



Monitoring Mass Media during the Campaign for Local General Elections of 5 June 2011

Final Report
18 April – 19 June 2011

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1. General Data

1.1 Project goal: To monitor and inform the public about the performance of the mass media during the electoral campaign including the access of candidates to media outlets and whether the outlets guarantee pluralism of opinions. The aim is to analyze reporting trends that can affect media performance and compromise their ability to provide truthful, balanced and comprehensive information to the public.

1.2 Monitoring period: 18 April–19 June 2011

1.3 Criteria for the selection of media outlets to be monitored:

- Audience-impact (national, quasi-national). *Justification:* It is well known that there is a direct connection between the size of the audience and the impact of the media on public opinion: the more people who are exposed to a message, the stronger its impact on certain segments of society.
- Broadcast language (Romanian and Russian). *Justification:* In addition to media outlets broadcasting/writing in Romanian, stations/newspapers providing news in Russian were included in the study as this language is accessible not only to Russian minorities but also to other ethnic minorities like Bulgarians, Gagauz and Ukrainians.

1.4 List of media outlets monitored:

Broadcast media:

Prime TV (“Primele Știri” at 21:00)—private station, national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian;

NIT TV (“Curier” at 22:00)—private station, national coverage, broadcasts in Russian and Romanian;

EURO TV (“Știri” at 20:30)—private station, quasi-national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian;

Jurnal TV (“Jurnalul orei” at 20:00)—private station, broadcasts via satellite in Romanian and Russian;

N4 (“Obiectiv” at 19:30)—private station, regional coverage, broadcasts in Romanian.

Print media:

Adevărul (national, Romanian, 5 issues weekly);

Timpul de dimineață (national, Romanian, 5 issues weekly);

Moldova suverană (national, Romanian, 4 issues weekly);

Nezavisimaia Moldova (national, Russian, 4 issues weekly);

Jurnal de Chișinău (national, Romanian, 2 issues weekly).

2. Methodological Framework

The full content of the newspapers and of a daily newscast on each station were monitored for news with either a direct or an indirect electoral character. Each news item was subjected to an assessment of content and context to establish whether it was favorable or unfavorable to one party or another or to one political entity or another. The news items were also analyzed according to the following objective criteria.

Impartiality/objectivity: According to the journalistic code of ethics, the news must be impartial and objective; it should not favor certain parties/groups/individuals to the detriment of others. Journalistic objectivity implies a clear distinction between opinions and facts both through the selection of the angle of approach and through the details provided. Discriminatory elements in reports and news items are prime indications that the story is presented from a journalist's point of view. Screening the news and a minimal analysis of background and context also imply that the interests of certain persons and not those of the general public are being protected.¹

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: To be correct and balanced the news should cover all the parties involved, particularly when the subject matter is controversial, and should treat all opponents equally.² Also, the media should ensure the access of the public to a variety of views to help people form their own opinions about events. If certain views are given more attention than others they become prominent and implicitly affect the public's perception about what is happening in society.

Language and videos: Responsible journalism means not only a truthful presentation of the facts but also the use of appropriate language. Deliberate exaggerations and licentious language, such as pejorative expressions or labels for individuals or organizations, and images manipulated to show certain parties in a negative light can raise serious questions about the observance of ethical and professional standards. The ethical conduct of journalists is especially in question when videos show things that are not true or that have been faked as well as when news items are illustrated with images that have no connection with the accompanying information.

3. Monitoring Data

BROADCAST MEDIA:



Involvement in the electoral campaign

Prime TV, a private station with national coverage, actively engaged in reflecting the electoral campaign, reporting about both the candidates for Chisinau Mayor's Office and Municipal Council as well as those competing outside of the capital. From 18 April to 19 June 2011, the main Prime TV newscast, broadcast at 21.00, included 299 items with direct or indirect electoral character. The electoral reports broadcast by this station covered the majority of the campaign events and intrigues. In the first round of elections they mainly referred to the actions of a single candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor – the candidate of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), Valentina Buliga. Also, some news items referred to confrontations between candidates (verbal attacks between Dorin

¹ Simona, Ștefănescu, "Riscurile comunicării mediatice în timpul conflictelor"

² Fico, Sofin, and Dragger, 2007. "Fairness and defamation in the reporting of local issues"

Chirtoaca, the candidate of the Liberal Party (PL), and Igor Dodon, the candidate of the Party of Communists (PCRM)), and others, less frequent items, were a amalgamation of actions performed by various candidates or a presentation of their positions with regard to certain issues. In the second round of elections the station covered both the activities of the candidates for Chisinau Mayor's Office, Dorin Chirtoaca and Igor Dodon, as well as the activities of candidates for the mayoral offices in other places.

It is to be noted that the monitored TV station also provided airtime for citizens' electoral education. Thus, viewers could learn details about the modality of checking the electoral lists, about the legal interdiction for electoral competitors to offer presents to voters, about the documents necessary for voting, about the exercising of the right to vote by the residents of Corjova, Dubasari. On the days of voting, 5 and 19 June, the station informed viewers on the voting modality, providing details about the voting procedure for those with temporary or lost documents, about the presence of voters at polling stations and the course of elections, etc.

Objectivity and impartiality

During the monitored period, Prime TV showed no significant deviations from deontological norms which could deform or truncate the information provided to the public. At the same time, the frequency with which the PDM, its leaders and candidates appeared as sources, and the angle of approach to events, denoted the editorial approval of this party. Some materials broadcast in the newscasts were electoral campaigning for the PDM.

Overall, during the electoral campaign Prime TV had 71 items with Interim President Marian Lupu, ministers that are members of the PDM, the PDM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, Valentina Buliga, and other PDM candidates for the positions of mayor in other places across the country. Such materials were either neutral or positive. Sometimes V. Buliga was referred to in two news items of a single newscast. Thus, viewers could find details about *the program and electoral promises regarding the issue of giving the status of municipality to some cities and the development of suburbs, development of education and provision of graduates with jobs, provision of hospitals with modern medical equipment, cooperation with businesses in Chisinau, construction of multi-level parking facilities, etc.*

To be noted that Prime TV also broadcast reports presenting Valentina Buliga from a different perspective, adding to her image (singing on stage on Family Day, visiting the horse riding school). The station announced the opening of some blood pressure and blood sugar checking facilities in the capital by the PDM, and the videos showed tents with the appeal to vote for the PDM and for Valentina Buliga. Often, the reports referring to Mrs. Buliga lasted longer and were presented in more detail than items about other electoral competitors.

Prime TV also covered the PDM electoral campaign outside Chisinau. On 22 May, for example, Prime TV broadcast a report with elements of electoral campaigning in favor of the PDM candidate for the position of Hancesti mayor, Alexandru Botnari. At an electoral meeting the PDM leader, Marian Lupu, asked the audience *"to provide adequate support*

for the no. 1 to the raion council, and actually no. 1 in reality, is the best mayor here in Hancesti, Alexandru Botnari”. In the newscast of 23 May, Prime TV broadcast another report with elements of electoral advertising in favor of the PDM candidates, this time in Stefan-Voda raion, where the “electoral caravan” with the participation of the PDM leader Marian Lupu arrived and was “*welcomed with honors*” by the locals. The material also included direct appeals of some PDM candidates to be voted for.

During the monitored period several cases were registered where officials participating at events of electoral character, in support of the PDM candidate for the position of Chisinau general mayor, were presented in Prime TV reports not as party leaders/representatives, but as ministers or members of Parliament. This leads to a transfer of the image of the public institutions they represent in favor of an electoral competitor.

At the same time, the station closely followed the activities of the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, especially during the second round of elections, when the Alliance for European Integration (AIE) announced its support for Dorin Chirtoaca in elections. Overall, Chirtoaca and other PL representatives appeared in 68 news items on Prime TV, 18 of which were in the week prior to the elections of 19 June. The majority of materials were in a positive and neutral context, and focused on the electoral activities of the PL candidate (*Chirtoaca giving a helping hand to Apa-Canal workers or to builders; meeting a group of children to find out their wishes regarding the future of Chisinau; promising to re-equip municipal hospitals and to build an Olympic stadium; meeting a group of sportsmen that appeal to the public to vote for him; etc.*). Also, in the last week of the campaign, Prime TV broadcast materials about the *scandal of Mr. Tofan*, municipal councilor from the PCRM: the Liberals presented evidence and witnesses claiming that Anatol Tofan has a criminal record, having been sentenced for rape and murder. Another largely covered the scandal connected with the accusations launched by Igor Dodon against Dorin Chirtoaca, claiming that when the trolleybuses were purchased from Belarus the latter prejudiced the budget through use of a Romanian company. To aid his argument, Dodon presented the Official Monitor of Romania. During the last days of the campaign, the PL brought evidence (the expert conclusion of the General Prosecutor’s Office), which denoted the forging of the Official Monitor of Romania.

The PCRM candidate for the Chisinau Mayor’s Office, Igor Dodon, mainly appeared in controversial items, in which he either brought accusations against the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca, or replied to the accusations directed at him from the latter.

The other candidates for the Chisinau Mayor’s Office had fewer appearances on Prime TV, in a different context, mainly neutral: making declarations, presenting their programs or replying to accusations from their counter-candidates. The activities performed outside Chisinau by other electoral competitors than the PDM were not covered by Prime TV.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Most often, Prime TV observed the principle of diversity and balance of sources/positions/opinions, especially in the 53 items covering conflicts, accusations and controversial issues involving electoral competitors. There were several cases (6), however,

when news items included accusations, and reporters failed to provide the right to reply. The majority of conflicts referred to the electoral fight between the candidate of the PCRM and that of the PL for the position of the capital's mayor. The accusations became more intense in the week immediately following the first round of elections, when the confrontation between Igor Dodon and Dorin Chirtoaca deepened as a result of them reaching the second round.

Examples of unbalanced materials are: the news item of 20 June, in which the Social Democratic Party (PSD) candidate Sergiu Coropceanu accused the Mayor's Office of inadequate repairs of the Cogalniceanu Street, and the accusation lacked a response – even if the Interim General Mayor, Nistor Grozavu, rejected the invitation to the event organized by Coropceanu, the reporters should have asked for comments of the persons responsible for road repairs. On 23 May the same PSD candidate accused Igor Dodon (PCRM) and Dorin Chirtoaca (PL) of having known about the frauds at the “Chisinau-Gaz” company, but did nothing to stop them. The Prime TV reporter did not ask for the accused persons' opinions, mentioning only that they “*have not yet commented the accusations*”. The news item from Dorin Chirtoaca's conference of 16 June, announcing the expert conclusion of the General Prosecutor's Office that confirmed the forging of the Official Monitor of Romania, lacked Igor Dodon's reply.

Language and videos used

During the entire electoral campaign, Prime TV displayed no deviations from the ethical norms regarding the writing and approach to electoral subjects. Overall, the videos and language used by Prime TV were acceptable. Except for the melodies accompanying two news items regarding Dorin Chirtoaca's activity – a meeting with scholars and offering flowers to veterans – there were no other interventions distorting the content of reports with the help of audio or montage effects.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the monitored period the TV station NIT broadcast 410 news items with direct or indirect electoral character. The vast majority of them referred to the campaign activities of the PCRM representatives both in Chisinau and outside the capital. These were materials about the participation of the PCRM leaders in various events, such as the Victory March (on 9 May), the social marches conducted by the PCRM on 22 May in Soroca, Orhei and Cahul and on 29 May in Chisinau, Vladimir Voronin's electoral meetings in various places and the electoral meeting “For a clean victory”, organized to support the PCRM candidate for the position of the capital's general mayor. Every third item in newscasts had Igor Dodon as a direct or indirect character. Thus, in a single newscast of 21 April NIT included three items from the launch of the campaign, describing in great detail the electoral promises of Dodon and of the team of candidates for Chisinau Municipal Council. Their total duration was about 17 minutes. It was not an isolated case; materials referring to the PCRM representatives were voluminous, lasting about 4-5 minutes each. Materials and

special reports from electoral events organized by the PCRM were distinguished by duration and presentation of openly pro-PCRM slogans.

At the same time, the station's editorial policy was directed towards the constant and absolute criticism of the PL candidate for Chisinau Mayor's Office, Dorin Chirtoaca, along with the entire governing alliance. They were referred to in disfavoring items and addressed messages with negative connotation (every second item in newscasts). The other candidates for the position of Chisinau mayor were either absent in NIT newscasts, or referred to only when they made declarations accusing Dorin Chirtoaca or favoring the PCRM and its candidate.

By its biased performance, NIT violated the Central Electoral Commission's Regulations on covering the campaign for the general local elections of 5 June 2011 in the Moldovan media, according to which "Electoral competitors shall participate in the electoral campaign on the basis of equality and they have the right to non-discriminating treatment regarding the provision of airtime and space in mass media".

Objectivity and impartiality

Of the total of 410 items with direct or indirect electoral character, broadcast by NIT during the reported period, a significant majority – 334 – were unbalanced and biased, presenting information subjectively and failing to separate facts from opinions.

The PCRM and its candidates for public offices in the local administration were directly favored in all materials referring to them (172), both by detailed coverage of the electoral competitor's events/reactions, and by the frequency by which the declarations of the PCRM representatives and candidates were broadcast. Thus, the PCRM president Vladimir Voronin and the party's candidate for the position of Chisinau general mayor, Igor Dodon, were the most intensely covered persons during the reported period, exclusively in materials with a positive nature.

After the first round of elections on 5 June, a series of materials presented Igor Dodon's solutions for every suburb of the capital. During the last week of the electoral campaign (13-19 June) the station broadcast 15 materials in which the PCRM candidate was presented in a positive light, unlike his counter-candidate for the position of general mayor. Thus, on 14 June we found that Igor Dodon visited some families in Durl esti that suffered from inundations. He promised them help and appealed to the Government to provide assistance to the affected people. After the visit to Durl esti, Igor Dodon appeared with a group of priests, with viewers informed that he had had a meeting with them to receive their requests as a candidate for the position of mayor. On 15 June NIT spoke in a large report about Igor Dodon as a "*pacifying mayor, who can maintain relations not only with Moscow, but also with Brussels and Washington*". On the same day, Dodon laid flowers at the monument of Eminescu, and spoke about his importance for Moldovans. On 16 May, Igor Dodon continued meetings with European officials, but this time with those from the European Council, and received support from a number of persons and non-governmental organizations.

Dorin Chirtoaca was the subject of 138 news items, all of them with a clearly negative character. It was said that he was unable to solve the problem of unauthorized buildings at the “Artico” Center in Chisinau (1 June); that he was involved in corruption schemes and conflicts of interests (1 June); that he misappropriated money for trolleybuses through a Romanian firm (27 April); that he bought trolleybuses for an increased price and that they are already breaking (5 May); that he makes false promises (19 May); etc.

The reporters’ subjectivity was obvious in all 334 biased news items. For this purpose, NIT journalists often used methods that are foreign to journalism: damage of the message, image transfer, false associations, comments and opinions not separated from facts. In the context of the ceremony of 9 May at the “Eternity” Memorial, the PL candidate for the capital’s Mayor’s Office was mentioned as follows: “Mihai Ghimpu’s nephew Dorin came instead of him, and he seemed not in the least interested by the 66th anniversary of the victory over fascism”. On 13 June NIT broadcast several items about the crime situation in the country. The news about the murder of a girl in the Gordinesti village was just a starting point, being followed by three items about severe attacks against the governing alliance. After reminding the audience about a number of crimes that had occurred lately, the reporter came to the conclusion that *“Citizens’ insecurity raises signs of worry when even some politicians come to ask the state for protection for fear of assassination. Experts believe that the situation went out of control and that the current Alliance gave courage to dangerous criminals who reestablish the criminal structures of the ‘90s, destroyed by the Communist governing”*. The reporter provided no information from the Ministry of Interior or from independent experts.

During the reported period, NIT inserted materials that confronted the statements and declarations from the electoral advertisements of Valentina Buliga, PDM, Dorin Chirtoaca, PL, and Vlad Filat, PLDM. The first electoral advertisement of Dorin Chirtoaca, PL, was fully analyzed (19 May), and Chirtoaca’s statements were opposed in a multitude of ways: vox populi, journalists’ retorts, montage of videos and music. Thus, the station violated the Central Electoral Commission’s Regulations on covering the campaign for the general local elections of 5 June 2011 in the Moldovan media, which clearly stipulates that “Electoral advertising shall not be included into newscasts, sportscasts, programs for children, religious programs” (p.12) and “Published or broadcast electoral materials, both those of the Central Electoral Commission and of electoral competitors, cannot be accompanied by comments” (p.17).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

NIT neglected the deontological principle of diversity of opinions in the majority of the broadcast news items. Every third item contained a single opinion, the one of PCRM representatives, or several opinions, but the PCRM opinion was dominant and detailed, while the other opinions/positions were presented briefly or contested by opponents or reporters. Sources of information for NIT reporters were usually PCRM representatives or supporters, and other attitudes and ideas were not encouraged by this TV station. For example, on 5 June, in the item about the appeal submitted to the Constitutional Court by the PCRM (item no.3), the PCRM Member of Parliament Sergiu Sarbu said that *“we will sink even deeper into this criminal anarchy”*. Sarbu was quoted three times, while the accused were not contacted to state their opinions. The author said only that *“AIE actions*

were qualified by analysts and opposition...”, but did not include into the material any analyst’s declaration.

NIT broadcast news about the so-called administrative-territorial reform, which will result, according to the PCRM, in liquidation of mayor’s offices, schools, etc. NIT made reports from several localities, such as Vanatori, Nisporeni (3 May), Cigirleni village, Ialoveni raion (5 May), and the city of Leova (12 May). By the manner in which these news items were presented NIT presented intentions as facts already realized, and journalists claimed that: *“the village will be left to its fate”*, the residents *“will have to leave for abroad, their dream of a new kindergarten dispelled at any moment”*, the reform *“will make their lives even more difficult”*, and the elections of 5 June *“are a last hope”*, *“the local elections must become a black day for liberal authorities”*, etc. None of the materials provided the position of AIE representatives regarding this issue, nor did they have experts’ opinions.

Simulation of a diversity of opinions was a frequent practice at NIT. It was achieved by placing into materials some reactions that do not offer necessary information, because it was either removed from context or truncated. For example, on 16 June the station broadcast a declaration by Igor Dodon, requesting the Prosecutor’s Office to investigate other seven cases of corruption and misappropriation of funds, which, in his opinion, had occurred at Chisinau Mayor’s Office. To observe the right to reply, the station asked the opinion of the head of the Mayor’s Office’s Press Service, who *“regrets the fact that the actions of the local administration raise discontent”*. It is not clear whether it referred to the notice of candidate Dodon, nor is it clear what the public officer meant. This pseudo balance also occurred in the material *“Dorin Chirtoaca addresses doctors for help”* on 13 June. The only reply given by a participant at the meeting organized by the PL candidate for the position of mayor was that of a Vice Minister of Health, who gave negative answers (*“No. No. No.”*) to a number of reporter’s questions, which could not be heard. Another controversial news item with a simulated response was that on 20 May claiming that trolleybuses purchased from Belarus cost less than the capital’s Mayor’s Office paid for them. The reply of Gh. Morgoci, director of the Electric Transport Department of Chisinau, was taken from another material referring to the technical condition of the trolleybuses purchased this year, which had been broadcast on 17 May.

In materials on controversial issues the right to reply was offered in extremely rare cases and in conditions unequal to the accusations. Thus, of 227 controversial news items broadcast by NIT during the reported period, 176 lacked the opinion of the parties involved.

Examples in this regard include be the following news items: In the newscast of 31 May the Comrat city authorities were accused by the PCRM candidate of doing nothing to solve the problem of water supply for the residents, but the Comrat authorities’ reply was unavailable; another item in the same newscast described an “electoral fight”, with the only source of information being the secretary of the Cimislia raion council, a PCRM representative, who said that the fight had been provoked by the PLDM representative, and the latter was not provided with the right to reply. The station also failed to provide the right to reply to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) when Igor Dodon was said to be convinced that CEC stole his victory (7 and 8 June), to the representatives of the parties accused of corruption by Marcel Darie, ex-candidate from the Party of Law and Justice for

the position of Chisinau general mayor (10 June), and in other items with controversial subjects. This is contrary to Article 7 (c) of the Broadcasting Code, which stipulates that in cases of subjects regarding conflict situations the media shall observe the principle of informing from several sources.

Language and videos used

In the majority of criticizing materials with direct or indirect electoral character, that referred to the candidates of the parliamentary parties other than the PCRM, NIT used language contrary to deontological standards, as well as editorial tricks, such as integrating/applying irrelevant images to the presented subject, focusing on an image/statement and repeating it, applying inscriptions on the video and musical background aimed at amplifying the manipulating message. During the monitored period the station broadcast 38 items using such elements, transmitting the station's point of view, which was usually subjective, regarding the presented information. Most of these tricks referred to the PL candidate for the position of general mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca, but to other leaders of the Alliance for European Integration (AIE) as well.

For example, in several news items broadcast in the first week of May referring to some members of the PLDM (Liberal Democratic Party) leaving the party, while the lead was being read, an image was shown, depicting an oak from which 5 acorns fell down (the acorns bearing the photos of some former members of this party – Alexandru Tanase, Fiodor Ghelici, Calin Vieru, Vitalie Nagacevschi and Mihai Godea). The PLDM leader appeared in a news item about decentralization on 28 April, drawing a map of Moldova, and Serafim Urechean was presented in a montage with bags of money in his arms (the item about his designation as president of the Court of Accounts, 21 April). Another example of violations of the Broadcast Code and of deontological norms by NIT was the use of archive videos without specifying this fact. Several days prior to the second round of the local elections in the capital the station broadcast a news item about the murder of a girl in Gordinesti village. The background of this item was bigger than the news itself. All the reporter's conclusions and comments regarding this case were accompanied by videos with tortured and dead persons. None of the images were *blurred*, and the viewers were not warned about the shocking images that were to come. Watching these images it is not difficult to reach the conclusion of "some experts", quoted by the reporter: *"the situation went out of control and the current Alliance gave courage to dangerous criminals who have re-established the criminal structures of the '90s, destroyed under the Communist government"*.

The favorite character for video tricks produced by NIT journalists was Dorin Chirtoaca. The tricks referring to D. Chirtoaca were created by various means: caricature, music, archive images, irrelevant images attached to texts referring to other issues, etc. Thus, an item in the NIT newscast of 18 April portrayed Dorin Chirtoaca as presenter of the "Pole Chudes" TV show broadcast on the TV station Pervy Kanal, Russia, then Chirtoaca's face replaced the image of Stefan cel Mare on the 100 lei bill, which also displayed the image of some red Easter eggs (in the news item "Dorin Chirtoaca's Easter lies", 19 April). On 3 May, in the news item about the conflict between Dorin Chirtoaca and Victor Bodiu, while the presenter was reading the lead, a tricked image appeared, in which the two candidates

were wearing boxing gloves. The material also included videos of two children quarreling, dogs and cats fighting, howling. On 18 May, an item included a montage of videos with garbage heaps, walls with falling plaster, accompanied by Dorin Chirtoaca's voice, "*Vote for the change, vote for PL*".

Another example of the offensive use of some videos attached to a defective text, making no distinction between the facts and opinions, is the material about the participants of the 7 April events who support Dorin Chirtoaca. The reporter said that this support was bought for one million lei, the amount spent by the Mayor's Office on compensations given to young people tortured by the police, while pensioners only received one hundred lei each. The entire text was accompanied by videos about the destruction of the Parliament building on 7 April without mentioning them being archive images, in which a municipal councilor of the PL, Oleg Cernei, shouted "Fire!". The material ended with the image of Dorin Chirtoaca chanting on a stage "Live and flourish...", which had no connection with the subject of the item: support for Dorin Chirtoaca in the electoral campaign for the position of mayor by the victims of events occurred on 7 April 2009.

Thus the station again violated the Broadcast Code which forbids "... distorting reality through montage, comments, devices or titles".



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 18 April to 19 June 2011 EURO TV broadcast 191 materials with direct or indirect electoral character. Most of them informed viewers mainly about the ongoing electoral campaign, beginning with the registration of candidates, launch of competitors and of their electoral platforms, public events organized by electoral competitors, declarations made by candidates for the positions of mayor or councilor, etc. During the period following the first round of elections, the station presented news about the results, reactions from politicians, international organizations and civil society, as well as details about the actions of the two competitors who remained in the race for the position of Chisinau mayor, their accusations against each other, the activity of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), etc.

During the two months of electoral campaigning, EURO TV also covered the capital's daily problems, including: the condition of the roads, the problem of road surface marking, garbage in parks, the condition of architectural monuments, traffic congestions, the launch of new trolleybuses, extension of trolleybus routes, seizure of "Termocom" JSC accounts, water supply provision for Chisinau suburbs, etc.

Objectivity and impartiality

News items with electoral relevance broadcast by EURO TV showed no grave deviations from deontological norms that could distort or truncate the information provided to the public. Materials broadcast by this TV station during the reported period were mostly

impartial and objective. It is to be noted that of the total of 191 news items, only two displayed problems with objectivity and impartiality. These materials covered the preliminary results of elections, broadcast on 6 June. The station announced that “*the PCRM steals from raion councils*”, which was the reporter’s conclusion. The negative connotation of the term *steal*³ used in the text and in the inscription displays the author’s attitude towards the subject. In the same newscast, in the item about the victory of the PCRM candidate in Balti, the reporter claimed that “*the Northern capital stays in the hands of Communists*”, which also reveals the reporter’s attitude towards the PCRM.

At the same time, during the first two stages of monitoring (18 April – 15 May) the amount of news items about the activities of General Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca, later the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, meant he was slightly favored by the larger coverage compared with other electoral competitors. Overall, Dorin Chirtoaca appeared 53 times in EURO TV news items directly referring to him in an either positive or neutral context.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

During the electoral campaign EURO TV mainly observed the principles of diversity and balance of sources. However, the station had some problems with observing the principles of balance of sources. From 18 April to 19 June EURO TV broadcast 43 relevant controversial items, 11 of which failed to present all parties involved. For example, on 3 and 6 June the station broadcast news about the Promo-LEX report containing accusations against some candidates and electoral offices, without their reply. On 31 May the station broadcast an item from the press conference held by Mihai Godea, who accused the AIE of inactivity, and on 2 June – the IJC report presenting data about the defective performance of some media outlets in the electoral campaign, without requesting their opinion; on 7 June – a press conference held by IDOM (Institute for Human Rights in Moldova), launching accusations against the managers of some psychiatric hospitals; etc. During the last week of the campaign (13 – 19 June) the station broadcast four controversial items that failed to quote the second side. For example, on 13 June in the item titled “Dodon wants the suburbs” the PCRM candidate accused the PL candidate of “remembering about the suburbs only during electoral campaigns” and said that “the suburbs do not deserve Dorin Chirtoaca as mayor”, but Chirtoaca’s reply was not presented. On 17 June, in item no. 8, Igor Dodon said that this campaign was “full of provocations, insinuations and mutual accusations”, accusing his counter-candidate of “hysteria”. Nevertheless, the item lacked the opinion of the second side.

At the same time, EURO TV had a number of news items that, although not controversial, required several sources and background information. Thus, the news about the opinion polls, which covered the top list of candidates with good chances for winning in elections and the top list of politicians trusted by the people, contained only data from the poll, announced at the press conference. These items did not include opinions of experts on the subject, although necessary. Also, an item about the need of AIE unification to increase Chirtoaca’s chances in the second round presented only the discourse of the experts

³ **STEAL** [sti:l] *vb* **steals, stealing, stole, stolen** 1. to take (something) from someone, etc. without permission or unlawfully, esp. in a secret manner

supporting the idea of unification (7 June); in the item about the election results announced by the CEC the only speaker was Iurie Ciocan, the president of the commission (7 June); the item about the candidates' expenses during the campaign presented only figures, without the opinions of experts in the field (6 June).

Language and videos used

During the period of monitoring (18 April – 19 June) we found no cases of the use of either discriminatory language against electoral competitors, or images able to distort reality and create a basis for questioning the observance of ethical and professional standards by EURO TV journalists.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the monitored period, 18 April – 19 June, Jurnal TV broadcast 242 materials with direct or indirect electoral character. Jurnal TV presented the news considered by the station's editors to be directly connected with the campaign in a special segment, "Local elections 2011". However, after the first round of elections the segment was no longer included into newscasts, and electoral items were presented among other items.

Objectivity and impartiality

Overall during the period of monitoring the most prominently covered candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor was Dorin Chirtoaca (PL), who had 64 appearances in the newscasts "Jurnalul orei 20.00", the majority in a neutral or favorable context. The PCRM candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Igor Dodon, was present in 50 neutral or negative news items.

During the first weeks of the campaign, the PLDM candidate, Victor Bodiu, was covered in 21 news items. The electoral campaign of Mihai Godea, independent candidate, was subject of 22 items. The candidate of the PDM, Valentina Buliga, was the subject of only 4 items.

After the first round of elections, the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca, and the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon, often appeared in the same materials, in the context of mutual accusations. For example, during the week 29 May – 5 June, Jurnal TV referred to Chirtoaca and Dodon in 21 items. However, the context in which they appeared was different: the PL candidate appeared in either a neutral or positive light, while the PLDM candidate – in a neutral or negative context.

Although Jurnal TV newscasts largely observed the principles of impartiality and objectivity, the station also broadcast materials that contained deviations from professional standards. For example, on 25 May Jurnal TV included an item about the disclosures and

“predictions” made during the last year by Sergiu Mocanu, without quoting any sources, instead only bearing the reporter’s conclusions made on the basis of some declarations and events, failing to clearly separate facts from opinion.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Overall, Jurnal TV broadcast 49 controversial materials that contained accusations against electoral competitors. The vast majority of controversial materials also presented the opinion of the parties referred to/accused, with some exceptions, such as the item on 21 April titled “Chirtoaca married Dodon and Bodiuc”, which began with the exclamation “Dodon and Bodiuc live in cohabitation”, attributed to Chirtoaca who accused the two counter-candidates of launching into the campaign contrary to the law. The station failed to provide the right to reply of the persons referred to. On 6 May the station broadcast a material in which Sergiu Mocanu, the leader of Antimafia Movement, accused prime vice-president of the Parliament Vlad Plahotniuc, the State Enterprise Registru and the Anticorruption Center of falsifying the signatures necessary for the registration of Mihai Godea as candidate for the position of general mayor. None of the accused parties replied, and the journalists failed to even mention whether they tried or not to contact them.

During the period between the two rounds of elections, 6 – 19 June, Jurnal TV broadcast 3 materials about the appeals to come to vote and vote for Dorin Chirtoaca, launched by Damian Hancu (8 June, 16 June, 17 June), in which he said that “the hands of the PCRM candidate are stained by the blood of the people killed in April 2009”, and requested that the latter publicly apologize. None of the 3 materials presented the position/reaction of Igor Dodon.

Language and videos used

In the coverage of the electoral campaign for local general elections Jurnal TV showed no deviations from deontological norms regarding the language and images used in the monitored newscasts, except in a report on electoral topics that had rather the form of a pamphlet, with music and a lot of humorous combinations of electoral messages and street advertising, broadcast on 9 May.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 18 April to 19 June the TV station N4 broadcast 223 items with direct or indirect electoral character, without separating electoral reports in a special segment. The number of items about the activity of CEC and of civic education materials broadcast by N4 was relatively small.

Before the date of the first round of elections (5 June) the majority of materials that directly referred to the electoral campaign covered the registration of candidates, the events for launching candidates into the campaign, the candidates' reactions to their counter-candidates' or third parties' actions and declarations, etc. After 5 June the monitored newscasts presented the results of elections and their interpretation by various political actors, as well as subjects involving the two electoral candidates that continued the race for the capital's Mayor's Office, covering their events/declarations, mutual accusations and counter-candidate's replies.

N4 gave special attention to covering the activity of Vlad Filat as Prime Minister; these reports had an indirect electoral character, since they were often followed by the PLDM electoral advertising, making thus a transfer of image from Prime Minister Vlad Filat to the party participating in elections. Besides these issues the station broadcast other reports, in which Prime Minister reacted to some events or accusations coming from electoral competitors.

Objectivity and impartiality

30 of the 223 news items relevant to this monitoring had problems with objectivity and impartiality, and facts were not separated from opinions. An example in this regard was the item on 4 May about the electoral meeting of the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon, at a hospital, where inserts were chosen so as to present the candidate in an unfavorable light. An example of obvious bias was a news item in the newscast on 5 May about the top 50 most influential politicians, presented at a press conference. The reporter avoided naming the number three in the top (*Dorin Chirtoaca, our note*), but announced that Victor Bodiu made a huge leap, coming very close to top 10, which demonstrates the station's bias. In some cases reporters made assessments or made their opinion known through the modality of expression, which contradicts journalistic deontology. Thus, on 8 June the station broadcast a report about the reaction of the State Enterprise "Registru" to cases of granting the same residential registration multiple times before the elections. The reporter exclaimed, *"And to crown it all (our underlining), the law does not forbid for a residence of several square meters to be the place of registration for a hundred people, for example"*. The same happened on 9 June, when the authors of a report about the consolidation of the Alliance for European Integration, broadcast before the second round of the capital's mayoral elections, rejoiced, *"Finally the AIE officially supports Dorin Chirtoaca in the second round of elections for the general mayor"*.

During the entire period of monitoring N4 favored in newscasts, by frequency, duration and accents the Prime Minister and president of PLDM, Vlad Filat, as well as the PLDM candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Victor Bodiu, before his withdrawal from the electoral race for the capital's Mayor's Office. In some reports journalists made references to the Filat-Bodiu tandem, which favored a transfer of image from Prime Minister to candidate. An example of the station favoring Victor Bodiu is a news item from the "Obiectiv" newscast of 28 April, which began with the following introduction: *"Unbelievable, but true. In Chisinau, it will be possible to purchase apartments in installments for 20 years, and the monthly rate will not exceed 200 euro. At least this is a*

commitment of the Liberal Democrat candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor Victor Bodi.”

In the report on 27 April covering the events marking the Day of the National Flag reporters tried to catch all the events organized on the occasion, but approached political actors differently. Thus, N4 avoided broadcasting General Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca with a statement made during an event produced as part of the celebration, but showed how the PLDM candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor distributed tricolor flags to passersby and explained to them their meaning.

Before the withdrawal of Victor Bodi from the list of candidates for the position of Chisinau general mayor, his counter-candidate from the Liberal Party, Dorin Chirtoaca, was referred to mainly in the context of accusations brought against him during the campaign. After the AIE’s decision to support Dorin Chirtoaca in the second round of elections, N4 presented him in neutral materials or in a positive context.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Most often the TV station N4 provided a minimum of diversity of opinions in its newscasts, which was not the case with the balance of sources. N4 failed to always provide the right to reply. For example, on 18 May the president of the Party of Law and Justice, General Nicolae Alexei, accused the PL candidate of having been unable to combat corruption in the capital and of the fact that there are family clans in the city hall that invest the city’s money into their own businesses. After the accusations, the N4 reporter said that, *“because of meetings with voters, Chirtoaca could not be found to comment on today’s accusations,”* and included a short declaration made earlier as an answer to other accusations brought by the representatives of the Party of Law and Justice.

In other cases, reporters failed to transmit balanced information about a controversial subject, even if they seemingly observed diversity of opinions and the right to reply. An example in this regard is an item broadcast on 3 June about an anti-PLDM coalition in Carpineni village, Hancesti raion, formed by three parties, the PL, PCRM and PDM. The item implied that these parties had advanced a single counter-candidate to that of the PLDM. The PLDM candidate and Vlad Filat were present in the report. For diversity of opinions reporters presented the position of the PL as well, through Dorin Chirtoaca, who rejected the accusations. The authors, however, returned to the idea voiced in the beginning and finish the report with the following expression, *“Liberal Democrats insist that the PL, PCRM and PDM have a single candidate”*. This ending overturned any frail balance of sources which the reporters attempted to build, and gave the item a touch of tendentiousness. Overall, during the period of monitoring, the TV station N4 broadcast 34 news items and reports that failed to observe the deontological principles of balance of sources and diversity of opinions.

In 13 of the 44 news items with controversial electoral subjects, broadcast during the monitoring period, N4 failed to provide the right to reply when some electoral competitors brought accusations against their opponents. Thus, on 25 May the station announced that some participants in the debates organized by N4 accused the employees of the Chisinau

mayor's office, especially Dorin Chirtoaca, of corruption. Instead of presenting the opinion of the parties involved, the reporter said the following, "*You will find Dorin Chirtoaca's reply at the next round of debates where he is invited.*" The journalist had a deontological obligation to provide the right to reply in the same newscast, which did not happen. The opinion of the PL representative Mihai Carlig could be found only on 27 May in another item about the electoral debates organized by N4, but the broadcast material did not include a direct answer to the accusations of corruption brought against Chirtoaca. Accusations without reply were also broadcast on 26 May with reference to the same debates on N4, this time from Vitalia Pavlicenco, the National Liberal Party's candidate for the position of Chisinau general mayor.

On 14 June N4 broadcast a report from a public event organized by the Ministry of Environment which discussed the problem of the garbage dump in Tantareni village. The Minister of Environment, Gheorghe Salaru, accused the PCRM of transforming this problem into a political one, adding some other accusations against the parliamentary opposition. The position of the PCRM was unavailable.

Language and videos used

During the period of monitoring N4 reporters used adequate language in newscasts, without the labeling of some candidates. The same observations are true for the use of videos and montage elements, which generally observed ethical and professional standards.

PRINT MEDIA:



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the period of monitoring, the daily *Adevărul* published 140 articles with direct or indirect electoral character. They covered electoral subjects, starting with the submission of documents to the District Electoral Council for the registration of candidates and the official launch of the campaign, and continuing with the electoral events of various electoral competitors. *Adevărul* informed readers about the ongoing campaign and about the changes that occurred after the first round of local elections. It also did not ignore the mutual accusations of candidates for the position of the capital's general mayor referring to acts of corruption and promotion of some dubious persons in the Municipal Council.

Among subjects with indirect electoral character we can mention articles that spoke about the Government, Parliament and Chisinau Mayor's Office. The newspaper also published paid electoral materials with corresponding marking in the segment "Electoral advertising 2011".

Objectivity and impartiality

During the electoral campaign, the daily *Adevărul* showed no tendency of favoring or disfavoring electoral competitors. The newspaper mainly covered the actions and attitudes of candidates for the position of the capital's general mayor.

In the vast majority of cases journalists did not commit violations or journalistic norms or deontological principles of impartiality and objectivity. Only 3 journalistic materials had problems with impartiality and objectivity. Thus, the material "Pompous tri-launching of Chirtoacă's trolleybuses" on 29 April contained expressions such as "hellish jams," "everyone came to see the 'wonder' about which the mayor had been talking for half a year," "Dorin Chirtoacă did not miss any occasion for working on his image, carrying the press around with him to every event", which are the personal opinions of the author that should not be found in an informative item. In the same issue, in the article "Copy paste and the electoral rake," the reporter informed that "Dodon also took in his hand a stick with a nail attached to one of its ends," and "2 MPs came to the "subotnik" (community work done on Saturdays, concept from the Soviet times – translator's note) by a car having parliamentary numbers, playing truant from the plenum meeting." Thus, the PCRM candidate was a little ridiculed. On 28 April, the article "The head of the state pardoned his party colleague" contained expressions "to wash from sin", "for the washing of Leonid Balan", which reveal the reporter's bias to the discussed subject.

As for editorials, they were pertinent and were rather analyses of events and tendencies, without defending certain ideas or persons. Value judgments in opinion materials did not distort the reality and were based on documents or facts.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

From the editorial point of view, the newspaper was fair and balanced during the entire electoral campaign monitored and presented in this report. Overall, *Adevărul* had 14 contradictory materials, and the right to reply was disregarded in a single case.

It is to be noted that the balance between counter-candidates for the position of the capital's mayor was observed not only in text, but also in photos.

Language and images used

The articles in *Adevărul* were written with observance of deontological norms and did not contain pejorative or licentious expressions labeling some electoral competitors. All the materials relevant to this monitoring used appropriate language, and the images were informative, without deviations from ethical norms.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

Timpul de dimineață published during the monitored period 304 articles with direct or indirect electoral character. The majority of them (142) were opinion materials (editorials,

commentaries produced by the newspaper's journalists, interviews, opinions of bloggers and readers), 95 were news items and other strictly informative articles, including materials with the character of a journalistic investigation, and 67 were electoral advertising (with or without corresponding marking). At the beginning of the electoral campaign the newspaper inaugurated the segment "One thousand and one nights of Chisinau", which listed the problems of the municipality that are to be solved. From the point of view of topics articles covered, through news and commentary, the most important events of the electoral campaign including the actions/declarations/replies of the main electoral competitors.

During the monitored period, *Timpul de dimineață* published a number of interviews with different people (artists, students, politicians, representatives of diasporas, etc.), which promoted a certain electoral competitor and were in fact masked advertising for this candidate. After the first round of elections the newspaper had promotional dialogues with some candidates: 14 June – interview with Nicolae Crudu, PLDM candidate for the position of Durești mayor – *"I tried to be a good mayor for all Durești residents"*; 16 June – interview with PLDM candidate for the position of Hancești mayor, Constantin Tacu – *"Had I started stealing, I would be good, too..."* (published in the segment "Elections 2011" without a note of whether it was paid from the candidate's electoral fund).

Objectivity and impartiality

The majority of news articles and complex informative materials with electoral character were correct from the point of view of structure as well as the impartial and objective approach to information. However, eight materials from the category of news, analyses and investigations displayed certain subjectivity and non-separation of facts from opinions. For example, on 6 May the article "Robbery of the decade in Ungheni" showed the author's biased attitude, evident especially in the expressions used (*"Gheorghe Filimon's defective activity during all these years was covered by the communist clan that came to power in 2001"*), and the author failed to always observe the deontological principle of presumption of innocence concerning the person that is written about.

The majority of opinion articles (62 of 142), including editorials, commentaries, interviews, letters, citizens'/readers' appeals, favored the Liberal Party and/or its candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca. Thus, during the monitored period the newspaper published interviews with various personas (Dan Dungaciu, Spiridon Vangheli, Vasile Iovu, Ninela Caranfil, Eugen Doga, Mihai Druta, etc.), who praised Dorin Chirtoaca and made direct or indirect appeals to support the PL candidate in the local elections.

Also, the newspaper published a lot of articles that can be categorized as hidden advertising of electoral competitors. They were not placed into the segment "Elections 2011" and were not accompanied by the specification "Paid from the electoral fund", but referred to the activity and electoral programs of these candidates. For example, on 20 May the newspaper published a long interview with Dorin Chirtoaca, titled "5 June will mean the end of Communist ideology in Moldova," which spoke about the ongoing electoral campaign, listed the mayor's achievements during his first term, as well as, his priorities for a second term.

The editorial policy of *Timpul de dimineață* during the monitored period towards the PCRM candidate for the position of the capital's general mayor, Igor Dodon, was diametrically oppositional. Dodon was presented in opinion materials only in a negative, disfavoring and undermining context (from the commentary "Who votes for Dodon?", 1 June: "...*not a single day passes without him saying a lie, sometimes even two*"; 3 June, article "Why Dodon is a danger for Chisinau..." – "*He fills his pockets and doesn't care if anyone becomes bankrupt. He only cares about winning*"; 8 June – "Here is who I. Dodon wants to make order in Chisinau with!"; 13 June – the editorial "Dodon, the puppet of Communist mafia"; 16 June – the commentary "The puppet in pink lies *in Moldovan!*"; from the investigation "EXCLUSIVE: We lost 'Moldova' with the help of Dodon", 17 June – "*Igor Dodon asked the Ukrainian authorities to intervene in the stealing of the building of the Moldovan Consular Office in Odessa*"; etc.).

During the reported period the newspaper published a number of readers' letters, appeals of some groups of voters, extracts from blogs that directly or indirectly called for the support of the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor and harshly criticized the Party of Communists and its candidate, Igor Dodon.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Even if the news articles of *Timpul de dimineață*, which covered the ongoing electoral campaign and the results of elections, were generally correct the newspaper did not always provide diversity of sources of information and of opinions/positions; a deontological principle that is compulsory, especially for journalistic materials covering controversial subjects. For example, the material "Hooliganism in full electoral campaign", published on 6 May, failed to provide the right to reply to the persons accused of attacks during the campaign (although data was taken from the Promo-Lex report, the opinions of those involved should have been presented). On 25 May the newspaper published the story "Communists' luxury palace", in which PL candidates brought accusations against the PCRM, but the opinion of the accused was missing. Two days prior to the first round of elections, *Timpul de dimineață* published, in the segment "Candidate profile", a two-page-long unsigned (!) article about the PCRM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, explaining "Why Dodon is a danger for Chisinau..." The article included violations of journalistic norms by bringing accusations against a candidate and not requesting his reaction. "... *Dodon says that he fights against corruption, when in fact he contributed to its flourishing. Dodon declares modest income, though lives like a lord*" – these are just some of the anonymous statements provided without concrete and well documented details. The article is accompanied by several caricatures and photos with cars, which are claimed to be Igor Dodon's. The issues of 15 and 17 June contained the article "We lost 'Moldova' with the help of Dodon", according to which the former Communist government alienated, at a ridiculous price, one of the most expensive properties of Moldova – sanatorium "Moldova" in Odessa, and Igor Dodon, then prime-vice-prime-minister, addressed the Ukrainian authorities to facilitate this alienation. The accused person's opinion regarding this claim was not presented.

Overall, during the monitored period *Timpul de dimineață* published 19 articles (other than opinion materials) that covered controversial subjects, launching accusations against

persons involved in the electoral campaign for the local elections. In only 6 cases did the authors observe the deontological norm which requires that the point of view of all the parties involved is presented.

Language and images used

The language of electoral news items in *Timpul de dimineață* was appropriate, while that of commentaries was in some cases harsh and exaggeratedly ironic towards the PCRM and this party's candidates ("Scoundrel" Dodon, "puppet", "puppet in pink", "Moscow's puppet", etc.). The opinion article "Dodon's salvation, 'poking fingers' and after-tears" (17 June) repeated some licentious expressions attributed to one of the municipal councilors elected from the PCRM list, some letters being replaced with dots, which, however, failed to sufficiently protect the text from defective elements.

In several cases the materials published in the newspaper were accompanied by photo collages without adequate marking.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 28 April to 19 June *Moldova Suverană* published 196 materials with direct or indirect electoral character. The genre of the items published in *Moldova Suverană* was mostly opinion articles. News items were few and often brief (most often from the *Moldpres* agency or unsigned items).

Moldova Suverană covered the events produced during the campaign selectively; readers were particularly informed about the electoral events organized by the PCRM, in some cases mentioning that materials were advertising, but most often such mentions were missing. Paid electoral articles usually began on the first page and continued on page 2 or 3, and belonged to the staff of the PCRM candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Igor Dodon, or to political analysts supporting the PCRM candidate.

During the entire monitored period, the newspaper's editorial policy was built around harsh criticism of the parties composing the AIE and their representatives as well as the promotion of the PCRM candidates in elections. Thus, the readers of *Moldova Suverană* did not have sufficient information to be able to independently form their opinions.

The majority of materials were composed of speculation rather than sources of information for readers about events. Articles covered events that especially referred to the events of the electoral campaign conducted by the PCRM, among which the celebration of 9 May, the launching of the electoral campaign of Igor Dodon, the PCRM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor (19 April, 22 April, 28 April), the launching of the campaign "I love Moldova" (18 May), materials about the PCRM candidate's visit to Brussels and his return with solutions for Chisinau (20 May, 24 May), Dodon's meeting with the heads of

diplomatic missions in Moldova, who were informed that the PCRM will not allow the forging of elections results (25 May), etc.

Objectivity and impartiality

Materials published in *Moldova Suverană* clearly favored the PCRM candidate Igor Dodon in 69 materials with a neutral or positive character. Examples in this regard are articles “Igor Dodon met several Russian officials in Moscow” (31 May), “Dodon is not only the solution, he is Chisinau’s salvation” (31 May), “Chisinau needs an anti-crisis manager” (3 June), “Igor Dodon – the season of civilized change” (3 June), “Moldova chose the Party of Communists” (9 June), “Igor Dodon: on 5 June I won in Chisinau, on 19 June I will win in the entire municipality” (an interview with Igor Dodon, published on 10 June), etc.

All the 66 articles referring to Dorin Chirtoaca, the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, had a negative character, sometimes with defamatory information. Examples of tendentious materials are articles “Rehabilitation of the road infrastructure in Chisinau, a priority only in electoral campaigns” (20 May), “Chirtoaca, a TV bully and incompetent in life” (19 May), “Chisinau has come to be the criminal capital of a poor Moldova and the Mayor’s Office a kind of headquarters of corruption” (20 May), “Chirtoaca – a curse for Chisinau” (26 May), etc. The article titled “Budget irregularities since Ghimpu was also head of the Chisinau Municipal Council at the Mayor’s Office”, published in several issues (19 May, 20 May, 24 May, 25 May and 26 May), presented in a distorted manner the audit report about the implementation of the Chisinau municipal budget for 2009.

During the entire monitored period *Moldova Suverană* published 97 biased materials, where facts were not separated from opinions. Opinion articles were mainly defamatory with regard to the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca, the PL president, Mihai Ghimpu, the PLDM president, Vlad Filat, or to other representatives of the AIE. These articles were full of accusations; their authors used a pejorative language and faked images, and violated ethical and deontological principles.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

During the entire period of monitoring *Moldova Suverană* failed to provide diversity of opinions. In 91 articles information was given from a single source or from several sources but quoted selectively and from a single perspective/angle of approach. Analysis materials inserted by *Moldova Suverană* were tendentious and subjective. Instead of examining a subject in detail, presenting different opinions and positions that would help the reader to better understand the issue, analyses in *Moldova Suverană* compiled information with the purpose of discrediting, by selectively including details and omitting the replies of the accused parties.

The newspaper ignored the principle of compulsorily quoting both sides in controversial materials. The 82 materials covering controversial subjects or launching accusations against electoral competitors or parties represented by them failed to provide the right to reply required by deontological norms.

Language and images used

74 of the materials published in *Moldova Suverană* used pejorative, insinuating and semi-licitious expressions and street language, caricatures, collages or faked images for the purpose of manipulation.

For example, in the issue of 20 April, the newspaper published a text titled “Let’s get cured from the green illness” began with the following statement: “For two years a ridiculous and impotent liberal coalition made up of 3 lying buffoons and a fat one”; it continued in the same style. In the article “The lad will divorce...the capital’s mayor’s office” (27 April) Dorin Chirtoaca was called “*Little Dorin, son of stray dogs*” etc., and in an article on 13 May, titled “Mihai Bedlam Ghimpu. God save you from a fool with a well-rested brain,” the declarations of the PL leader were described in a suburban language (“His Romanian diarrhea, the blunder of defective thinking”).

In most cases editorials and opinion articles were accompanied by caricatures, collages and faked photos emphasizing the text. Collages and caricatures mostly portrayed Dorin Chirtoaca in disfavoring light, such as the collage in which he wore a Nazi uniform (“Chirtoaca, a TV bully and incompetent in life”, 19 May), or the faked photo in which Dorin Chirtoaca and Mihai Ghimpu are standing back to back with axes in hands and the image of the city hall in the background, in the text titled “Chisinau has come to be the criminal capital of a poor Moldova and the Mayor’s Office a kind of headquarters of corruption” (20 May).



Involvement in the electoral campaign

The Russian-language publication with national coverage *Nezavisimaia Moldova* actively covered the electoral campaign for the local general elections. From 18 April to 19 June 2011 the newspaper published a total of 238 articles with direct and indirect electoral character.

Before the first round of elections the publication informed its readers about subjects concerning the electoral activities of a number of electoral competitors. However, it constantly focused on the candidates of the PCRM and the PL for the Chisinau Mayor’s Office. The newspaper prioritized such issues as the registration and launch of the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon, in the electoral race, the presentation of the electoral platforms of the PCRM candidates for the positions of municipal councilors. Also, the newspaper presented the PCRM’s achievements during the eight years of governing, and the social marches conducted by the PCRM in some cities of the country. Thus, on 31 May three (!) pages were given to the detailed coverage of the so-called social march of 29 May organized by the party to support its candidates for the positions of municipal councilors and mayor of Chisinau. Photos, impressions, appeals: all aimed at convincing the reader that

the current regime needs to be ended and the only solution is the PCRM. The same tonality was maintained during the entire electoral campaign in news items and opinion articles.

In the period before the second round of elections (6 – 19 June) materials referred to the victories of the PCRM in the local elections and the not-quite-correct behavior of some electoral competitors and observers at elections. At the same time, the newspaper increased its number of controversial materials, especially containing accusations of corruption and poor administration of the capital by the incumbent mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca. Usually, Chirtoaca, Igor Dodon's main counter-candidate, was the focus of *Nezavisimaia Moldova* within the context of criticism and negative information.

It is to be noted that during the electoral period the newspaper often published letters from readers attacking the PL candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca. The multitude of letters published during the monitored period created the impression that journalists tried to transfer a part of their own convictions 'for' and 'against' onto the readers' account.

Objectivity and impartiality

Monitoring results show that overall *Nezavisimaia Moldova* engaged selectively in covering the electoral campaign, reporting only about the campaign activities conducted by the Party of Communists and its candidate for the position of Chisinau general mayor, Igor Dodon. Other electoral competitors, especially Dorin Chirtoaca, Dodon's main counter-candidate, were mentioned only in the context of accusations and critical materials, signed by the newspaper's employees, readers or experts close to the PCRM.

Igor Dodon was favored in 74 articles published by the monitored newspaper during the electoral campaign. Thus, readers were informed that the PCRM advanced a candidate who is *an independent political person, the leader of the reforming wing of the PCRM, an experienced manager, a real technocrat, with the vocation of solving the problems related to drawing the country out of crisis*. The newspaper provided ample space for reports about the PCRM congress with the participation of the party's candidates for the local elections of 5 June. Amongst the articles inserted within that issue the newspaper published the speech of the PCRM president Vladimir Voronin in front of the congress delegates (*Entire power in the soviets – to the Moldovan people*), where he explained the *dreadful character* of this electoral campaign and the *acute need* for the PCRM to win the elections, in a situation where the current administration is *incompetent* and has a *multidimensional plan to destroy Moldova*. In the PCRM's appeal to the voters the latter were encouraged to vote for the party's candidates, because the current local and central public authorities are *incompetent* and aim at liquidating a number of mayor's offices, which are the only *hope* for the voters left adrift.

Often, *Nezavisimaia Moldova* published readers' letters that either supported Dodon or criticized his counter-candidates, especially Dorin Chirtoaca (PL) and Valentina Buliga (PDM).

The PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca, was the preferred “target” of criticism and accusations by the newspaper *Nezavisimaia Moldova*. During the monitored period it published 54 texts directly or indirectly referring to him, all presenting him in a negative context. He was accused of *inefficient management of the municipality's issues, destruction of architectural monuments, the city's degradation, poor management of the municipal budget, incompetence, irresponsibility and incapacity to do something good for the city, promotion of anti-communist hysteria, etc.*

With the background of this dichotomy Chirtoaca-Dodon, the other candidates for the position of the capital's general mayor were nearly invisible in *Nezavisimaia Moldova*.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

The balance of sources was one of the gravest deontological problems observed at *Nezavisimaia Moldova*. The majority of materials published in the newspaper presented information from a single perspective, indicating only one source of information. The newspaper had a total of 67 relevant controversial materials, and 61 quoted a single side in the conflict. The right to reply was not provided in cases when it was necessary because of the grave accusations published. As a rule, the quoted sources were representatives or supporters of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova.

In the vast majority of cases when accusations were made against candidates for the position of Chisinau mayor Dorin Chirtoaca (PL), Valentina Buliga (PDM), Mihai Godea (independent), they were not asked for their opinion, and in rare situations (when the news was taken from other media outlets) it was indicated that the said candidates “have not yet commented on the accusations”. Examples of unbalanced articles include, one in which the Chisinau Mayor's Office was accused of encouraging the destruction of historical monuments in the city, Chirtoaca was accused of money laundering through a Romanian firm (accusations that were repeated during the entirety of the campaign); the PDM and PLDM candidates were accused of attacking the PCRM candidates and campaigners in Basarabeasca and Causeni raions, etc.

The newspaper repeatedly confused diversity of opinions with insinuation, failing to present a minimum number of arguments in support of the promoted idea. On 7 June, for example, the newspaper published the article “*The Nisporeni Commissariat is investigating three cases of mass payoff to voters by the Democratic Party*”. The item had no other sources than a declaration by the police commissar. It is dubious as nowhere in his declarations was the name of the Democratic Party mentioned. Only in the background did the journalist state that one of this party's leaders comes from Nisporeni, but that nothing is known about his involvement in sharing money for votes in this raion.

Language and images used

The majority of articles in *Nezavisimaia Moldova* used language that was full of colorful expressions, especially referring to the current government. In 28 cases authors applied comparisons and labeling, ignoring deontological norms, whether the case was a tablet, analysis or news item. An example in this regard is the article published on 19 April about

the activity report of Dorin Chirtoaca that used pejorative expressions about Chirtoaca and his projects, such as “Chirtoacaville”, “the whole of Chisinau is tired of this ‘mayor’” etc. In the article “*Ideological vampire*” of 13 May, Tudor Soroceanu offered an analysis of political vampirism in the world and in the country. He explained this “phenomenon” by renaming the candidate for the position of mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca - “mutant vampire”. On 22 April, in the section titled “Newspaper – reader – newspaper” letters were published from the readers, in which Chirtoaca was called “Chirtoshca”, “Dorinel”, with the mention that “his main project is to transform Chisinau into a sewer.”

The brightly colored and sometimes pejorative language was sometimes accompanied by caricatures of the parties from the governing alliance and of the Liberal party candidate. In some cases, to amplify the effect of disfavoring, the newspaper used images that did not refer to the covered event, which is contrary to the journalist’s professional deontology. On 24 May, for example, the newspaper published an article titled “While the mayor is dancing...” that reported the consequences of the deluge the day before, with reference to an information portal. The text announced that the rain had paralyzed traffic on certain streets. This news item was illustrated with two images: one of flooded cars and the other of Mayor Chirtoaca dancing at a party. These images and the title selected suggested to readers the false idea that the mayor partied while the city was flooded. Dorin Chirtoaca was also disfavored by caricatures and images illustrating some articles. The commentary titled “*Intelligence of a professional*” (27 May), for example, was illustrated with a caricature representing Dorin Chirtoaca as a three-headed dragon with the caption “Mayor, Producer, Liberal!”



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the electoral campaign, the bi-weekly with national coverage, *Jurnal de Chişinău*, approached the subject of local elections at the level of interpretation rather than information. The newspaper published 154 materials with direct or indirect electoral character, including posters and electoral advertising, marked and unmarked. It is to be mentioned that the publication covered the campaign mainly in opinion articles, analyses and pamphlets. A number of materials, especially in the cycle “Buraga’s letters”, approached the electoral campaign in an allegoric or ironic form (“More adequate candidates” by Ion Buraga, 22 April and 29 April; “Dodon’s retreat”, “9 May with electoral tint”, 10 May; “Aurochs of patriotism”, 14 June; “Who would Eminescu have voted for”, 17 June; etc.), or at opinion level.

News items reported the registration of electoral competitors, incidents and misunderstandings among AIE factions, etc. Also, the newspaper analyzed the chances of the candidates from the parties of the governing alliance for the position of Chisinau general mayor, mentioning that Dorin Chirtoaca is the highest rated of the candidates (“The three will be one”, 10 May). Other subjects approached were the results of the Public Opinion Barometer published by the Institute of Public Policies, the mutual accusations by Chirtoaca

and Dodon, as well as, the electoral debates in the segment *“I want to be councilor”*. The issues following the elections mainly contained materials and reports from the electoral staff of the main competitors, analyses of the data from the Central Electoral Commission, reactions to the results of the first round of elections, actions performed by competitors during the last stage of the electoral campaign, and electoral advertising. On 13, 20 and 27 May, as well as on 3 June, *Jurnal de Chişinău* inserted a page of electoral education, *Activ*, edited by the Association of Independent Press (API), which presented informational materials about the ongoing campaign, the behavior of electoral competitors, the rules of voting that a voter needs to know, etc.

Objectivity and impartiality

Jurnal de Chişinău generally observed the rights of journalistic conduct regarding the objectivity and balance of information, as well as, presentation of different opinions. During the monitored period the newspaper showed no evident favoring or disfavoring of political entities involved into the electoral campaign for the local general elections.

However, there were 17 informational materials that revealed the reporters' bias and lack of objectivity towards the discussed subjects. The newspaper published articles in which authors took certain positions, tending to provide support to some parties. Thus, we noted 4 articles favoring the PLDM and its leader Vlad Filat who, in several electoral advertisements, appeared as a locomotive for the party (*“Prime Minister sabotaged”*, 17 May; *“Moscow is interested in destroying PLDM”*, 27 May; *“Puppeteer can dynamite AIE”*, 27 May; *“Filat delays owners of cars with foreign plates”*, 27 May). The same happened in two articles about the PL and its candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca (*“Electoral sport”*, 17 May; *“Chisinau could be conquered in the first attempt”*, 27 May). The articles pointed out Chirtoaca's advantages compared with other candidates, especially that of the PCRM.

From 18 April to 19 June the PCRM and/or its candidate, Igor Dodon, were mentioned in 37 materials, mainly with a neutral or negative character, sometimes carefully veiled. For example, on 17 May, in his analysis *“Moscow's candidates and spies”*, the editorialist Petru Bogatu wrote that Igor Dodon was the candidate of the Russian government. Dodon was also the focus in the column *“Buraga's letters”* in this issue. In a so-called interview with Voronin about Victor Bodiu's withdrawal from the electoral campaign, he described the *“solution”* suggested by Igor Dodon: *“The solution for cleaning grease from bowls, for killing kitchen bugs, etc.”* The pamphlet style and subtle attacks against the PCRM were present in other items as well. In *“The Tuesday letter”* on 24 May, the author talked about Communism and poverty. He reached the conclusion that, *“The danger of Communism will await us as long as we are the poorest in Europe... To get rid of poverty, it is necessary to get rid of Communists.”* The material titled *“Dodon gets fixed to Chirtoaca's trolleybuses”* (3 June, p.4) contained details about a televised debate with the participation of I. Dodon and D. Chirtoaca, who accused each other of corruption. At first sight the article seemed balanced, since it contained the opinions of both parties. However, judging by the space given to Dorin Chirtoaca to express his accusations and provide details, the reporter was clearly biased in favor of Chirtoaca and disfavored Dodon. *“Dodon lost in his village”* was the title of an article on page 3 of the 10 June issue – despite the fact that the material spoke

about several situations that occurred during the elections in various places, including the home village of the PCRM candidate. Although the subjects were diverse, the reporter chose a confusing title which presented Dodon as a loser, despite the fact he was not a candidate in his home village. In fact, the reference was to the PCRM in general, which gathered few votes in the said village. Another internal title *People don't want to go back to Communism* reveals the tendentiousness of the newspaper with regard to the PCRM.

During the mentioned period, Dorin Chirtoaca and/or the PL were mentioned in 22 materials. Although materials referring to Chirtoaca were fewer than those referring to Dodon, they were mostly positive or neutral. Opinion articles promoted a certain vision of the parties competing in the local general elections, favoring non-Communist parties and appealing for their consolidation.

It is to be mentioned that *Jurnal de Chişinău* also published three materials which can be categorized as masked advertising. They were the appeal "*Together for Moldova!*" (3 June p. 3, 17 June p.7), signed by the PLDM president Vlad Filat, who urged voters to go to vote and "massively support the AIE candidate for Chisinau Mayor's Office, Dorin Chirtoaca", and an appeal of the Council of the Writers' Union of Moldova, published on 14 June (p.10), urging voters to vote for Dorin Chirtoaca.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

From 18 April to 19 June, *Jurnal de Chişinău* published 13 controversial materials 3 of which failed to provide space for the persons involved to reply. On 17 May, *Jurnal de Chişinău* published the story "Prime Minister sabotaged. Often, the Prime Minister's directions remain unexecuted." The item noted that many of the Prime Minister's requests were not executed by the PDM ministers, including Valentina Buliga, because she was involved in the electoral campaign. The latter was not offered space to reply. The same was true for the article "Ministry of Interior refuses to provide the names of those who ordered the sham newspapers." This time Valentina Buliga made the accusations. According to her, "the sham publications were the work of the PCRM." The newspaper did not include the position of the party accused of falsifying the publications. The reporter also failed to include the reply of the parties involved in the material titled "AIE in 3D for Chirtoaca" (10 June, p. 9), in which accusations of corruption against Chirtoaca were balanced by his reply referring in fact to electoral fraud (!) "*All municipal enterprises purchase fuel from companies affiliated to the PL; materials for road repairs, including for Alba Iulia Street, were purchased from a single source; microbus routes are sold through a fraudulent scheme*", said Dodon. In reply, Chirtoaca announced that the PL requests repeated counting of votes for Chisinau Municipal Council (...). The article "*Fight for the Mayor's Office, in the Prosecutor's Office*" (17 June, p.8) regarding the mutual accusations of the PL and the PCRM representatives quoted several sources, including Dorin Chirtoaca, Oleg Cernei, Teo Carnat (PL), and Igor Dodon, Anatol Tofan (PCRM), as well as the political analyst Anatol Taranu. However, the article lacked the opinion of the PCRM member Nicolae Curtoglu, accused by the PL of "being involved in schemes of illegal alienation of the hotel "National" and the sanatorium "Moldova". And the article "NIT is in danger of intoxicating citizens" (17 June, p.15), despite the fact that it did not bear accusations against electoral competitors, but informed readers about the results of some mass-media

monitoring programs and quoted several experts in the field, should have also included the opinion of the NIT station representatives.

In order to comply with the Deontological Code and provide both positions in controversial articles, the journalists of *Jurnal de Chişinău* made reference to some statements made by the person involved in unclear conditions. This was true for the article published on 24 May, “Communist Dodon regains Romanian citizenship?” The author mentioned that, “*The PCRM MP was not happy, as other Moldovans are, when finding out that he had regained Romanian citizenship, but said it was instead a ‘political diversion’.*” The response appears to be the author’s conclusion, because in the end he specified, “*It is not known for sure yet if it was the Communist Igor Dodon who regained Romanian citizenship. According to the State Information Resources Center REGISTRU, there are 16 persons registered in Moldova with the name Igor Dodon.*”

Language and images used

The analyzed articles of *Jurnal de Chişinău* used appropriate language and images that are not contrary to the Deontological Code. In only one item, “*Geoana’s ghost. Electoral campaign. Watchfulness at the PCRM head office*” (7 June), did the journalist quote a Communist MP who used licentious language. Although the term used was not quoted exactly, some letters being replaced with three dots, the term can be recognized, as well as the meaning of the expression (*It is time..., It is time to f... from the train station*). In such situations, however, reporters could avoid using the expression, mentioning only that the said MP used licentious language/swearing addressed to an electoral competitor.

4. Conclusions

Based on the monitoring results, it can be concluded that during the electoral campaign the monitored media covered the electoral campaign differently, some of them making grave deviations from professional and deontological principles. Thus,

- Prime TV, a private station with national coverage, observed professional and ethical standards in covering subjects with electoral character. The large amount of news items with the presence of PDM and PL candidates denotes the station’s favoring of these two parties’ candidates for the positions of mayors and local councilors.
- NIT, another private station with national coverage, openly campaigned for the PCRM, serving as an instrument for the promotion of this party’s ideology. The vast majority of news items with electoral relevance were biased and sometimes denigrating, covering events only from the perspective of the PCRM. The large volume and the content of news items shows that from an editorial point of view NIT is a politically partisan TV station, which is contrary to professional deontology and legal provisions.
- Two other TV stations, Euro TV and Jurnal TV, had a relatively balanced performance, without grave deviations from professional and deontological standards. From the point of view of the frequency and the context in which

electoral competitors appeared in newscasts, both stations displayed a slight favoring of the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor.

- The TV station N4 generally observed the deontological and professional standards of covering electoral campaigns. N4 slightly favored the PLDM through the high frequency of image news items broadcast with the presence of this party's leader, who also is the country's Prime Minister.
- The newspaper *Adevărul* covered the campaign in a balanced manner, without siding with any electoral competitors.
- *Jurnal de Chișinău* showed no obvious deviations from professional and deontological standards. The larger number of materials about the PL candidate denotes a slight favoring for him by this newspaper.
- *Timpul de dimineață* actively covered the electoral campaign, without grave violations of ethical and professional principles. Judging by the frequency of materials favoring/disfavoring certain candidates, we observed a favoring of the PL candidate and disfavoring of the PCRM candidate.
- The publications *Moldova suverană* and *Nezavisimaia Moldova* openly campaigned for the PCRM candidate and disfavored the electoral competitor of the PL. Both newspapers had flaws regarding impartiality and balance of sources, as well as diversity of opinions. The language used, especially in opinion items, was often pejorative, and many articles were accompanied by faked images violating deontological norms.

6. Recommendations:

The mass media:

- Should use the monitoring reports as self-regulatory tools and should eliminate the deficiencies so that in their future activities they can:
 - Inform the voters correctly, impartially and fairly;
 - In the news, renounce estimating/commenting on the electoral events of the political parties or their representatives;
 - Eliminate all discrimination in applying the principle of diversity of opinions and in offering the right to respond;
 - Take into account the political convictions of various categories of the population ensuring balance and diversity of opinions but also freedom of expression;
 - Truthfully cover the events without distorting the sense of reality through editing and commentaries by observing the principle of information from several sources.

The Broadcast Coordinating Council:

- Should use the monitoring reports as factual background for assessing whether the monitored TV stations observed the right of Moldovan citizens to full, objective and truthful information, the right to free expression of opinions and the right to free communication of information through broadcast media.

- Should take notice of the defiant performance of the private TV station with national coverage NIT, which, according to the monitoring reports for the electoral campaigns of 2009, 2010, 2011, performed as a party TV station, flagrantly violating the provisions of the Broadcasting Code.
- Should impose on the TV station NIT sanctions proportional with the frequency and degree of violations, so as to end practices of flagrantly ignoring the authority of the body regulating the broadcast media.

NOTE: The four intermediary monitoring reports contain a total of nine case studies regarding professional defects at some monitored stations and newspapers. These reports can also be found on the website www.azi.md, in the segment Media Literacy.

*Coalition 2009 is a voluntary union of Moldovan non-governmental organizations that aims to contribute to ensuring free, fair, transparent and democratic elections of the Moldovan Parliament and continues the activities of promotion of free and fair elections as started by coalitions 2005 and 2007. At **present Coalition 2009 comprises over 70 non-government organizations.***

