -Yeri” project is funded by the Eurasia Foundation, Moldova Representative Office, with the contribution of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA/ASDI) and the National Endowment for Democracy, USA.

This project is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The content is the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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

Radio and TV

During the second half of November, just as in the first half of the same month, the national-coverage public channels – *TV Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova*, as well as the national-coverage private channel - *NIT*, preferred to involve the least possible in the elections from the Gagauz Autonomy. However, in the last days of the electoral campaign, all the three channels strayed from the position of non-involvement, spreading several pieces of news which were indirectly in favor of the actual bashkan Gh. Tabunșic. The pieces of news were about the positive appreciation which the President Voronin made to the address of the relationships established over the last four years between central authorities and regional authorities from Gagauz Yeri.

It should be mentioned as well that the editorial policy of non-engagement in the electoral campaign gives advantages to the actual bashkan, the voter remaining uninformed about the other candidates.

Instead, the regional channels – *Radio and TV Găgăuzia* have re-intensified the broadcasting of news that favor Gheorghii Tabunșic, both directly and indirectly, ignoring his counter-candidates. Except for Tabunșic, the image of no other candidate appeared in the news spread by *TV Gagauzia*. All the same, just as in the newscasts diffused by *Moldova 1* and *NIT* during the electoral campaign from the Gagauz Autonomy, only the image of the actual bashkan appeared.

At the same time, on both above mentioned channels, there can be noticed an increase in the bulk of electoral publicity, electoral education materials, elaborated with the assistance of Ladom and Adept, as well as in the frequency of debate shows.

Unfortunately, *TV Găgăuzia* organized the debates during 4 p.m. – 5 p.m., when a big part of voters were still at work. The actual bashkan did not take part in the debates. In the last days, similar to the national-coverage channels, *TV Gagauzia* spread the reportage with the participation of the President V. Voronin, who mentioned the fruitful collaboration between the central authorities and the Gagauz Executive body from the last years, indirectly favoring the actual bashkan.

TV Găgăuzia also broadcast three opinion shows, in which Gh. Tabunșic was highly praised and M. Formuzal vehemently criticized. In one of the shows, N. Dudoglo was also severely addressed to. The respective materials were highlighted by means of video and sound signals – Elections 2006. However, any reference to the authors of these signals was missing. During the last three days of the electoral campaign, *Radio Gagauzia* did not organize debates among the competitors, but spread a reportage regarding the re-launching of the agricultural sector in the village Cotovsc, thanks to the support of the Gagauz administration.

Written press

During the period November 18 – December 1, 2006, most of newspapers subject to monitoring – *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, *Vesti Gagauzii*, *Znamea* maintain or come back to their position of favoring the actual bashkan Gheorghi Tabunșic, disregarding the other candidates.

The only exception: the independent newspaper „Nastoiascee Znamea” (Ceadâr-Lunga) intensifies its criticism to the address of the actual bashkan and promotes Mihail Formuzal, the actual mayor of the town Ceadâr-Lunga.

On the whole, just in the preceding monitoring periods, the audio-visual and the written press are pre-occupied with praising a single candidate, ignoring his competitors.

4. Data of monitoring

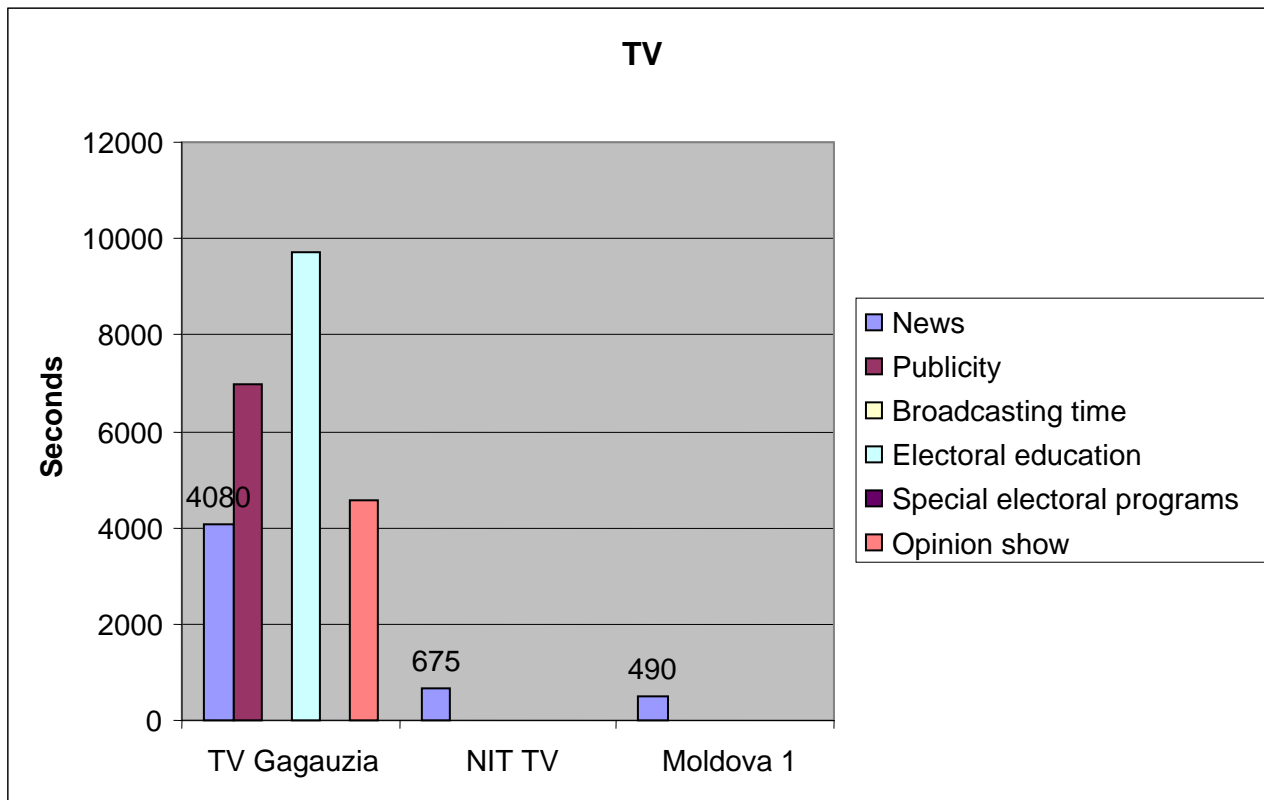
4.1 Involvement in the electoral campaign

4.1.1 Radio and TV

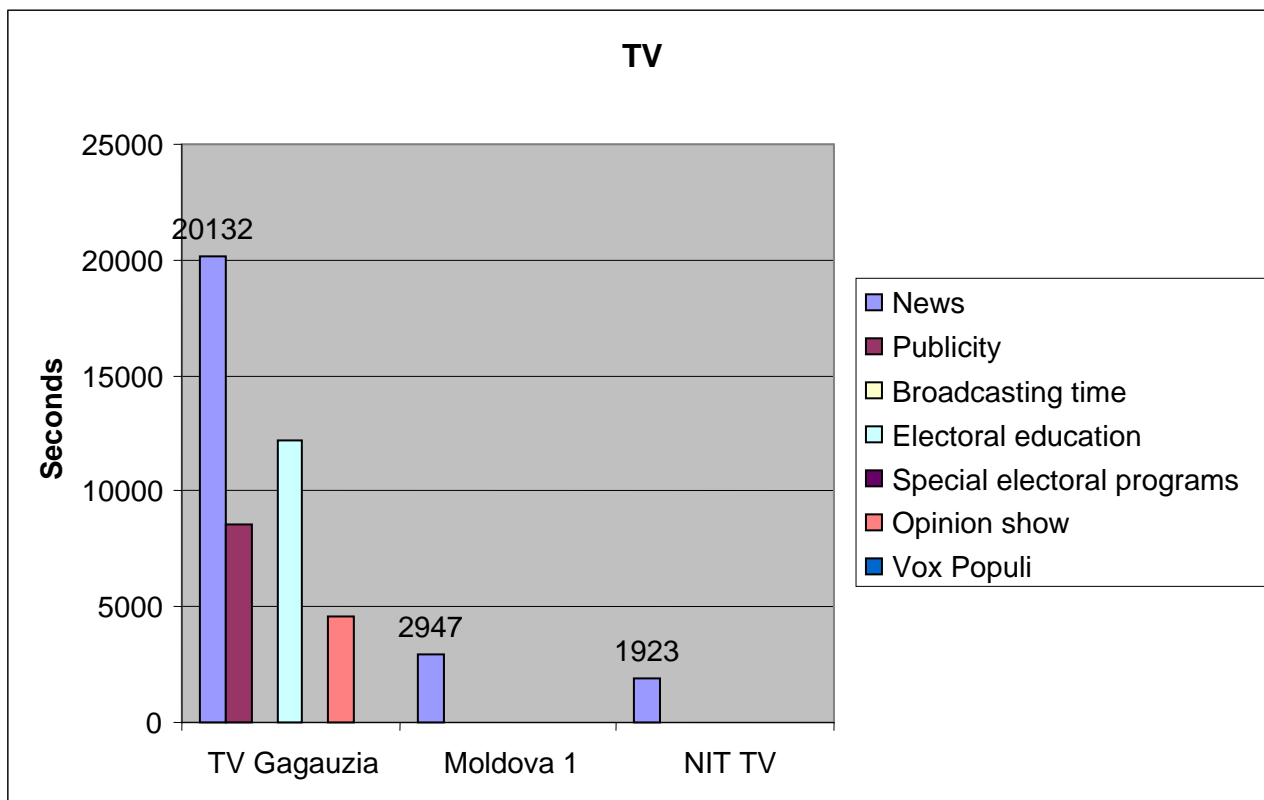
Throughout November 18 – December 1, 2006, there can be noticed the disengagement of national-coverage channels *TV Moldova*, *Radio Moldova* and *NIT*. Except for *Radio Moldova* which broadcast two more pieces of news about the electoral process from Gagauz Yeri, these channels referred to bashkan elections only in the last three days of electoral campaign.

Also in the respective period, a significant augmentation in the bulk of electoral publicity and education can be seen on *TV Găgăuzia* and *Radio Găgăuzia*. It should be mentioned that, on *TV Găgăuzia*, the practice of inserting electoral publicity within cultural programs (artistic movies, music shows) is being preserved. In the last days of electoral campaign, *TV Gagauzia* diffused opinion shows. On the other side, *TV Gagauzia* and *Radio Gagauzia* cease broadcasting electoral debates.

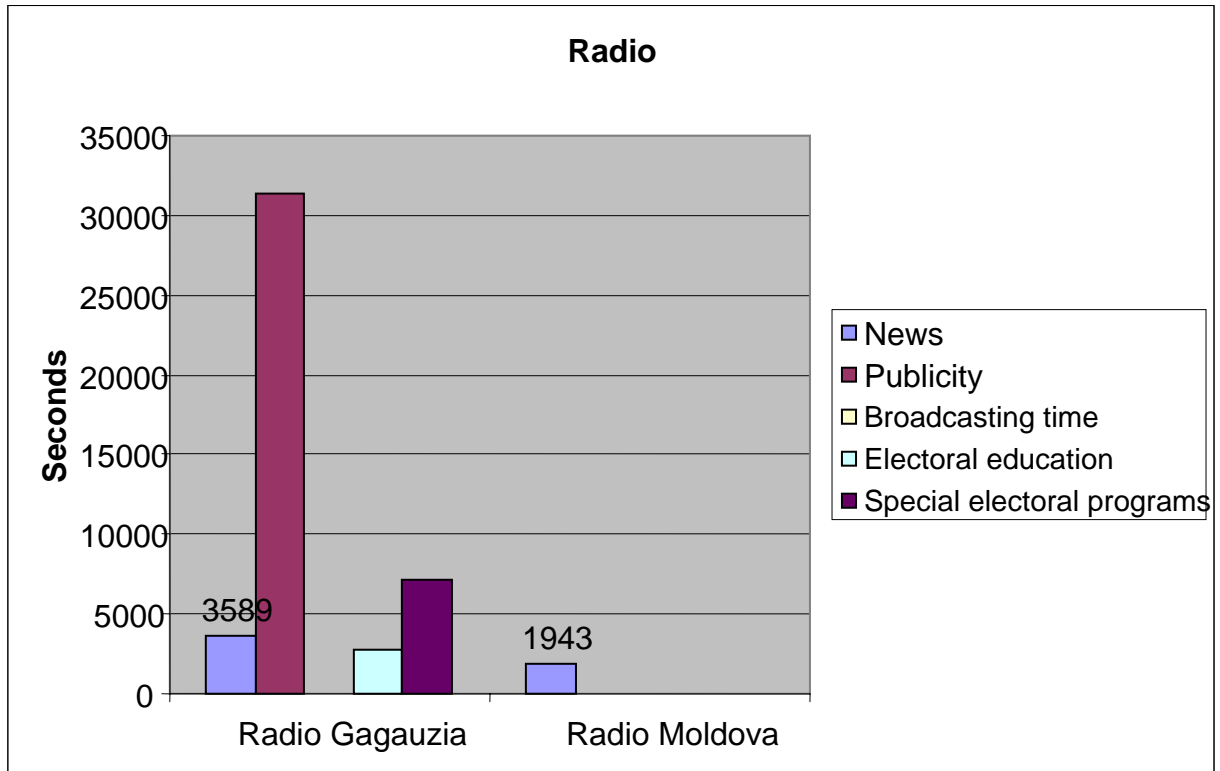
November 18 – December 1, 2006



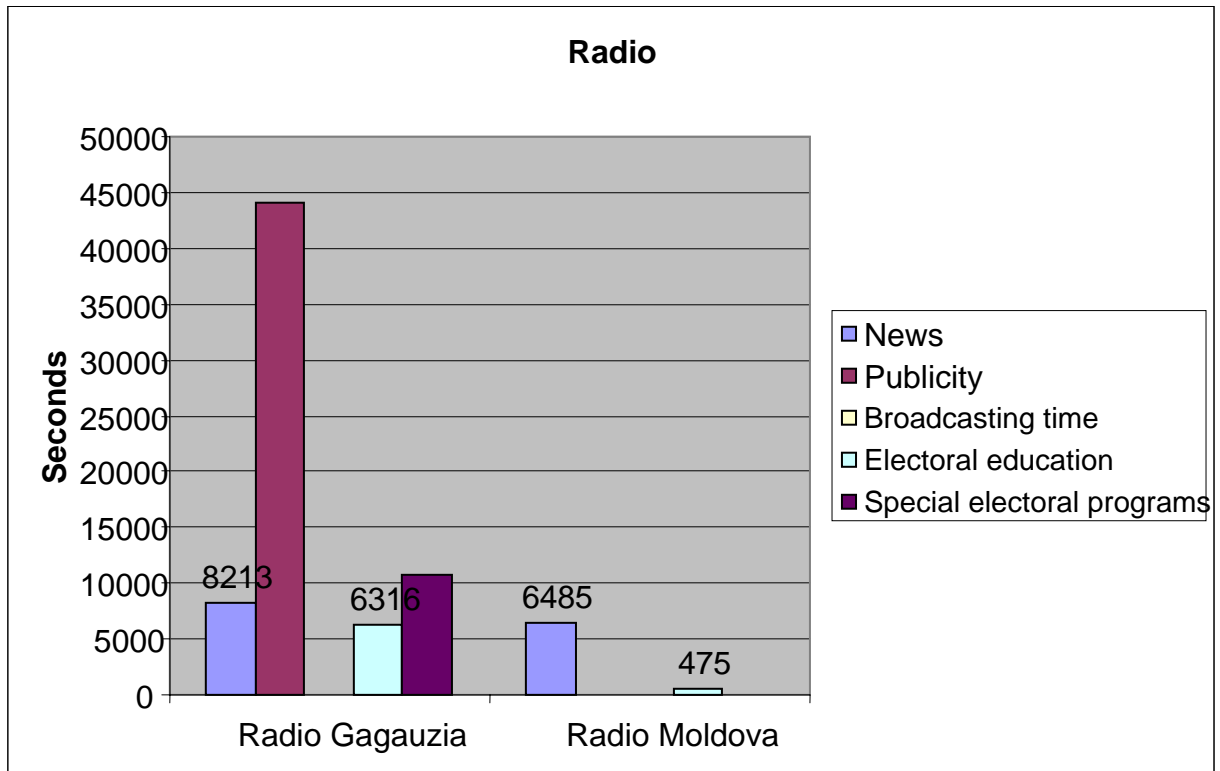
October 9 – December 1, 2006



November 18 – December 1, 2006



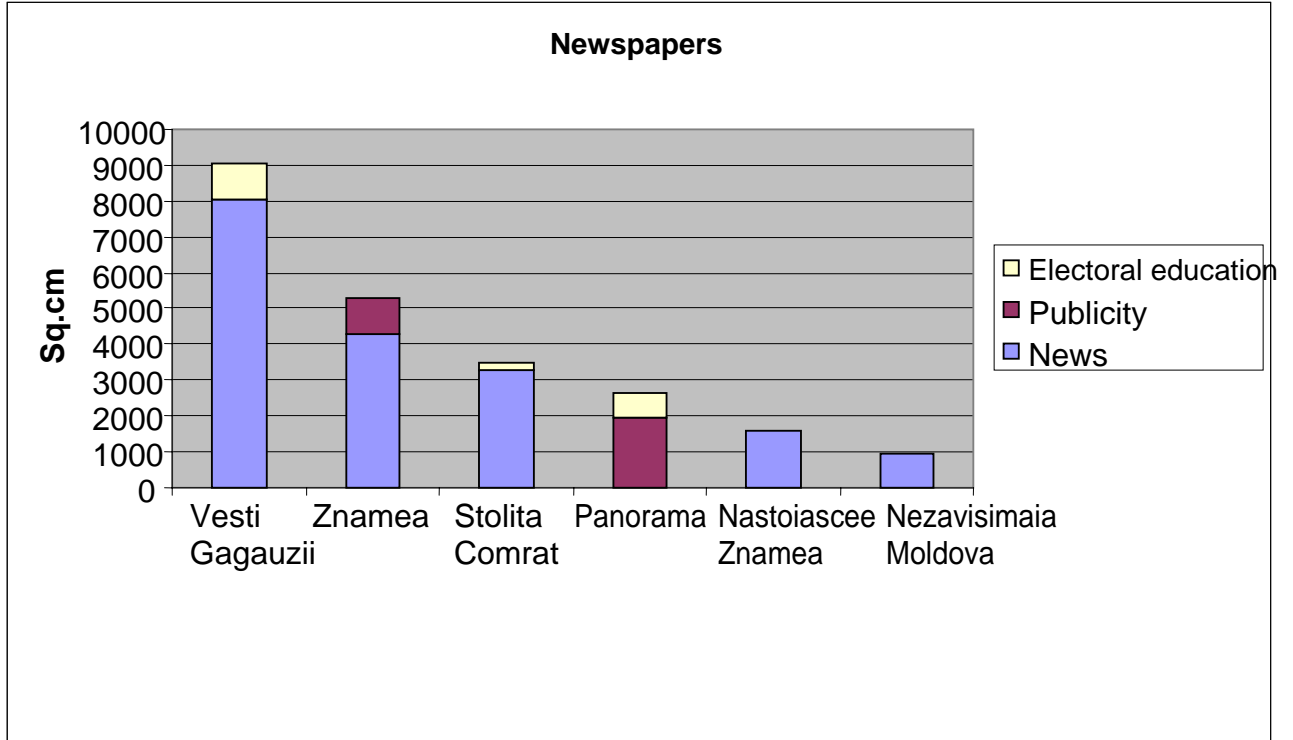
October 9 – December 1, 2006



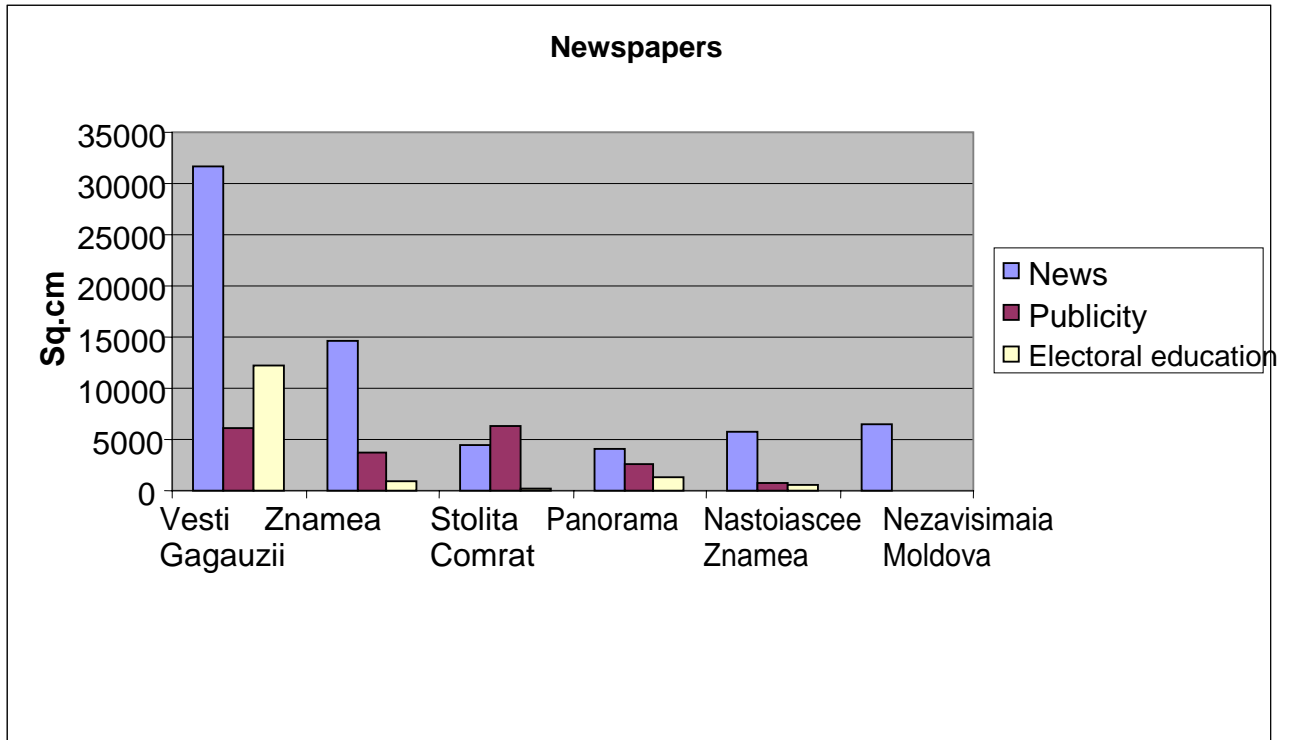
4.1.2 Newspapers

Similarly as in the previous period, during November 18 – December 1, 2006 the newspaper „Vesti Gagauzii” published the biggest bulk of electoral material, whereas „Panorama” included exclusively publicity and electoral education articles in its pages.

November 18 – December 1, 2006



October 9 – December 1, 2006



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

4.2.1 Radio and TV

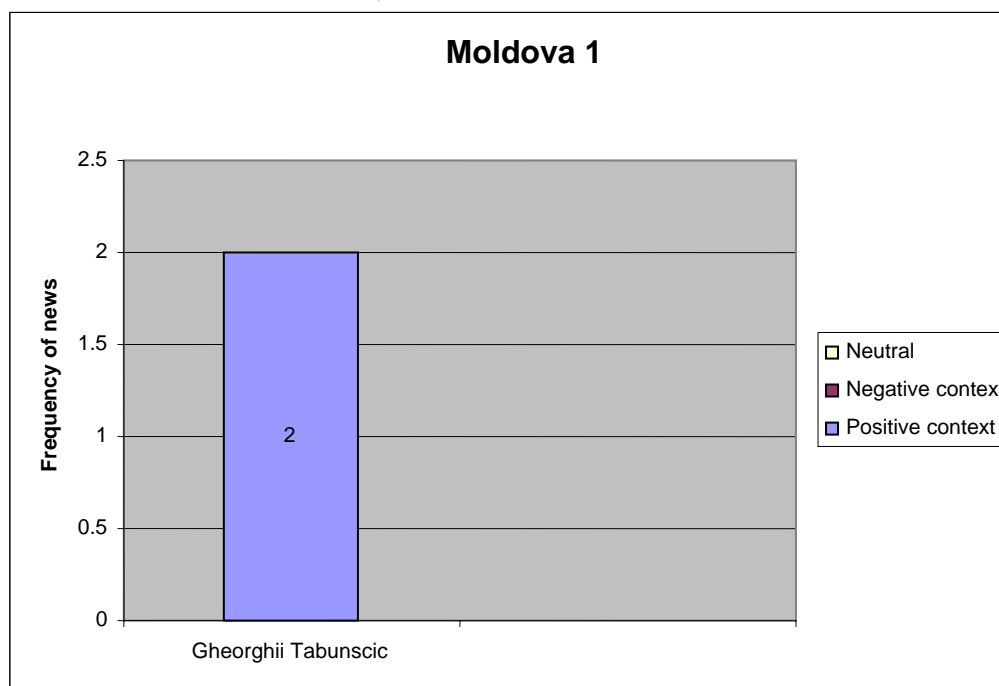
While *TV Moldova 1*, *Radio Moldova* and *NIT* did not get involved in the electoral campaign from the Gagauz Autonomy during the period November 18–28, 2006, the regional channels *TV Gagauzia* and *Radio Gagauzia* come back to their attitude of favoring, either directly or indirectly, the actual bashkan. Gh. Tabunșic appeared in the reportages about Găgăuz Yeri hard athletics championship, about the commissioning of the Center for Youth in Comrat. Indirect favoring of the actual bashkan was done through a reportage about the sessions of the Comrat Executive body, in which the achievements and performances of Găgăuz Yeri administration were mentioned.

The other candidates were ignored in the newscasts on *TV Gagauzia* and neutrally mentioned in two pieces of news on *Radio Gagauzia*.

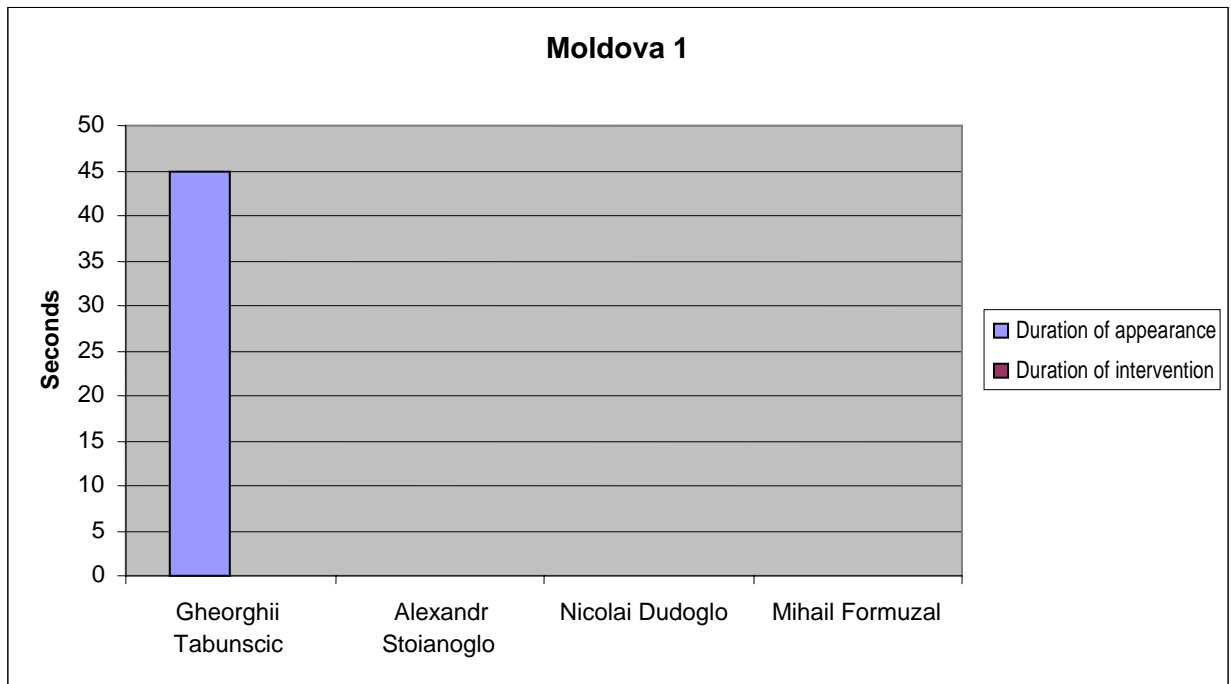
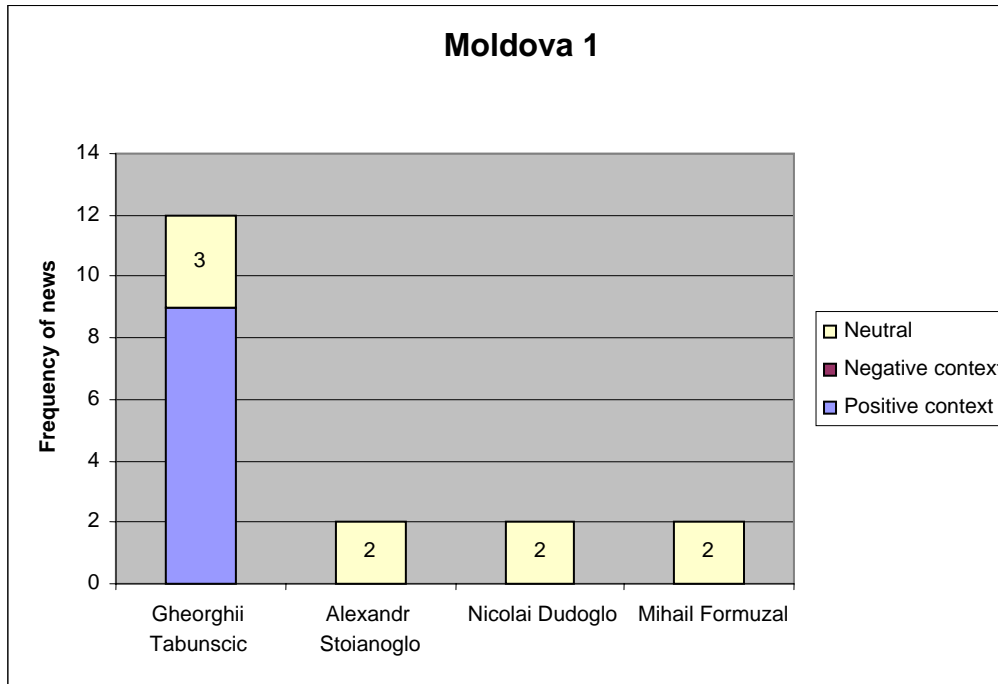
Throughout the last three days, there can be observed an effort to support the actual bashkan on behalf of all audio-visual channels subject to monitoring.

TV Moldova 1, *Radio Moldova* and *NIT* broadcast, on a repeatedly basis, a piece of news in which the president Voronin positively appreciates the collaboration between central authorities and Gagauz authorities, favoring indirectly the actual bashkan.

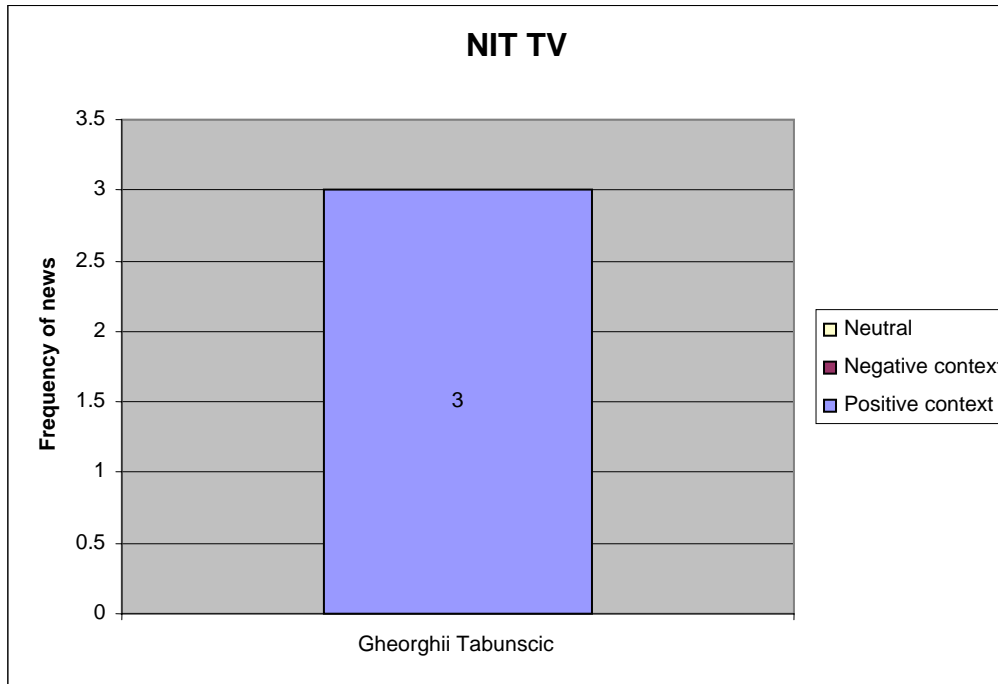
November 18 – December 1, 2006



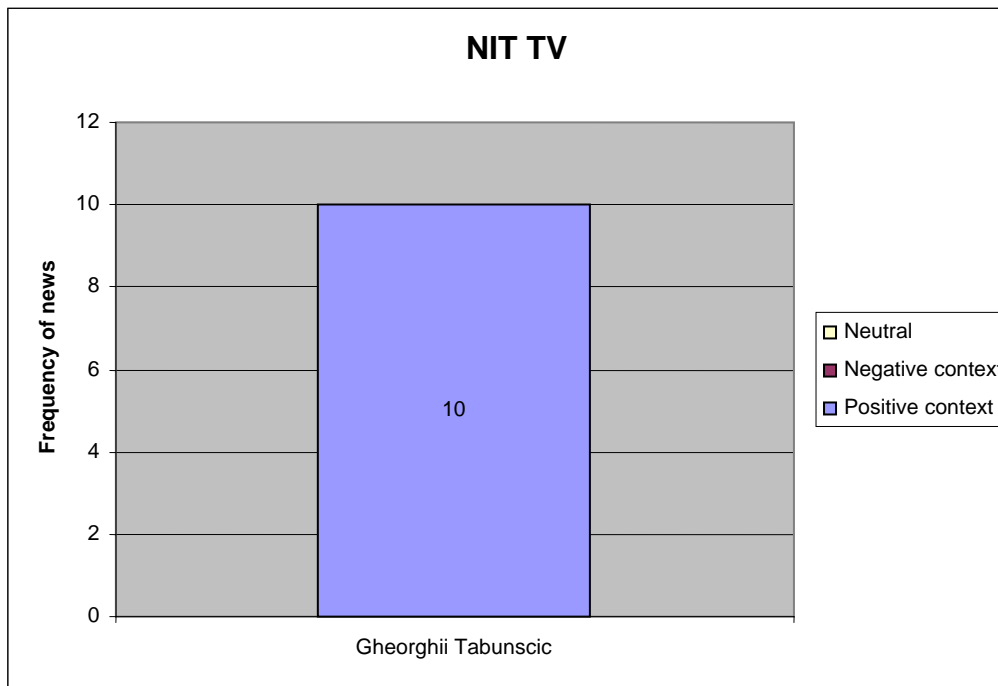
October 9 – December 1, 2006

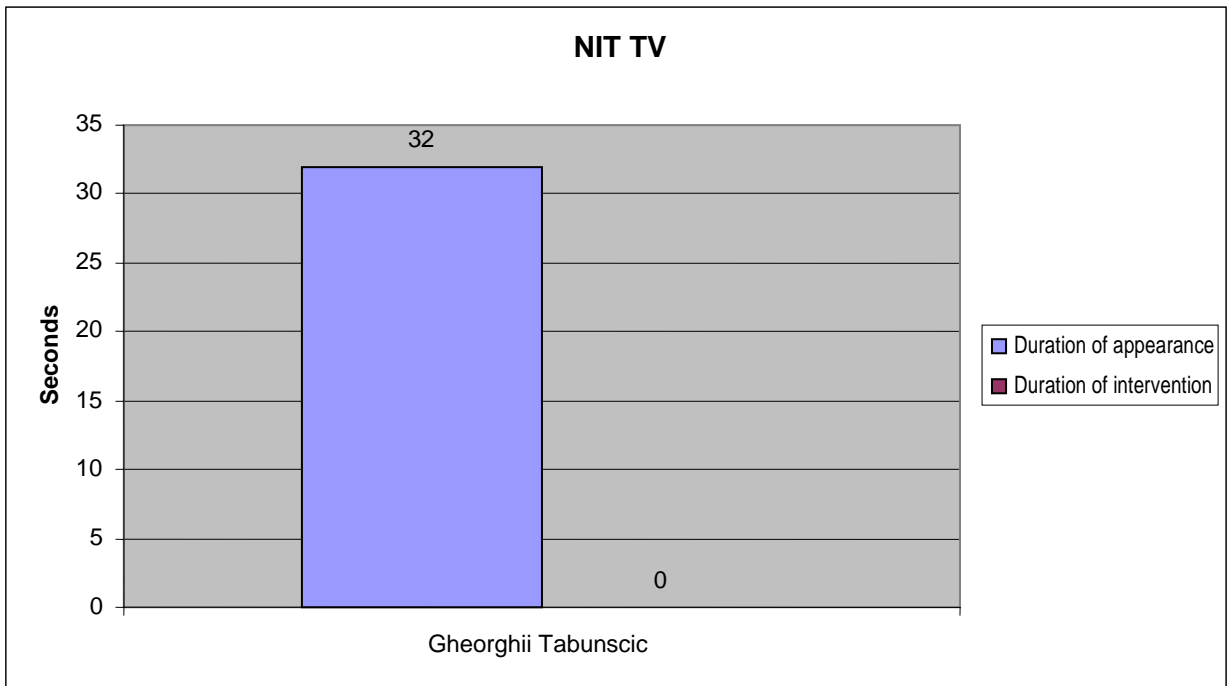


November 18 – December 1, 2006

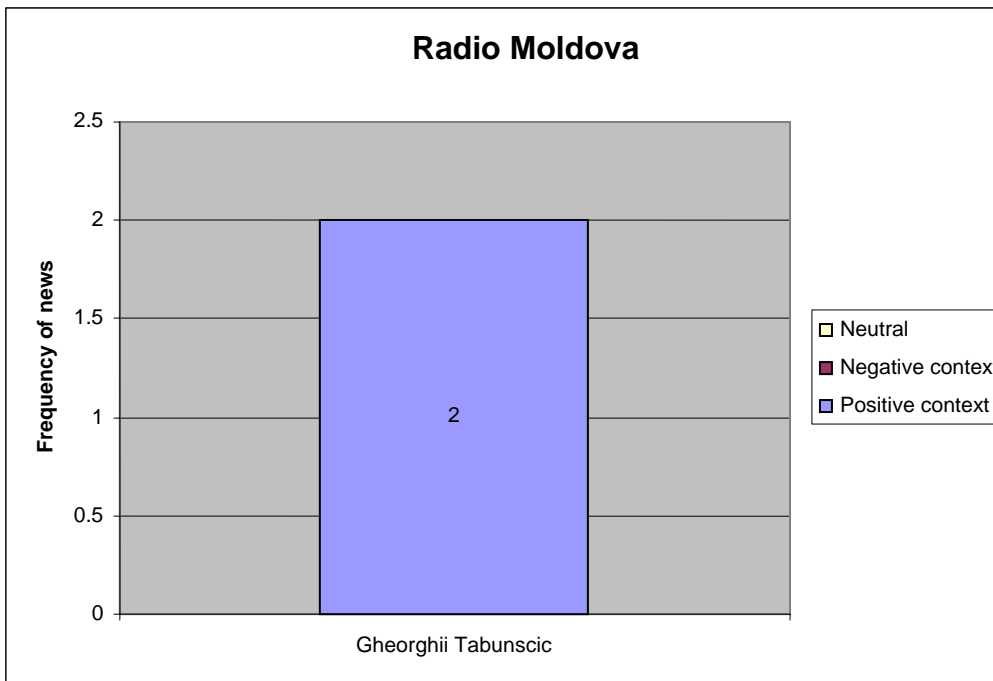


October 9 – December 1, 2006

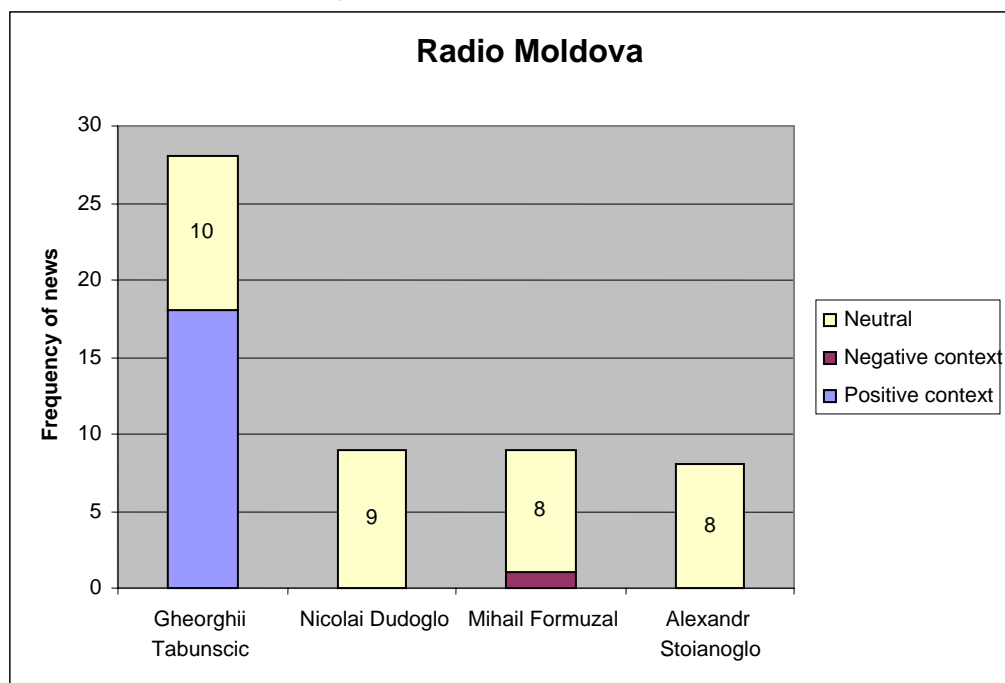




November 18 – December 1, 2006



October 9 – December 1, 2006



Although less frequent than in the previous period, the candidate Gh. Tabunșic appears in the newscasts on *TV Gagauzia* and *Radio Gagauzia* during November 18- 28, being favored, directly or indirectly, within several reportages. Thus, the actual bashkan figured in the reportage about the hard athletics championship Găgăuz Yeri (personally intervening during the show on *Radio Găgăuzia*), and the one about the commissioning of the Center for Youth from Comrat. Indirect favoring of the candidate Gh. Tabunșic was done by means of the news about the sessions of the Comrat Executive body, presented on the two local channels, in which the performances of Găgăuz Yeri administration had been mentioned.

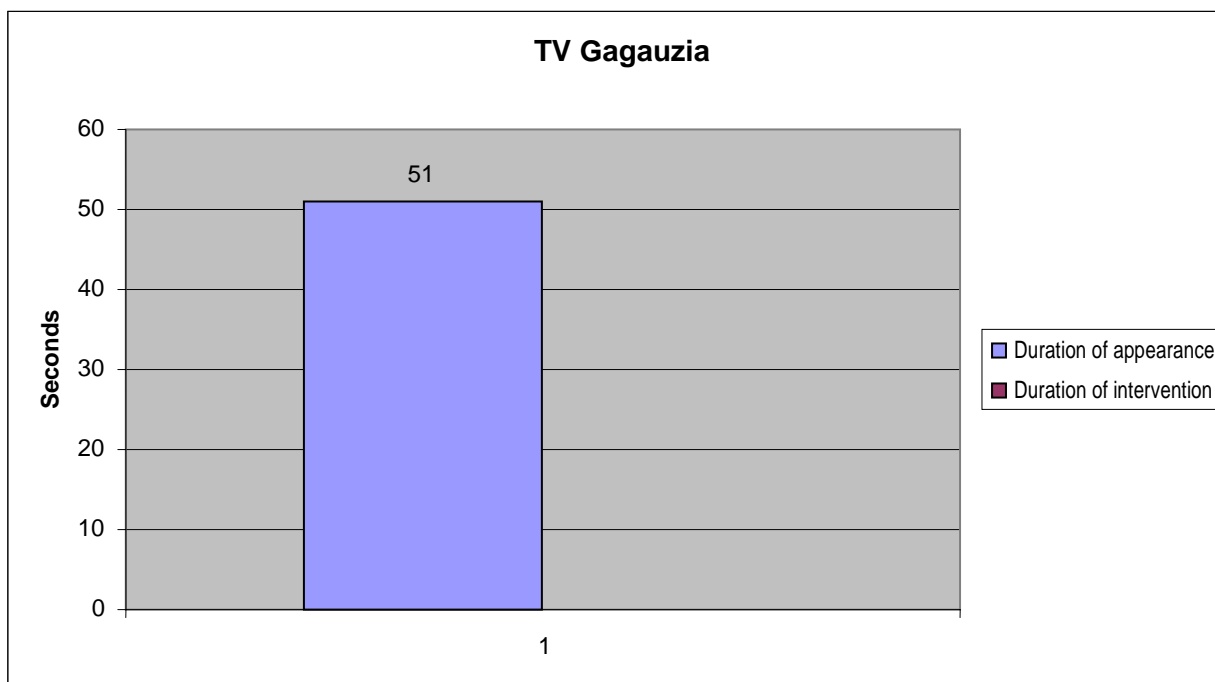
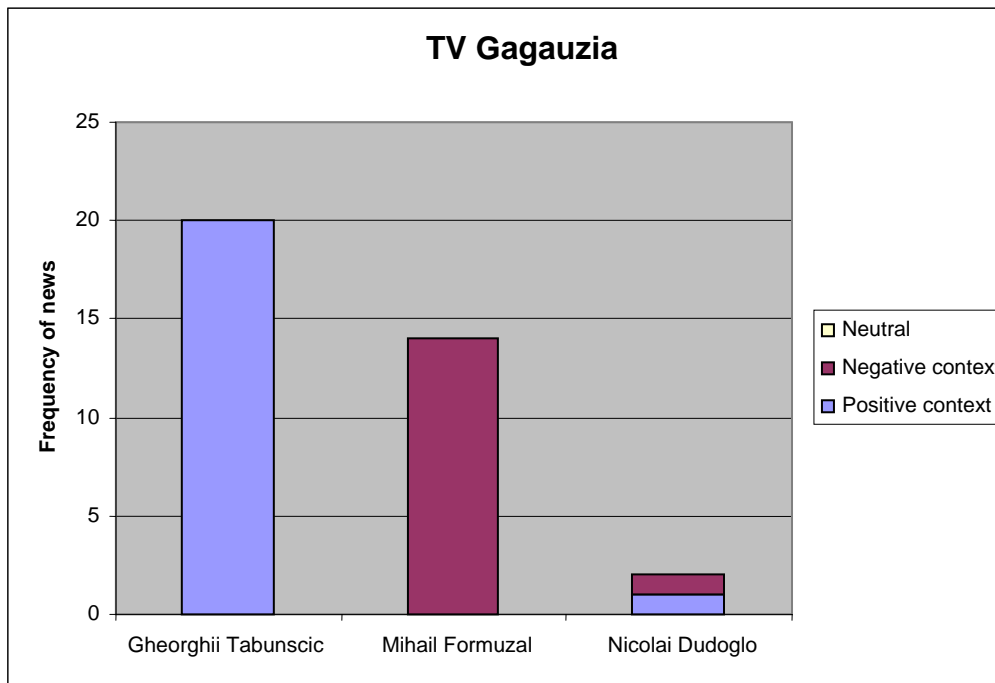
Other candidates were not mentioned during news shows on those two local channels.

Over the last three days, apart from the piece of news mentioned above regarding the harmonious collaboration instituted lately between Chisinau and Comrat, *TV Găgăuzia* offered three opinion shows praising Gh.Tabunșic and criticizing M.Formuzal and N. Dudoglu:

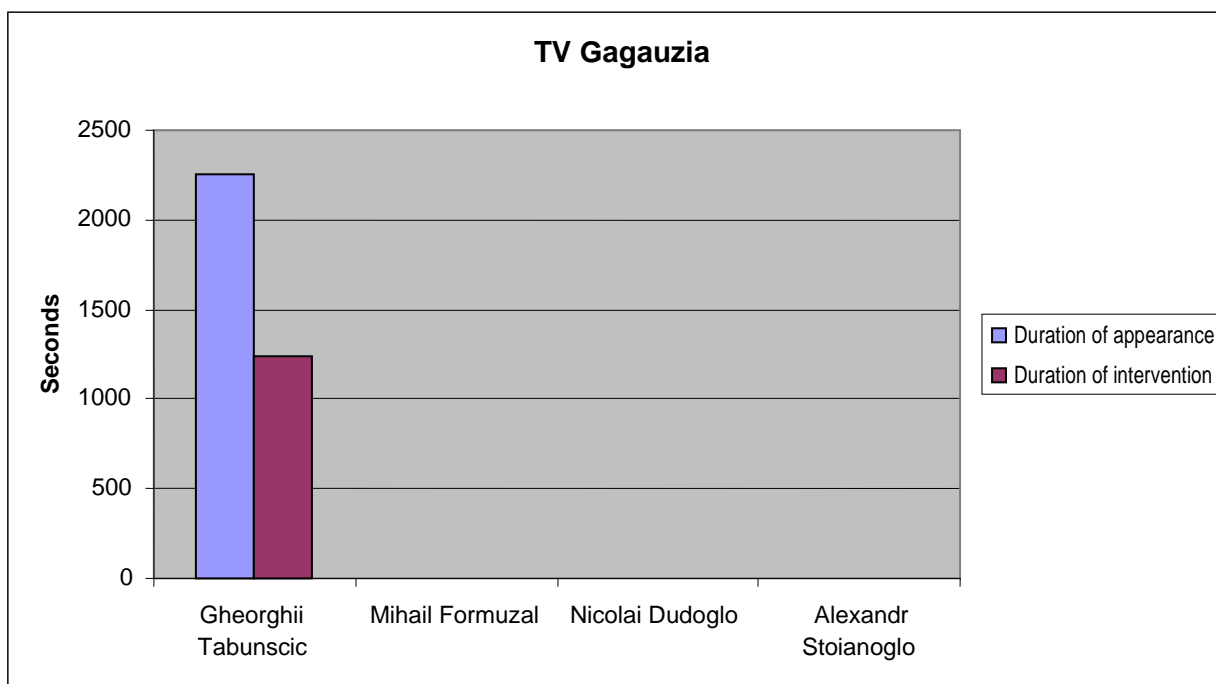
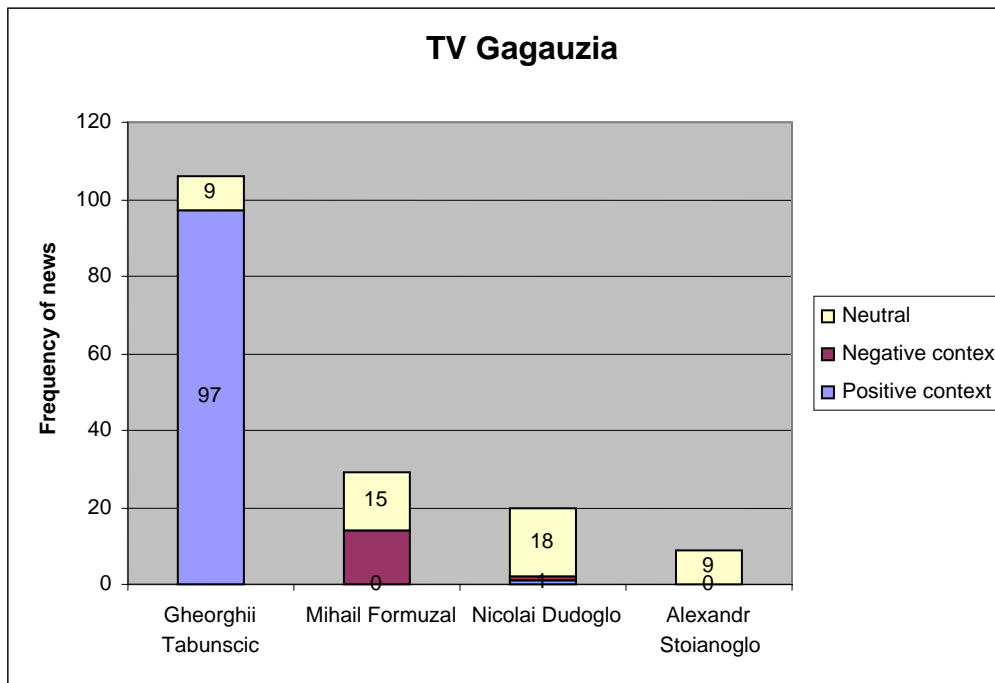
- The appeal of Gh. Tabunșic towards the electors, repeatedly broadcast on December 1, 2006 (720 sec).
- Show presenting the interviews with some local leaders from Ciadâr-Lunga, who criticize vehemently the candidate M. Formuzal and give compliments to Gh. Tabunșic, this material was repeated as well on December 1, 2006 (1100 sec).
- The appeal of a group of councilors from Comrat City Council to the address of electors in order to support Gh. Tabunșic; criticism was brought to M. Formuzal and N. Dudoglo (1900 sec).

During the last days, **Radio Găgăuzia** broadcast a reportage regarding the re-launching of the agricultural sector in the village Cotovsc, gratitude being addressed to the support of the Gagauz administration, favoring, thus, indirectly, the candidate Gh. Tabunșic.

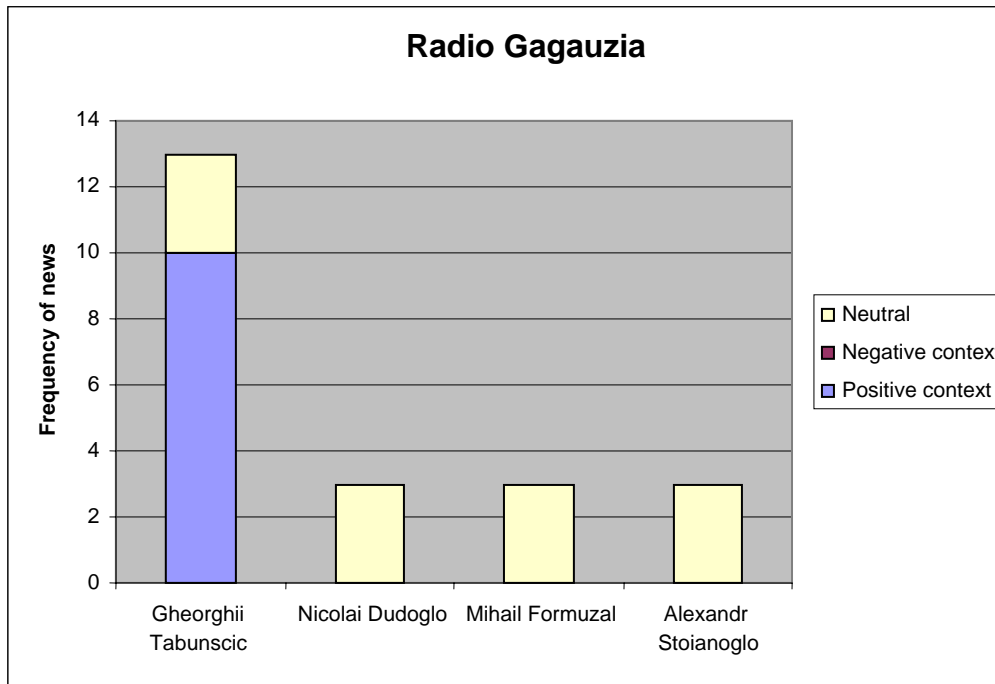
November 18 – December 1, 2006



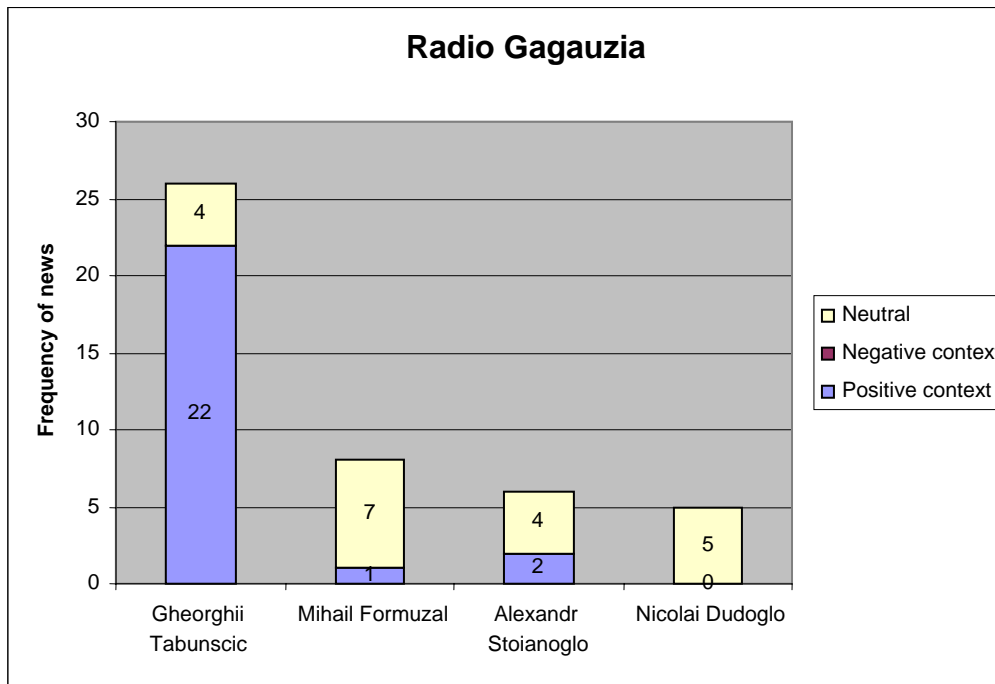
October 9 – December 1, 2006



November 18 – December 1, 2006



October 9 – December 1, 2006

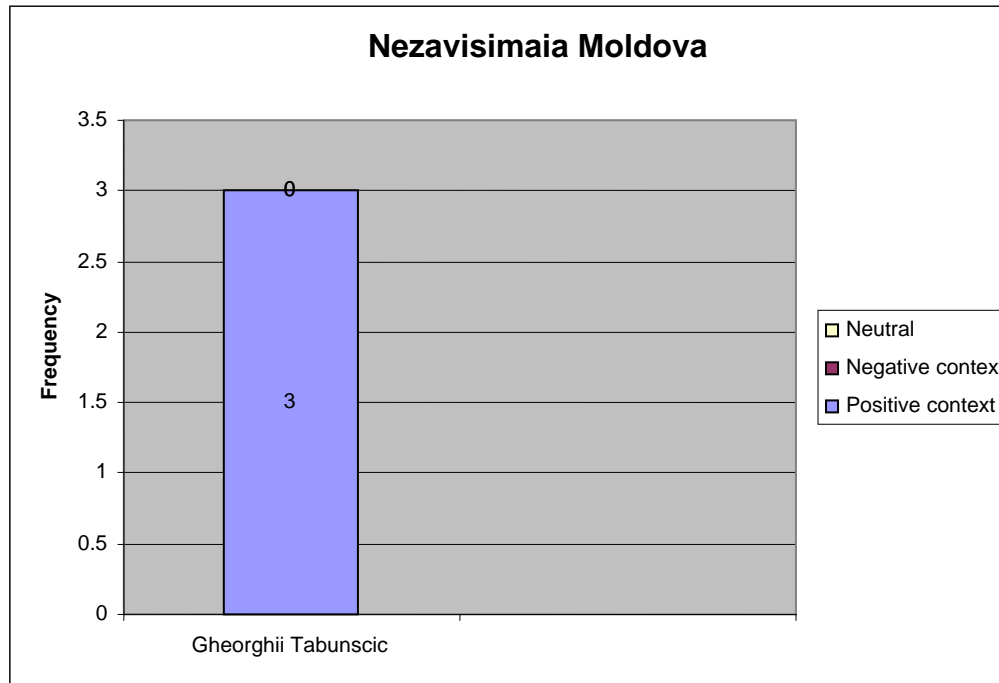


4.2.3 Written press

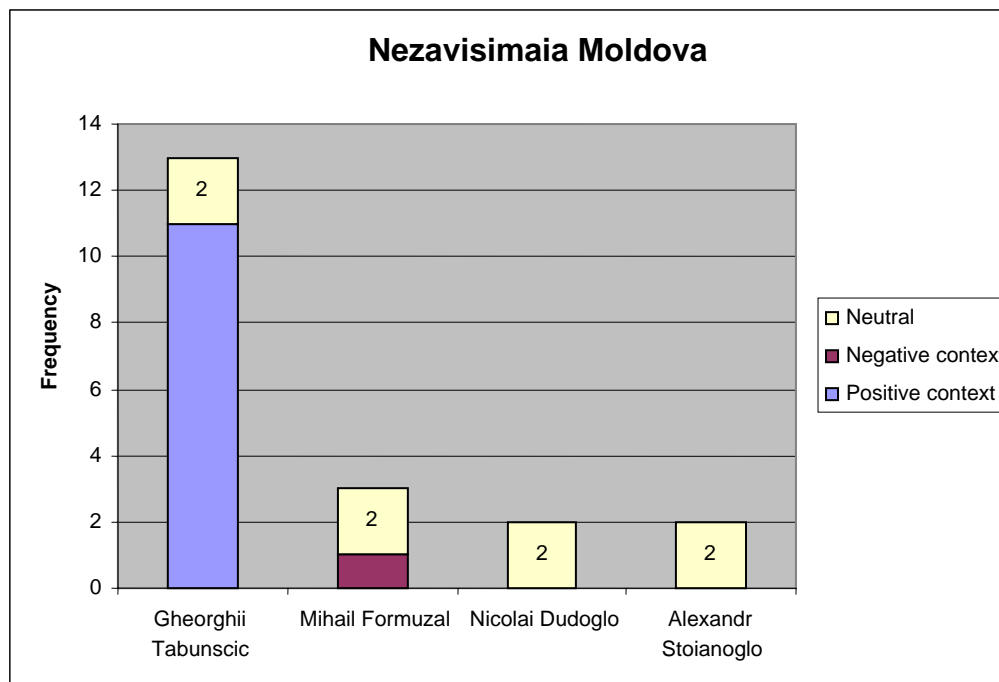
Throughout the period November 18 – December 1, 2006, the newspapers „Nezavisimaia Moldova” „Vesti Gagauzii and „Znamea” (Ceadr-Lunga) continued favoring the actual bashkan. „Stolița” (Comrat) supported the actual mayor of Comrat, Nicolai Dudoglo, while Gh.Tabunșciic was criticized as well as praised altogether.

The independent newspaper „Nastoiășce Znamea” preserved its critical opinion towards Gheorghii Tabunșciic, favoring Mihail Formuzal and negatively presenting the other two candidates.

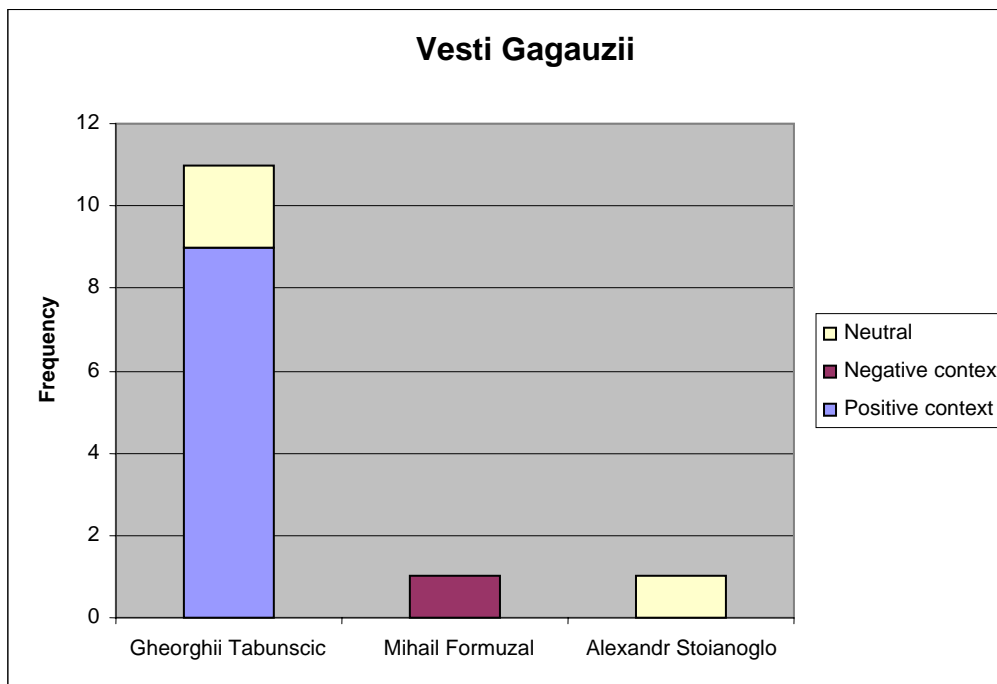
November 18 – December 1, 2006



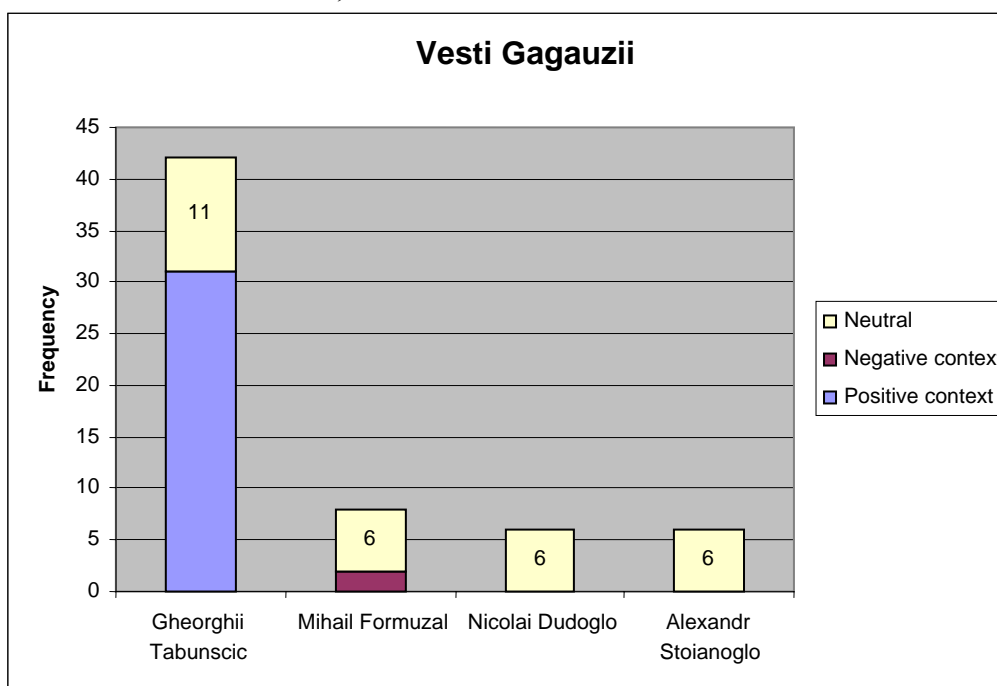
October 9 – December 1, 2006



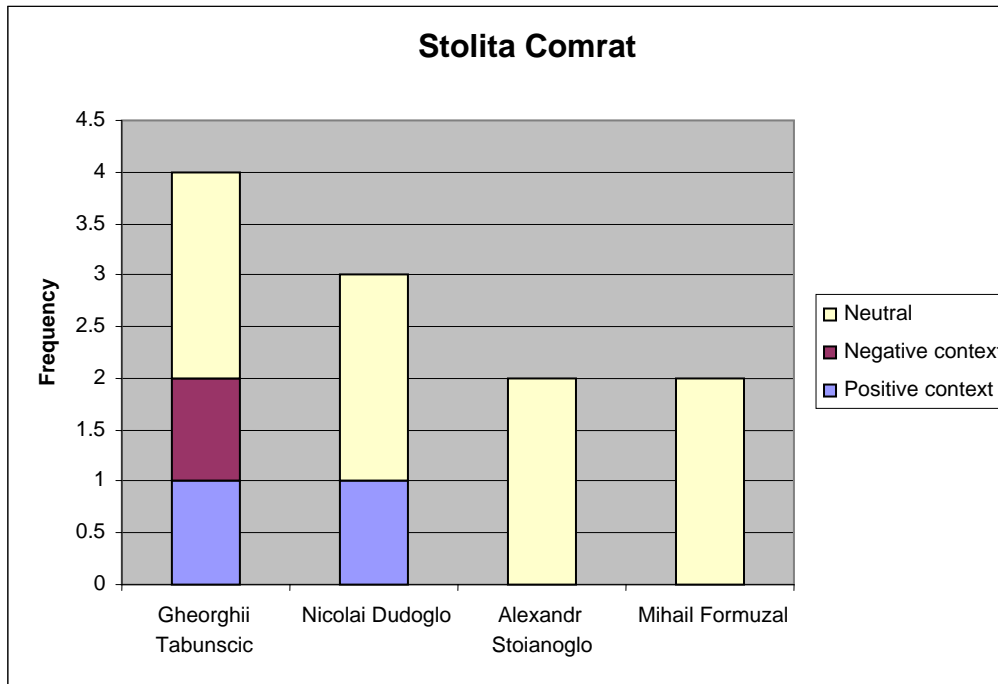
November 18 – December 1, 2006



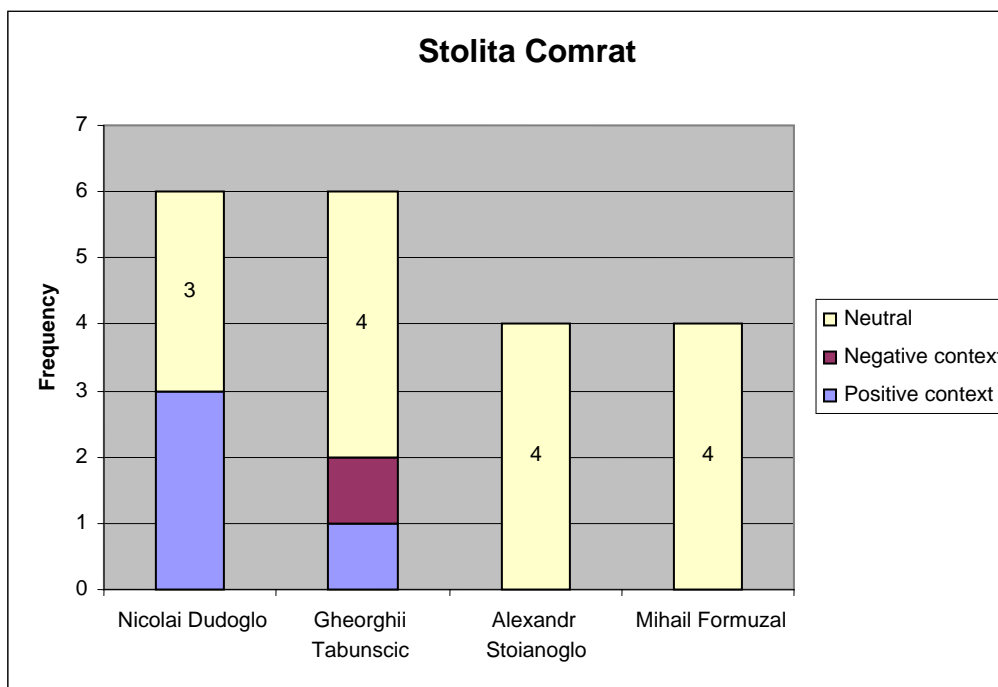
October 9 – December 1, 2006



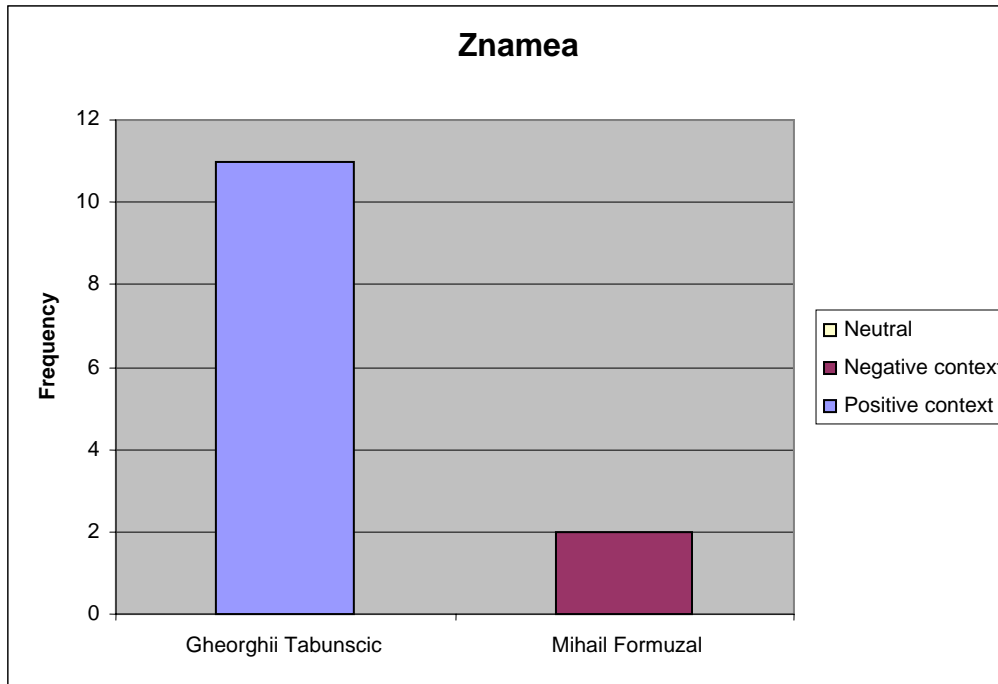
November 18 – December 1, 2006



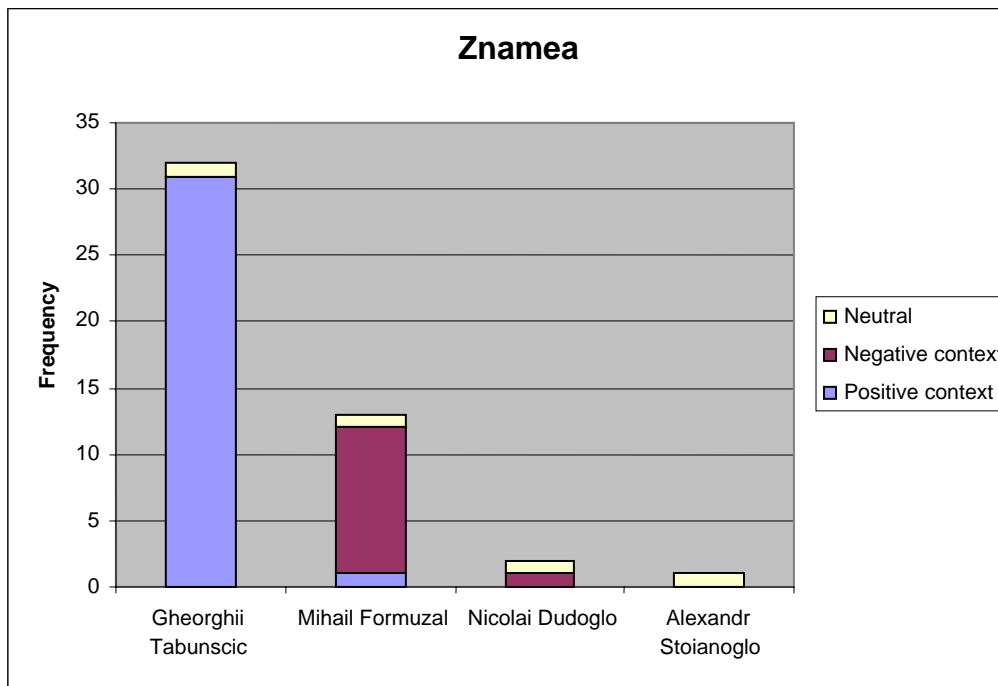
October 9 – December 1, 2006



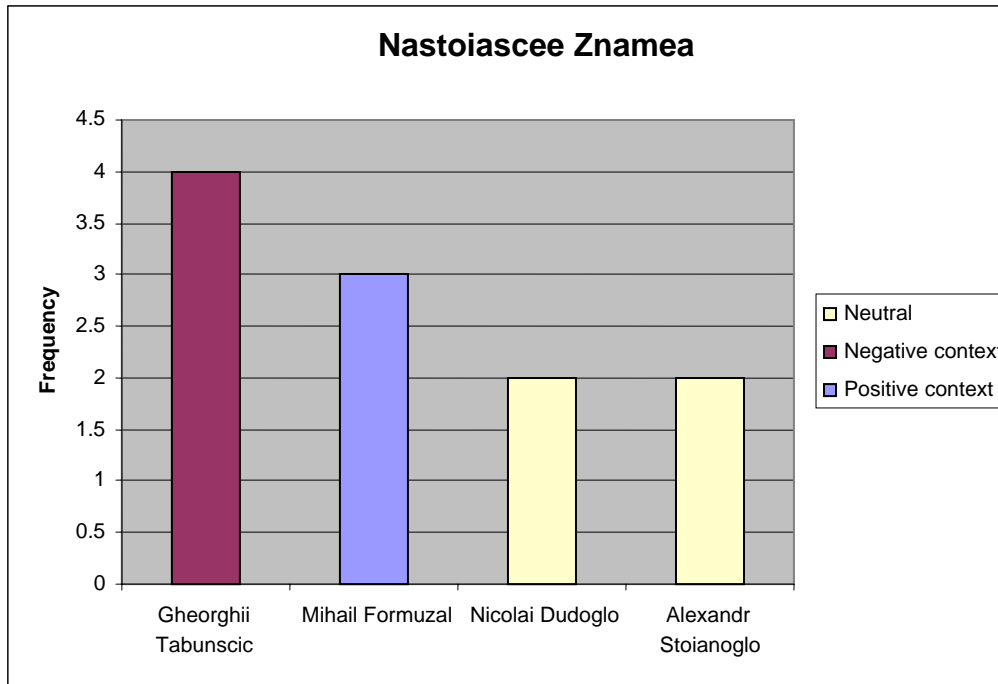
November 18 – December 1, 2006



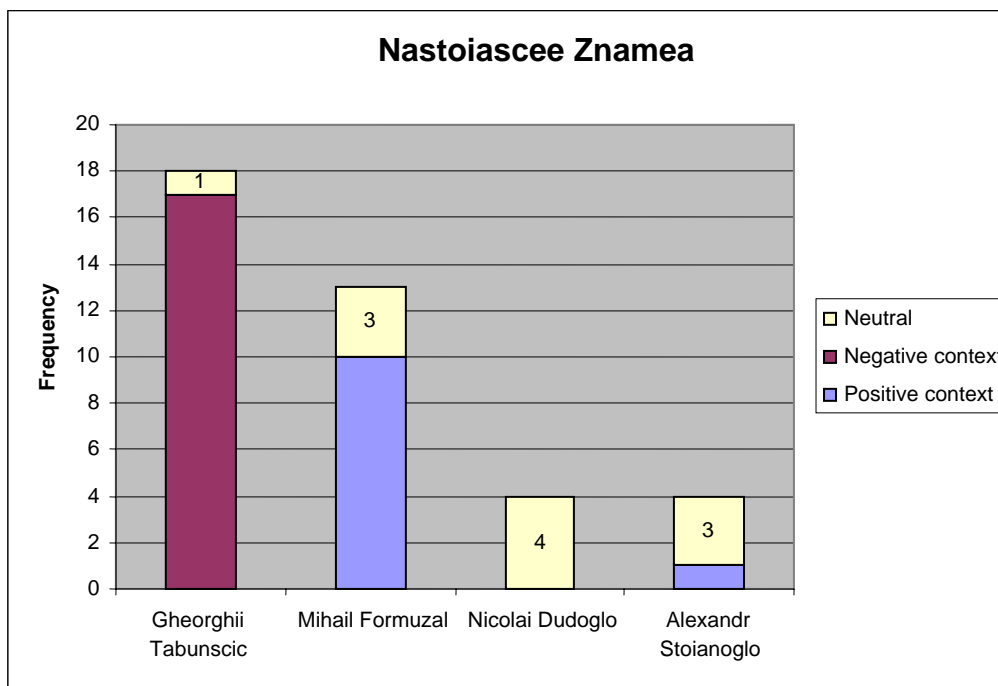
October 9 – December 1, 2006



November 18 – December 1, 2006



October 9 – December 1, 2006



October 9 – December 1, 2006

