



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

Report No. 2

2 May – 15 May 2011

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1. General data

1.1 Project goal: To monitor and inform the public about the performance of mass media during the electoral campaign including the access of electoral candidates to media outlets and whether they 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 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, 21:00) – private station, national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian;

NIT TV (Curier, 22:00) – private station, national coverage, broadcasts in Russian and Romanian;

EURO TV (Știri, 20:30) – private station, quasi-national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian;

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

N4 (Obiectiv, 19:30) – private station, regional coverage, broadcasts in Romanian.

Print media:

Adevărul (national daily, Romanian, 5 issues per week);

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

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

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

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

2. Methodological framework

The full content of the newspapers and a daily newscast on each station were monitored, for news with either a direct or an indirect electoral character. Each news item was subject 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 indication that the story is presented from a journalist's point of

view. A screening of 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 protected¹.

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 public has access 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 public 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 an 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 have been faked, as well as when news items are illustrated with images that have no connection with the accompanying information.

3. Monitoring data



Involvement in the electoral campaign

In the 14 monitored newscasts, broadcast from 2 May to 15 May, Prime TV included 68 items with direct or indirect electoral character. Materials with direct electoral character were included into the “Elections 2011” segment, broadcast at the beginning and end of the newscasts. Outside the electoral segment, news was broadcast about the attacks on the PD candidate for the position of Stauceni mayor and on the PLDM candidate for the position of Ialoveni councilor. The news about Mihai Godea, prime vice-president of the PLDM, leaving the party and joining the electoral competition as independent candidate for the position of the capital’s mayor was also broadcast outside the “Elections 2011” segment.

The electoral reports broadcast by Prime TV cover the majority of events and scandals within the campaign. Most often they refer to the actions of a single candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor (especially of the PD candidate, Valentina Buliga); some refer to confrontations between candidates (verbal attacks between Chirtoaca and Dodon), while others, less frequently, present a synthesis of the actions by several candidates (e.g., their presence at the events commemorating the victims of the Second World War, at Europe Day, etc.) or present their position on one topic (e.g. the promises of the PLDM, PL, PD and PCRM for the city of Balti, the news of 5 May, “The time has come to clean up the country’s northern capital”). It’s important to note that the slogan, “The time has come to clean up Chisinau” and “The time has come to clean up the country” is part of the advertizing campaign of the PDM broadcast on TV and published in print media.

Objectivity and impartiality

¹ Simona Ștefănescu, Riscurile comunicării mediatice în timpul conflictelor

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

In the period monitored, no significant deviations from deontological norms were registered at Prime TV, that could distort or truncate the information made available to the public and no problems related to separating opinions from facts were identified.

There has, however, been an inequality in the frequency with which electoral candidates appeared in the news items broadcast by this station. For example, in the period monitored, the PD candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Valentina Buliga, was present in 18 news items, and the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca, was the main actor of 17 news items. The other electoral candidates have been the subject of a lesser number of news items: Igor Dodon, PCRM – 13 news items; Sergiu Coropceanu, PSD – 8 items; Vitalia Pavlicenco, PNL – 3 items; Mihai Godea, independent candidate – 3 items; Radu Busila, PPCD – 2 items; Valeriu Plesca, The Third Force – 2 items.

Although Valentina Buliga and Dorin Chirtoaca appeared in an almost equal number of news items, their character was different. The news presenting the PD candidate entirely reflected her activity in the electoral campaign: Valentina Buliga's meeting with the employees of the glass factory (5 May), with the electorate from the Buiucani district (11 May), her presence at Europe Day (7 May), at the concert of Gheorghe Mustea (6 May), at Family Day (15 May), at the Night of the Museums (15 May), planting rose bushes in a park (7 May), at the flash mob, "We want light!" held during nighttime on an unlit street (12 May), etc.

On the other hand, the news referring to the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca, mainly focused on his reaction to an accusation/challenge from some other candidate in the electoral campaign. For example: the invitation by Igor Dodon to an electoral debate on Alba Iulia street (12 May), followed by Chirtoaca's invitations to Dodon to a debate at the water treatment plant (11 May) and a football match at the ruins of the former Republican Stadium (12 May). Other candidates, too, challenged Chirtoaca, creating news topics for Prime TV. For example, the request of Sergiu Coropceanu, PSD, addressed to Dorin Chirtoaca to remove the stone marking the place of a future monument on the Great National Assembly Square (7 May) or the accusations by a member of the "Force and Justice" movement of the alleged organization of a network by Dorin Chirtoaca for extorting money at the Mayor's Office (11 May), etc.

The news items referring to Dorin Chirtoaca's activity were presented in a (slightly) ironic manner. His meeting with scholars on 4 May contained the reporter's observation that "some participants evaded discussions having been overcome by sleep", and the videos with persons who "do not participate in the discussion" were accompanied by the sound of a lullaby. To be noted, that in the news item reflecting Valentina Buliga's meeting with scholars the following day the reporter does not mention the degree of the audience's involvement. The news item on 6 May "Lilies-of-the-valley from the mayor" underlined that Dorin Chirtoaca gave the war veterans flowers included in the Red Book, and was accompanied by a video of the mayor with flowers in his hands and a song about lily-of-the-valley in Russian, "Landyshi, landyshi". Another topic for a news item was the fact that Dorin Chirtoaca made a mistake, confusing H. Ford, the founder of the car brand of the same name with the former president of the USA. After checking, he apologized in front of journalists (4 May). Another news topic was Chirtoaca's ad hoc involvement in distributing tricolor ribbons, held by the "Democracy at home" NGO, which provoked the organizers' displeasure, for thus he caught the attention of mass media, overshadowing the organizers (9 May).

Materials reflecting Igor Dodon's electoral activity are, with some exceptions, also part of his electoral confrontations with counter candidates. For example, the news item presenting Igor Dodon's visit to a hospital and inclusion of displeasure expressed by people at the hospital: "You

want to get to the throne, and then you won't remember us! We know you by your eyes and words" (4 May), etc.

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

During the monitored period, Prime TV demonstrated observance of the diversity and balance of principle sources. Materials addressing controversial situations presented the positions and opinions of all the parties involved. It was especially evident in the counter-candidates' invitations to various confrontations – Chirtoaca inviting Dodon to a football match on the Republican Stadium (13 May), Dodon inviting Filat to a volleyball match (12 and 13 May), Dodon inviting Chirtoaca to a debate on Alba Iulia street (11 and 12 May), Chirtoaca inviting Dodon to a debate at the water treatment plant (11 and 12 May), Radu Busila, PPCD, inviting Chirtoaca to an electoral debate at the Tantareni garbage dump (13 May), etc. The news items presented all refuses and explanations provided by the invited persons.

In the context of ensuring diversity of opinions one thing becomes visible: most of the times the responses of the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon, were not prompt or in front of the cameras, but issued through press releases and displayed on the screen, with the candidate's image beside them, during news broadcasts.

Language and videos used

During the monitored period, the Prime TV station did not demonstrate exaggeration regarding the language acceptable for news. The titles/headlines were not ironic or complementary, for example "Electoral industry", "Electoral cleaning", "Elections at a needle's end" (7 May – a news item about "The Third Force" formation, which donated blood on the international day of the Red Cross), "Light rally" (11 May), "Electoral Olympics" (12 May), etc.

Except for the melodies accompanying two news items regarding the activity of Dorin Chirtoaca – the 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

From 2 May to 15 May 2011, NIT was actively involved in covering subjects with direct and indirect electoral character, broadcasting a total of 93 news items relevant to this monitoring. Of these, the vast majority referred to campaign activities of the representatives of the Party of Communists, both in Chisinau and outside. Thus, of the total of 93 news items, the PCRM was referred to in 52. These were materials about the participation of the PCRM leaders in various events, such as Vladimir Voronin's meetings with the representatives of international institutions, the Victory March (on 9 May), and the meetings with the electorate in a number of localities in the republic, where the accent was put on the alleged "dangers" resulting from the AIE's (Alliance for European Integration) actions. During these meetings, the background often displayed the symbols of the PCRM (hammer and sickle with the party's name). Also, several news items were released about the launch of the reports of the Civic Coalition Elections 2011 and of the initiative group "Media Monitoring", which, as a rule, reveal only the irregularities relating to the parties of the AIE. A number of news items with indirect electoral character referred to the communists notifying the Constitutional Court about the cancelling of policemen and army persons' privileges, preparing a

referendum regarding the maintenance of the current administrative-territorial status of the country, etc.

Increased attention was also given to the former prime vice-president of the PLDM, Mihai Godea, who declared his decision to independently run for the position of the capital's mayor, and then left the PLDM. Godea's decision was largely commented on NIT by politicians and political analysts.

Thus, in the period 2 May – 15 May NIT violated the Regulations of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) on Covering the Campaign for the General Local Elections of 5 June 2011 in the Moldovan media, according to which "Electoral candidates shall participate in the electoral campaign on an equal basis and shall be entitled to benefit from non-discriminatory treatment with regard to the granting of airtime and space (a.n.) in media outlets".

Impartiality and objectivity

Of the total of 93 news items relevant to this monitoring, 78 were biased. In most materials the information was presented from a single perspective. The PCRM was directly referred to in 52 news items, all in a positive or neutral context. Examples of materials favoring the PCRM were news items about the meeting of Igor Dodon with the employees of hospital No. 4 in Chisinau, where he presented "social solutions" (4 May), presentation of solutions for young people at meetings with students of the University of Physical Education and Sport (10 May), the Technical University (11 May) and the College of Medicine and Pharmaceutics (12 May).

From 3 May to 8 May, NIT broadcast the appeal to come on 9 May to the Arch of Triumph for participation in the Victory March, an action organized by the PCRM. On 9 and 10 May NIT provided a lot of space for the news about the Victory March. 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 Dorinel came instead of him, and he seemed not in the least interested in the 66th anniversary of the victory over fascism", while videos showed Dorin Chirtoaca talking with someone (9 May, news item No. 4). Meanwhile, the following were said about the AIE leaders (quoted after PCRM's MP Mark Tkaciuk): they "hurriedly retreated from the memorial, fearing the bright faces of simple people" (9 May, news item No. 5). These examples clearly demonstrate the bias of the TV station to various electoral candidates.

The other candidates, especially those from the AIE, appeared much less frequently and generally in a negative context regarding their involvement in various scandals. One example of this is the material of 3 May (news item No. 6), which said that "on Ancestors' Day, the PL and PLDM candidates quarreled in broad daylight about a historic monument subject to demolition". Another example is the recurrence to the declarations of the PD candidate, Valentina Buliga, about the PLDM recruiting PD members (4 May, news item No. 3), while the NIT reporter said that "Moldova became a scene for scandals and shows, where the governors fight at every corner".

About the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca, the presenter said the following: "new trolleybuses spoil his elections", because "during 4 working days, as many as 6 new trolleybuses went for repairs" (5 May, news item No. 8). Chirtoaca was also disfavored by the news item about the protest of microbus drivers (5 May). According to the author of the news item, "people say that mayor Dorin Chirtoaca makes decisions which multiply the capital's problems instead of solving them". In these instances, as in many other, Chirtoaca's opinion was not asked for.

To be mentioned, that in the case of PPCD candidates for the positions of Chisinau and Balti mayor, the character of these materials was either favoring or neutral.

NIT continued broadcasting materials about the problems faced by the residents of the capital and of other localities of the republic. The residents of some apartment buildings on Lech Kaczynski Street, Chisinau, enjoyed special attention. NIT journalists referred to their problem (people say that a construction enterprise deprived them of a playground, planning a supermarket in its place) in several newscasts broadcast from 2 to 15 May. They also had meetings with PCRM candidates for the positions of mayor and councilors. Igor Dodon appeared as a positive hero, who can solve the problems of these people, while Chirtoaca was said to have visited them and “gave sweets and bananas to children” (13 May), not solving the problem.

It’s important to note that NIT newscasts were saturated with reporters’ comments, whose opinions were presented as facts. In the news item regarding the withdrawal of the PLDM candidate, Victor Bodi, from the electoral race (6 May), the reporter did not separate facts from opinion, claiming that “PLDM was put to the wall”, “the decision shocked the public opinion”, “the news delighted Dorin Chirtoaca. He dreams about becoming mayor with 60% of votes.”, “Chirtoaca’s conclusion is far from reality”.

Another example of the blurring of fact and opinion was the news item No. 3 in the newscast of 4 May. The author declared, among other things, that “Moldova became a scene for scandals and shows...”, “all these create serious tensions in society”.

Thus, there is a flagrant violation of Art.7 (b) of the Broadcast Code according to which “in order to ensure in the broadcasters’ informative programs the principles of social-political balance, fairness and objectivity, they shall post each news item in such way as to not distort the sense of reality through editing tricks, commentaries, manner of formulation or headlines.”

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

The same Art.7 (c) of the Broadcast Code stipulates that in case of subjects referring to situations of conflict, the principle of information from a number of sources should be followed. Of the 53 controversial pieces, containing accusations and requiring a second opinion (that of the parties involved), the majority (45 pieces) lacked the second opinion, presenting one side, usually that of the PCRM representatives.

In this period, again, NIT broadcast news items about the so-called administrative-territorial reform, which would result, according to the PCRM, in the liquidation of mayor’s offices, schools, etc. NIT made reports from several localities, such as Vanatori, Nisporeni (3 May, news item No. 10), Cigirleni village, Ialoveni raion (5 May, item No. 6), and the city of Leova (12 May, item No. 5). By the manner in which these news items were presented NIT continues with false messages, the facts being presented as already realized, and journalists claim that: “the village will be left to its fate”, the residents “will have to go abroad, their dream of a new kindergarten can disappear 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 right to reply to AIE representatives. The opinions of experts were also absent. And on 5 June, in the news item about the contest placed with the Constitutional Court by the PCRM (item No.3), according to the PCRM’s MP Sergiu Sarbu “we will dive even deeper into this criminal anarchy”. Sarbu was quoted three times, and the accused parties were not asked to state

their opinions. The author of the materials only summarized that “AIE actions were qualified by analysts and opposition...”, without including any analyst’s statement into the material.

Other examples of misbalanced materials are news items about the accusations of Mihai Godea against the AIE (which “for 2 years hasn’t managed to do a thing in this country”, “AIE grew old and engaged in evil”). Also, this material resumes the declaration of Alexandru Tanase for a radio station, taken out of context, about “the national leader, a thief filling his pockets” (3 May). Other examples in this context are the PCRM accusations against AIE. In the newscast on 3 May, the PCRM secretary, Iurie Muntean, said that AIE “is an artificial, lying, shameful construction” (item No. 3). In another material on 3 May (item No.7), Vladimir Vitiuc (PCRM) said that “the parties of the Alliance for Europe gave a list of promises, of bags with food, a half-liter of vodka and bills of 100 lei”. In all these instances the right to reply of the parties involved was not observed.

In conclusion, the majority of the materials broadcast by NIT failed to ensure diversity of opinions. The journalists of this station usually quote only one source or offer information from one perspective only.

Language and videos used

In criticizing materials with direct or indirect electoral character regarding the candidates of parliamentary parties other than the PCRM, NIT in this period of monitoring again used caricatures and collages. In 7 materials the images used were in violation of deontological standards. For example, in several news items referring to some members of the PLDM 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 formation – Alexandru Tanase, Fiodor Ghelici, Calin Vieru, Vitalie Nagacevski and Mihai Godea). In other collages, Dorin Chirtoaca was presented wearing the suit of a mechanic or a training suit.

On 3 May, in the news item about the conflict between Dorin Chirtoaca and Victor Bodiu, while the presenter was reading the lead, an artistic image appeared, where the two candidates were wearing boxing gloves, and the material also included videos of two children quarreling, dogs and cats fighting, howling, the author saying that “this quarrel was a pamphlet subject for numerous bloggers. They were associated with babies that cannot share toys or with fighting animals”.

Also, in materials about some electoral candidates archive images were used aimed at discrediting them. An example in this regard is the news item in which the NIT reporter made a “summary” of the current mayor’s first mandate (11 May). In the author’s opinion, “after 5 June, the Dorin Chirtoaca phenomenon will be long remembered by the people of Chisinau”; “after the first year of his mandate, few saw him as a manager”, and all the 10 vox pops included in the material that disfavored Chirtoaca (see also case study No. 1).

Thus, there was again a violation of the Broadcast Code, which does not allow “distorting the sense of reality by editing tricks, commentaries, and manner of formulation or headlines.”



Involvement in the electoral campaign

In the 10 newscasts during the monitored period, the Euro TV station broadcast 32 materials referring to the electoral campaign directly or indirectly. The news items and reports mainly reported on the progress of the electoral campaign, the statements made by electoral candidates and the reaction of the parties involved, the launch of candidates and their electoral programs, the participation of candidates for the position of Chisinau general mayor at some public events at the national or city level, the actions organized by electoral candidates and their supporters. It also covered some of the daily problems of the city, such as extending the trolleybus routes, seizure of the accounts of SA “Termocom”, provision of water supply to Chisinau suburbs, etc. The TV station started the “Elections 2011” segment, which makes presentations directly referring to the progress of the electoral campaign, the activity of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), etc. However, materials directly referring to the electoral campaign were repeatedly broadcast outside this segment.

Impartiality and objectivity

All the public electoral events held during the monitored period were covered by the Euro TV station fairly, and the news broadcast by the station did not display deontological deviations that could distort the message of electoral candidates. Also, no problems were identified regarding the separation of opinions from facts.

At the same time, the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau general mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca, was favored by being more frequently broadcast compared with other electoral candidates. Thus, during the monitored period, D. Chirtoaca appeared 12 times in Euro TV newscasts with statements, in videos or materials referring to him directly and in a positive or neutral context. Other candidates appeared much less frequently, and mostly in a neutral context – I. Dodon/PCRM (five appearances), V. Buliga/PDM and S. Coropcean/PSD (two appearances each), R. Busila/PPCD, M. Severovan/independent, D. Marchitan/Third Force (one appearance each). In some newscasts, the PL candidate appeared several times. For example, in the newscast of 3 May, the current mayor appeared in three items (1. Capital without mayor – Chirtoaca begins the electoral campaign, holds an optimistic speech and receives “stormy” applause from colleagues; 2. Seizure of SA “Termocom” assets – Chirtoaca’s statement, making reference to the catastrophic situation of the company at the moment when he took the mandate of general mayor and its improvement over the last years; 3. Trolleybus 22 extends its route – favorable news for city authorities, videos show D. Chirtoaca).

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

During the reported period, Euro TV observed in all cases the principle of diversity and balance of sources, including in the six more or less controversial subjects/situations.

Language and videos used

From 2 May to 15 May no cases were registered of use of discriminatory language against electoral candidates, or videos capable of deforming the realities and/or tricked; the Euro TV journalists observed ethical and professional standards in the field.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

Over the last 14 days of monitoring the Jurnal TV station showed that it is still actively involved in the electoral campaign, providing an important coverage of a number of political events directly or tangentially relating to the electoral competition.

During the mentioned period, Jurnal TV broadcast 49 materials depicting various political actors, of which 25 subjects were included in the “Local Elections 2011” segment. Most of them refer to the direct electoral competition: Dorin Chirtoaca and Victor Bodiu accusing each other at the reconstruction site of a building; Sergiu Mocanu accusing Mihai Godea of being Vlad Plahotniuc’s man; Dorin Chirtoaca accusing communists of dirty campaigning; Igor Dodon accusing Dorin Chirtoaca of inefficiency, etc.

Another topic in Jurnal TV newscasts, first as one with indirect electoral character, later appearing in the segment dedicated to the electoral campaign, refers to Mihai Godea leaving the PLDM and launching his electoral campaign for the position of the capital’s mayor. Godea appeared in 15 materials, either as subject or source for the reactions of other candidates or politicians.

Impartiality and objectivity

During the monitoring period we cannot yet cite a direct favoring or disfavoring of one or another electoral candidate. However, certain findings suggest a conclusion regarding the performance of this TV station during the campaign: no materials with the presence of the Democrat Party’s candidate for the position of the capital’s general mayor, five materials with the presence of the PCRM (of which two were reactions to accusations against this party’s electoral competitor). On the other hand, the campaigning and other kind of activities of the PL and the PLDM enjoyed an extended neutral or favorable coverage in the monitored newscasts (PL – 12 items, PLDM – 9 items). Six neutral items also depicted the leaders of the Democratic Party with reactions to the topic of the day or accusations against them during this period (Mihai Godea leaving the PLDM, accusations from Vlad Filat or from Godea). The other political formations were absolutely absent, except for the electoral block “The Third Force” and the Antimafia Movement, which appeared in one item each.

Of the 49 monitored news items as subjects with direct or implied electoral character, 2 were broadcast with objectivity problems. The first case is a subject from the newscast of 6 May, covering the submission of financial reports from the campaign to the Central Electoral Commission. In the lead the authors said: “Lack of punctuality, a tradition observed in the electoral campaign in our country as well”. The news continued with listing the parties that received warning from the CEC for being late with submitting financial reports. None of the mentioned formations (the Socialist Party of Moldova, the Party Our Home Moldova, the Social Democrat Party of Moldova and the Social-Political Movement Ravnopravie) (Equality) brought explanations regarding the presenters’ “findings”.

Another item addressing the electoral themes at a rather pamphlet level was the report of 9 May speaking about the electoral boards of some candidates, which had humorous juxtapositions by being placed next to other advertizing boards. The presenters claimed that the Jurnal TV team had caught some funny images and offered to viewers a report with music and many amusing combinations of electoral messages and street advertizing.

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

Jurnal TV journalists mostly observe diversity of opinions and balance of sources. Nevertheless, every eighth news item (6 out of 49) broadcast by Jurnal TV during the monitored period had

problems with diversity of opinions. Such problems were the lack of reactions from political actors accused by their electoral rivals or items where they appeared in a disfavoring light as a result of broadcasting official information (being late with submitting financial reports to CEC, candidates' wealth statements).

The tendency to fairness shown by the Jurnal TV journalists during the campaign is also shown by the manner in which they addressed controversial topics with accusations against electoral candidates. Only one of the 12 materials lacked space for a reply. That was the item of 6 May, where Sergiu Mocanu, the leader of Antimafia Movement, brought harsh accusations against Mihai Godea, candidate for the position of the general mayor, against prime vice-president of the Parliament Vlad Plahotniuc, and the State Enterprise Registru and the Anticorruption Center. He accused Godea of falsifying signatures and Plahotniuc of forming a new party. None of the accused parties replied, and the journalists failed to even mention whether they tried or not to contact them. The item was about one minute long and included only a synchrony with Mocanu's position.

In order to avoid accusations against concrete persons and institutions, Jurnal TV avoided mentioning their names. It happened in several reports referring to local authorities, which were not, however, mentioned in materials. For example, an item of 8 May spoke about the residents of an apartment building in Orhei, who "for six years already are forced to put up with the unbearable smell and the ugly landscape created by a garbage dump. The authorities legalized a dump, and the dumpsters were put in front of the Civil Status Office". It is not known what local authorities are implied by this item, although it is clear that the authors refer to the city's mayor's office. Another item covered the so-called war of minibuses in the capital, where again accusations were brought against "authorities", but since the reporters did not mention which authorities, they did not quote a second source. The second source was also absent when one of the interlocutors mentioned that the guilty one for provoking the minibus drivers' revolt is a member of the Liberal Party. The only reaction was that of a driver, who, however, failed to create a balance of sources in this report.

Language and videos used

During the two weeks of monitoring, the journalists demonstrated several attempts to attract the public's attention by tricks, both video and verbal. The first category includes the report of 9 May, mentioned above, containing montage videos with various electoral advertisements of candidates for the position of the capital's mayor, which, combined with commercial advertizing, tried for a humorous effect <http://jurnaltv.md/ro/news/-strategii-electorale-255766/#>. The material was broadcast with a background of laughter sounds at the moments when the amusing combination between the electoral and commercial advertizing appeared on the screen (Bugs Bunny cartoons – Igor Dodon; Discount Night – It is time to clean up the capital with Valentina Buliga; Victor Bodiu – the "Lie to Me" TV show, etc.).

The presenters' attempts at greater creative expression often create confusion, but also create opinions that can disfavor certain electoral candidates. It's important to note here the journalists' inspiration during the newscast of 4 May. "Divorce at daggers. Mihai Godea left the PLDM. The ex-liberal-democrat makes interesting disclosures", "Chirtoaca – dictator? It happens. Electoral tricks happen between party members, too. At the last session of the Chisinau City Council Dorin Chirtoaca was named dictator", "Dana Marchitan "sings" in force. A novice in politics, Marchitan made a mistake from the start", "City councilors made a balance of the four years of activity. As expected, two camps, two conclusions".

The same refers to the quotations used for the titles of some news items. The mutual accusations of PL and PLDM candidates were presented as “Babies... Chirtoaca and Bodiuc”, the accusations of Mihai Godea against the three Vlads in the Moldovan politics went under the heading “Godea: little Vlads hold the monopoly”, the meeting of the PLDM with the electorate was accompanied by the quotation “I promise all the best”, and Vlad Plahotniuc’s reaction to Vlad Filat’s accusations – “Pretends it’s raining”, etc.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the period of 2 May – 15 May 2011, the N4 TV station broadcast a total of 8 newscasts, where it included 46 items with direct or indirect electoral character. On 2 and 9 May the station did not broadcast newscasts. The vast majority of materials informed either about media events organized by some candidates or about the reactions of counter-candidates to certain actions. Thus, the withdrawal of PLDM’s prime vice-president, Mihai Godea, from the party and his decision to run independently for Chisinau Mayor’s Office was one of the topics pursued by N4 for several days. This topic was followed by the one about the PLDM’s decision to withdraw its candidate (Victor Bodiuc) from the electoral race for Chisinau Mayor’s Office and the announcement that the party will support the PL candidate. Later, the number of news items with direct electoral character decreased, which determined the reduction of the newscasts’ volume on some days (e.g., the newscast of 10 May was almost twice shorter than those in previous days).

N4 had few materials about the activity of the CEC and those of civic education. The electoral reports were not separated into a special segment. They were included into newscasts depending on the importance of the event. At the same time, N4 had a number of reports with indirect electoral character, such as the one regarding the decision to offer wheat from the state reserves to several raions, the decision to allot MDL 250 million for payment of subsidies to farmers, the visit to Moldova by two UN ambassadors in the context of marking the day of traffic security at the invitation of Victor Bodiuc, the PCRM notifying the Constitutional Court about a number of legislative acts adopted by the Parliament and attacked by the opposition, greetings from some candidates on the occasion of the Press Freedom Day, as well as several news items with the presence of Prime Minister Filat (his visit to Brussels, loans from the IMF, the Prime Minister’s promises to increase salaries for doctors, made at a meeting in Drochia, etc.). The materials in which Vlad Filat appeared as Prime Minister were qualified as materials with electoral character, especially taking into account that the N4 newscasts usually end with the Electoral Advertising segment, in which the first video is that of the PLDM and presents Filat against a background of the party’s symbols and color. This fact can influence the viewers’ perception, who could attribute to the party all the achievements of Vlad Filat as Prime Minister.

Impartiality and objectivity

The monitored period can be divided into 2 stages: before and after the withdrawal of Victor Bodiuc from the electoral race. In the first stage we noticed a favoring of the PLDM’s electoral competitor, which is evident by the large number of materials referring to him, as well as to Vlad Filat. Thus, N4 included, from 3 to 5 May, 10 news items with Bodiuc and Filat. The tendency of favoring the candidate of the Liberal Democrat Party of Moldova was also supported by topic selection.

Of the 46 relevant news items, 13 had problems with objectivity and impartiality. One of them referred to the electoral meeting of the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon, at a city hospital, in which the inserts were selected so as to show the candidate in a disfavoring light. Among other news items depicting the more or less subjective character were the ones about Victor Bodiu's appeals to fairness in the campaign, when the entire screen was displaying the PLDM symbols; news items about Vlad Filat going to Brussels, from where he "will return with a present"; the arrival of UN ambassadors to Chisinau at Bodiu's invitation. An example of evident bias is the news item about the top 50 most influential politicians, presented at a press conference. The reporter avoided naming the top three (Dorin Chirtoaca, n.n.), but announced that Victor Bodiu made a huge leap, coming very close to top 10, which demonstrates the station's bias. Another topic with the same problems was the one of the greetings addressed to the media on the World Press Freedom Day, when Victor Bodiu appeared against the background of PLDM symbols and congratulated the journalists. It was mentioned that Chirtoaca and Lupu addressed congratulations to the media, too, by they were not given voice on screen.

Some cases were registered when the reporter failed to separate facts from opinion. Examples in this sense are: the news item in the newscast of 12 May about the communists in Parliament requesting isolation of Mihai Ghimpu for his alleged declaration that the participants in the march on 9 May were paid by the PCRM. "Lupu came into Ghimpu's defense," the reporter announced, although the insert that followed showed that Marian Lupu referred to something different. "Godea wants to be mayor," the reporter stated at the beginning of the news item about Mihai Godea's announcement about joining the campaign as independent candidate, allowing his own attitude towards the subject to be seen (3 May). Slightly ironic expressions, such as "complaints don't stop here", "PCRM's notifications make queues", "trolleybuses pompously launched by Chirtoaca", etc. denote a slight bias of the reporter to subjects.

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

Thirteen news items out of the 46 broadcast by the N4 TV station during the monitored period had problems with diversity of opinions. In most cases the issue was the lack of a source coming with explanations regarding certain topics. Here we can mention the topics about the Government's decision to lend wheat from the state reserve to several raions (3 May), the last session at the Mayor's Office with Chirtoaca's participation as mayor, the PCRM's notifications regarding the legislative acts adopted by AIE's MPs, the PSD's announcement about granting EUR 1 million to Zdob si Zdub if they won the Eurovision, Filat's visit to Brussels, where he obtained liberalization of trade with the EU, etc. In these cases the presented information required balancing by details provided by experts, commentators or political analysts, so that the perspective offered to viewers could help them to better understand the debated topic. The differential approach limits the public's access to a multitude of ideas, even if they are not directly related to the electoral campaign, favoring a single candidate.

From 2 May to 15 May the N4 TV station broadcast a number of controversial pieces – 12, which contained accusations against electoral candidates. To be mentioned that in the vast majority of controversial news items N4 provided the right to reply to opponents. However, in some cases news items remained unbalanced, without presenting the accused party. Thus, materials regarding the PCRM's contestations with the Constitutional Court as a rule introduced the opinions of PCRM representatives, but did not include opinions of those who adopted the laws or at least of experts, who would provide details and explanations.

The material about Victor Bodiu's withdrawal from the campaign was commented by partners from AIE and by the opposition. However, there were no experts' opinions, which would show a neutral perspective on possible scenarios following the fact.

In some cases authors used expressions, such as "some voices", to refer to sources (in the news item about the claims that Godea met Vlad Plahotniuc in Vienna and then decided to leave the party). Other expressions used in newscasts were of the type "he did not say whether he will or not accept the invitation", in the news item about Radu Busila's invitation to Filat to debate at the Tantareni garbage dump.

Language and videos used

During the monitored period, the N4 materials depicted videos without deviations from ethical and deontological standards. The language used was acceptable, reporters did not use labels attributed to some electoral candidates. These findings also refer to elements of montage, which observed ethical and professional standards.

PRINT MEDIA



Involvement in the electoral campaign

In the reported period, the daily *Adevărul* had a total of 26 items with direct or indirect electoral character. They referred to the withdrawal from the former PLDM prime vice-president Mihai Godea, who announced joining the campaign as an independent candidate for the position of the capital's mayor; to Dorin Chirtoaca launching his campaign as the PL candidate; to the difficulties faced during registration by the candidates in Transnistria; to the registration of electoral competitors in Chisinau and Balti; to the OSCE's monitoring of the elections. Also, it wrote about a protest organized in front of the parliament by several dozen people with disabilities demanding to be provided with conditions for voting on 5 June; and about the legislative initiative regarding the ban on electoral gifts, etc.

The news items with indirect electoral content included those about the "First Home" program, the protest against the demolition of some historic monuments in Chisinau, the protest of some microbus drivers, etc.

From 2 to 15 May *Adevărul* also published 5 items in the "Electoral advertising 2011" segment, which were labeled accordingly.

Impartiality and objectivity

The vast majority of the articles published in *Adevărul* were objective and impartial. However, there were items that slightly disfavored some electoral competitors or their political parties. The PL candidate and current mayor of the capital, Dorin Chirtoaca, was disfavored in 5 articles, while the PCRM was disfavored in 3 articles (in the "Dossier" segment). For example, the article with the heading, "The 'First Home' program is difficult to access" (published on 4 May, page 7), and the

sub-heading, “Stagnation. Mortgages in the capital advance at snail speed. Only 3 families received bank loans, six months after the start of the project,” disadvantaged the current mayor of the capital and PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca. Another example of disfavoring the PL candidate is the article, “Monuments under Threat” (6 May, page 7). The lead said the following: “The buildings of national value are disappearing even though the general mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca, repeatedly promised to protect them”. Also, it said that “the wave of destruction continues” (about 40 buildings were demolished in the past 4 years). Dorin Chirtoaca’s opinion is unavailable.

Another item (a commentary, published on 4 May, page 6), entitled “Elections, communism and political irresponsibility”, disfavored the PCRM, because the author wrote the following: “Today, the current PCRM is inspired by the criminal past of the soviet times (the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – our note)” or “The PCRM declares the possible and impossible, as if it was the right thing to do. A recent apologia of Lenin is yet another proof of this party’s irresponsibility.” This case is one of transferring of a negative image.

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

The majority of materials in *Adevărul* observed the principle of fairness and diversity of opinions. Only one controversial item lacked the opinion of a party involved (6 May, page 7, “Monuments under Threat”).

Language and images used

The materials in *Adevărul* are written with observance of deontological norms and do not contain pejorative or licentious expressions addressing electoral competitors. All of the items that fall within this monitoring used correct language, and the images were informative, without deviating from ethical standards.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

Timpul de dimineață published 47 articles during the monitored period with direct or indirect electoral character, including marked electoral advertising. A large portion of them were opinion materials (14 editorials and commentaries) and marked electoral advertising (11 in total). It is important to note that the newspaper had three materials that can be categorized as hidden advertising.

Impartiality and objectivity

The majority of informative materials with direct and indirect electoral character were impartial and objective. However, some materials demonstrated a certain amount subjectiveness. The article published on 6 May under the title, “Robbery of the decade in Ungheni” showed the author’s biased attitude, evident especially in some of the expressions used. For example, the following expressions clearly reveal the author’s negative attitude towards the subjects of the material: “Anatolie Popusoi – a fierce supporter of communists”, “Three Filimons complicate things”, “Until this day

specialists haven't been able to see by what miracle", "Gheorghe Filimon's defective activity during all these years was covered by the communist clan that came to power in 2001", "The two might escape scot-free", "Alexei Filimon can fully enjoy his time in the electoral campaign to get ready to stay four more years in the mayor's chair". In addition, although the author tried to observe presumption of innocence by using the conditional might, there were some lapses – "Here is a case in which members of a family brought damages of millions to the village, alienated by parts an institution created and maintained from public money", "The current administration of the State Enterprise "Silva-Centru" is still fighting in court with Gheorghe Filimon's brother, Alexei, the mayor of the Tescureni village, Ungheni raion. He had concluded several illegal contracts with his brother, alienating a large part of the enterprise's assets", the reporter said, presenting the information as a realized fact. Yet, while the court issued no decision regarding the culpability of the persons in question, the reporter should have refrained from such conclusions.

The majority of opinion materials were to a certain degree disfavoring of the PLDM and/or the PCRM. The PD candidate twice appeared in materials categorized as masked advertising.

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

Timpul de dimineață continued promoting diversity of opinions through segments in which various commentators and average people share ideas about the electoral campaign. For example, on 5 May, there a vox populi on the problem of illumination in Chisinau. Items appeared in the segment "One thousand and one nights of Chisinau". An item entitled "Thirst for power endangered AIE" presented a reader's letter referring to withdrawals from the PLDM that contained a message to the current administration to save and maintain democracy in Moldova. Besides these opinion materials of the public at large, *Timpul de dimineață* published commentaries with direct or indirect electoral character referring to various electoral competitors.

In three of the five controversial materials, only one party in conflict was presented. Thus, the material in the investigations segment entitled, "Robbery of the decade in Ungheni, part II" (13 May), brought accusations of alienation of large amounts of money from a public institution, claiming that the fraudulent scheme also included a current candidate for the position of mayor in the village of Tescureni, Ungheni district . Several sources were quoted, but the opinion of the accused was unavailable, as was the information of whether the reporter had tried to contact them. It should be noted that in the first part of the investigation (6 May), the author mentioned that the persons involved had refused to answer questions; still, considering the possibility that some readers might not have read the issue the week before, it was necessary to indicate the position of the accused individuals. The material "Hooliganism in full electoral campaign", 6 May, page 19, failed to provide the right to reply to the individuals accused of attacks during the campaign. Although the data were taken from the Promolex report, the opinion of those involved should have been presented. The material entitled, "Mihai Godea: 'Power corrupts, It's a rule' ", presented Godea's opinion about withdrawal from the PLDM, but also referred to "Filat's change", corrupted by power. The item presented the opinions of two political analysts, but Filat's opinion or that of other PLDM representatives regarding the indirect accusations of corruption and Godea's actions were unavailable (5 May, page 5).

Two cases of non-marked or hidden advertising have been found: the item "Valentina Buliga congratulated medical assistants on their professional day", which contained a greeting adapted from a PD release (13 May, page 19), and "Flash mob for capital's illumination", describing how the members of the PD's youth organization came out with candles into streets in order to draw the the

local public administration's attention to "the lack of lighting in the capital's streets and districts", the action was attended by Valentina Buliga, who expressed some of her priorities (page 10). Both materials included Valentina Buliga's photographs. Another item, this time advertising in favor of Dorin Chirtoaca, is the interview of PL's vice-president Veaceslav Untila, with the following text emphasized in the middle: *Dorin Chirtoaca has the best chances of becoming the capital's mayor for the second consecutive term.*

Language and images used

The language of electoral news in the newspaper *Timpul de dimineață* was correct, while that of the commentaries was sometimes slightly ironic. However, it did not exaggerate with labeling or accusations against candidates.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

The publication *Moldova Suverană* during the monitored period had 28 materials with direct or tangential reference to the electoral campaign, including marked electoral advertising. Most of them were opinion articles regarding events or information identified by the publication's journalists. All of them contained severe criticism of the ruling coalition or texts favoring the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova and its candidate for the position of the capital's general mayor. Events from the period 2-15 May were also selected according to a principle understood only by the editorial team, but considering the presence of some political actors in items, the conclusion is that the publication only reports events directly relating to the activity of the PCRM and criticizing the government.

It is difficult to determine the topics covered by this publication during the monitored period given the fact that the texts were speculations rather than sources of information for readers about the events that took place. Nevertheless, we can identify some topics covering reality, among which the celebration of 9 May; the launch of the electoral campaign for Igor Dodon, PCRM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor; Vladimir Voronin's meeting with a European high official; and presentation of the report on monitoring the electoral campaign by the coalition "Civic Control – Elections 2011".

Impartiality and objectivity

Of the 28 materials published during the monitored period, which directly or indirectly refer to the electoral campaign, nine articles directly favored Igor Dodon, the PCRM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor. The Liberal Party and the Liberal Democratic Party and their candidates for the Mayor's Office were present in 14 items (7 and 7, respectively). All of these were evidently negative and acid towards Dorin Chirtoaca and Victor Bodiu and the formations represented by them.

The report from the events commemorating the victims of the Second World War was presented with a number of photographs grouped under the heading "Victory Day – the day of the majority of the population's solidarity with the PCRM". In addition to this biased heading that turned the

subject from commemoration to electoral campaign, images depicted PCRM leaders and participants in the solidarity march which, according to the anonymous author, was “a protest of the people against the current inhumane and antipopular government”.

Beyond the correct and balanced language used when presenting the actions of the Party of Communists and of its candidate for Chisinau Mayor’s Office, articles about the leaders of the Alliance for European Integration abound in negative expressions and attitudes, offensive comparisons and labels.

In the editorial of 6 May, “Filat’s liberal-democratic business became food for swine. Oak – cigarette for tobacco of political contraband”, Mihai Contiu accused Vlad Filat of reducing politics to the level of practice in tobacco contraband, and the PLDM became his exclusive property. The author compared the party with a withering oak, and party members became loyal servants. Another editorial, signed by Tudor Chiriac on 11 May, spoke about the barbaric denial by scientists of Moldovans and the Moldovan language. Although no direct referral was made to the leaders of the governing alliance, the text was accompanied by a tricked photograph of Vlad Filat and Dorin Chirtoaca. These combinations of image and text referring to certain conclusions and speculations are not rare in the newspaper.

In the article “Chisinau – Moldovan capital, not Romanian”, Nicolae Stoica said that the only party based on a program of strengthening the statehood is the Party of Communists. He made the conclusion that the indifference of some citizens helped Dorin Chirtoaca win the mayor’s chair and “the liberal-totalitarian anticommunism entails the Romanization of Basarabia”, which will be a detriment to national minorities. The liberal leader did not escape criticism in another article, “Mihai Bedlam Ghimpu. God save you from a fool with a well-rested brain”, written by Mihai Contiu and published in the issue of 13 May. The journalist harshly criticizes Ghimpu’s statement that the PCRM had paid the 60,000 participants in the march of 9 May. He considers this claim an insult to all veterans. To be more convincing, the article was accompanied by an altered photograph in which Mihai Ghimpu was shown in a shirt from a psychiatric hospital.

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

All the items containing accusations against electoral competitors (most often PL and PLDM) lacked those parties’ positions. For example, an article of 6 May contained a heading in large lettering “Is Dorin Chirtoaca a fanatic and killer of the capital’s roads?”. Its author, Teofil Kamiski, a lawyer, claimed that Dorin Chirtoaca had hit a person at a pedestrian crossing at Mircea cel Batran Boulevard on 22 April 2011. According to him, Chirtoaca had paid the doctors, who covered the case up and stated that the person had fallen from a height and broken his leg. These accusations against the candidate of the Liberal Party for the position of the capital’s mayor were not accompanied by the explanations of doctors, the police, the victim and the person accused of traumatizing a pedestrian. This fact is a violation of all principles governing the writing of such articles.

On 11 May we learn from *Moldova Suverană* that “Filat’s external affairs find on the world map positions for ambassadors even to moon”. The author Mihai Contiu, without references to any source, spoke allegorically about expenses from the state budget for costly visits abroad, which he finds “lacking opportuneness”. According to him, such visits included that of Victor Bodiu to Singapore, accompanied by the “newly appointed Minister of Justice, Oleg Efrim, as well as the fresh addition, Loreta Handrabura”. Contiu also reminded of the bilateral agreement signed by Iurie

Leanca at New York with the state of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where a liberal-democrat MP will be sent as ambassador. None of these quoted official sources or cited references, which raises questions about this as “news”.

Language and images used

The language used in most articles in *Moldova Suverană* abounds in expressions with a pejorative tint, insinuations and colloquial words. On 13 May, in the article “Mihai Bedlam Ghimpu. God save you from a fool with a well-rested brain”, the author Mihai Contiu qualified the declarations of the liberal leader using suburban language (“His Romanian diarrhea, the blunder of defective thinking”). The author’s linguistic effervescence can be seen in other articles, too, where he labels political actors as “killer”, “party-business”, “morgue of intellectuals” (“Filat forced by the Occident and by Basescu to bow to Chirtoaca”, 12 May). The line of labels continued in the article “Filat’s external affairs find on the world map positions for ambassadors even to Moon” of 11 May, where the Moldovan diplomacy was labeled as “clients of Filat’s policy, Jora Filat’s diplomats, diplomatic businesses, etc.”

Most of the time, the editorials and opinion articles were accompanied by altered photos aimed at emphasizing the things unwritten in the material. The 11 May article about diplomacy included a montage showing the Foreign and European Integration Minister, Iurie Leanca and the PLDM’s MP Ion Butmalai half-naked on a beach in the company of a black woman. On 6 May, in the article “Filat’s liberal-democratic business became food for swine. Oak – cigarette for tobacco of political contraband”, Victor Bodiu appeared in a photograph wearing a green military suit and explaining something to Vlad Filat. The title of the image comes from a different news item and is understood only by those in the know: “They started out as democrats and finished as press killers!”

Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 2 to 15 May the newspaper *Nezavisimaia Moldova* published 24 articles with direct and indirect electoral content. Among the main topics it covered were those concerning the 9 May celebration, official speeches of the PCRM leaders, the electoral campaign of Igor Dodon, the withdrawal of Mihai Godea from the PLDM and joining the electoral competition as an independent candidate “as a proof of the collapse of the Alliance for European Integration”. Also, a part of the materials explained the importance for the communists’ candidate to win the capital’s mayor’s office and the dangers of voting for Dorin Chirtoaca. With a single exception, the items with clear electoral content were not accompanied by the specification “Paid from the electoral funds”.

Impartiality and objectivity

On 4 May the newspaper provided wide space for reports about the PCRM congress with the participation of the party’s candidates for the local 5 June elections, who, according to the heading of a report from the spot, “go to power, not for its sake”. Among the articles was the speech of Vladimir Voronin, PCRM president, 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 the situation when 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.

During the monitored period, the newspaper covered the electoral campaign of Igor Dodon, PCRM candidate for the capital's mayor from a positive perspective. Dodon was directly favored in 8 articles, including: *"Igor Dodon – the right choice for Chisinau!"* (5 May, Igor Dodon presented his social program for Chisinau); *"Dirty methods proved their weakness"* (6 May, the destruction of an Igor Dodon's advertisement board); *"For the State or against the State"* (6 May, a comparison between candidates Dorin Chirtoaca and Igor Dodon, with a firm pro-Dodon position); *"Buried in the wood, to the north of the manor"* (11 May, Igor Dodon's participation at the burial of the remnants of some Second World War soldiers at Serpeni village); etc.

Only Dorin Chirtoaca can compete with Igor Dodon in the number of materials. During the monitored period, he was the direct or indirect subject of seven articles. Unlike his communist rival, Chirtoaca was disfavored in all materials. For example, on 6 May the newspaper published an article about the suspicious activities of the former mayor, where he was accused of stealing from the city's budget: *"The capital's budget at the Chirtoaca-Ghimpu clan's command"*. In another item, Chirtoaca appeared as a vampire promoting the anticommunist hysteria (13 May, *"Ideological vampire"*). Many times the PL candidate for the position of general mayor was mentioned as an *apropos*, and was attributed facts that might have no connection with him. Such is the article *"Who suggests choosing between Antonescu and Soltys?"* (11 May), which referred to a street board with the question "Who is your hero? Ion Antonescu or Ion Soltys?". The article's anonymous author made it understood that the author of the question was Chirtoaca. Similar were the materials *"Ghimpu's blasphemous statements were an insult to all the participants of the Victory March"* (12 May), which among other things said that Ghimpu's fascist hysteria is characteristic of Chirtoaca as well; or *"We will pay the price"* (13 May), which answered some accusations from Mihai Ghimpu, but also mentioned his nephew, Dorin Chirtoaca. The line of accusations against the PL candidate continued in the letters received from readers and inserted into the segment *"When we are united, we are invincible"* (13 May). After all these accusations against Dorin Chirtoaca, the articles *"What are the criteria for choosing mayor for Chisinau?"* (12 May) and *"For the State or against the State"* (6 May) repeated the advantages of the vote for Dodon and the disadvantages of the vote for Chirtoaca.

Against this background of Chirtoaca-Dodon dichotomy, the other candidates for the position of the capital's general mayor were nearly invisible in *Nezavisimaia Moldova*. The PD candidate, Valentina Buliga, appeared in three articles in addition to Igor Dodon's other rivals; the same number of articles mentioned the PLDM and the AIE. Mihai Godea's announcement about running independently for Chisinau Mayor's Office was also not an important topic for this publication. The event was communicated as *apropos* in an item confirming that things in the campaign are as bad as the newspaper had written before (6 May, *"Godea confirmed suspicions about manipulations with the lists of voters"*).

Fairness and balance of sources. Diversity of opinions.

The balance of sources is one the gravest deontological problems of *Nezavisimaia Moldova*. Of the 13 materials covering controversial issues in the electoral campaign, 11 were written with reference to a single source: most of them spoke to a representative or supporter of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova.

Accusations against public institutions or electoral competitors were not covered by the right to reply, even in news items. For example, in the article *“The right-wing Moldovan media admit serious violations of the Electoral Code”* (12 May), the Coalition Civic Control – Elections 2011 accused Teleradio Moldova of bias in the electoral campaign. In another item in this newspaper the Coalition accused the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova of hiding some sources of financing: *“Monitors assume that the governing party is hiding the sources of financing the electoral campaign”*. None of these articles provided the opportunity to reply to the two accused parties.

The newspaper often confuses diversity of opinions and insinuations, and fails to present a minimum of arguments in favor of the promoted idea. An example of this can be seen in the 11 May article, *“Who suggests choosing between Antonescu and Soltys?”*. At first sight the article seems to be speaking about the advertising board in the capital’s center, which asks the people of the city who their hero is, Antonescu or Soltys. In fact, the author referred to Mihai Ghimpu’s refusal to go to the military parade in Moscow in 2010 and the “original” manner in which Dorin Chirtoaca congratulated the veterans, placing messages on garbage cans around the City Hall. Then the author rhetorically asked who could be behind the provocative board on the eve of the celebration of 9 May 2011. And to be more convincing, he inserted short presentations of the two persons compared in the board as background.

Language and images used

The majority of articles in the newspaper displayed a fuzzy language, full of colorful expressions, especially when mentioning the current administration. The authors used comparisons and labeling without paying attention to deontological norms, be it a presentation, an analysis or a news item. 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 transferring the candidate for the position of mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca. And since the pejorative and ironic language failed to convey the “theory”, the author moved to categorizing, such as “mutant vampire” and “product of a Bucharest television”. This finding is also true for other articles from the monitored period.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the monitored period, three issues of *Jurnal de Chișinău* were released, with 19 journalistic items referring directly or indirectly to the local elections. For example, in the first two weeks of the electoral campaign, the newspaper covered this topic mainly in opinion articles and analysis materials. The main topics related to Mihai Godea withdrawing from the PLDM, the PLDM candidate, Victor Bodiu, withdrawing from the electoral race for Chisinau Mayor’s Office, manifestations dedicated to 9 May and their electoral implications, etc. 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). Some materials, especially in the segment “Buraga’s letters”, approached the electoral campaign in an allegoric or ironic form (“Dodon’s retreat”, “9 May with electoral tint”, 10 May). In the 13 May issue, the newspaper published the page of electoral education ACTIV, edited by the Association of Independent Press (API), which presented informational materials about the

procedure of elections, provided answers to questions referring to the exercise of the right to vote, etc.

Impartiality and objectivity

In general, news items referring to local elections, published by *Jurnal de Chişinău*, observed the standards of journalistic conduct regarding objective and impartial communication of information, as well as the presentation of different opinions on a subject. No exaggerations were found in terms of language or tricked images. Thematic news items, published by the newspaper, did not violate the deontological principle of separating opinions from facts. As for opinion articles, they presented and promoted a certain view on the candidates and parties competing in general local elections, favoring non-communist parties and appealing to their consolidation.

4. Conclusions

Based on the monitoring results, it can be concluded that from 2 to 15 May 2011 there have been no significant changes in the performance of the monitored media. Except for one TV station and two newspapers, the analyzed media demonstrated no severe deviations from professional standards and deontological principles.

- Prime TV, a private station with national coverage, observed professional and ethic standards in covering the campaign. The frequency with which electoral competitors appeared in newscasts suggests a certain favoring of the PDM candidates.
- NIT, another private station with national coverage, continued to openly promote the PCRM, not only through the amount of space given to items about this electoral competitor, but also through the manner of addressing the topics. The majority of the news broadcast by NIT during the reported period were biased and showed caricatures and archive videos, aiming at discrediting certain political actors.
- N4, a station with regional coverage, slightly favored the PLDM both in its news items having a direct electoral character and in image news with the presence of Prime Minister Filat.
- The Euro TV and Jurnal TV stations had a balanced performance, without obvious deviations from professional and deontological standards. Euro TV, however, through a greater number of news items concerning the PL candidate for Chisinau Mayor's Office, proved to be slightly favoring of the PL.
- The newspapers *Adevărul* and *Jurnal de Chişinău* covered the campaign in a balanced manner, without taking the side of certain electoral competitors.
- *Timpul de dimineaţă* showed no severe deviations from professional and deontological standards. There were some problems with the balance of sources in controversial materials, and some materials were registered having characteristics of masked advertising.
- The publications *Moldova suverană* and *Nezavisimaia Moldova* openly campaigned in favor of the PCRM and against the other electoral competitors from the PL, PLDM and PDM. Both newspapers maintained the tendency of presenting mostly unilateral information, based on one or several sources, but expressing a single point of view. The language, especially in opinion materials, was often pejorative.

6. Recommendations

- The monitored media should use the monitoring reports as self-regulatory tools and should eliminate the deficiencies so that in their further 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 take action and sanction, in accordance with the provisions of the Broadcast Code, the broadcasters who violate the right of Moldovan residents to full, fair and truthful information, the right to freedom of expression and free communication of information via broadcast media.

ANNEX

Case study no. 1

NIT, Curier, 11 May, 22:00

Author: Sergiu Strungaru

NIT, a TV station with national coverage, inserted into the newscast of 11 May at 22.00 an extensive item which, in a critical manner, presented a summary of Dorin Chirtoaca's activity as the capital's mayor. The type of the material is difficult to identify. It is neither a report, for the reporter does not speak about important events from the site, nor a news item, for it lacks the respective characteristics – the information is not topical, up-to-date, nor it is significant or unusual. The material does not answer the traditional questions who, what, where, when, why or how, but rather presents compiled information with the evident aim of discrediting one of the candidates for the position of Chisinau mayor.

The 5.10-minute-long item is clearly tendentious; it lacks diversity, presents information from a single perspective and is filled with the journalist's commentaries, which is a violation of the Deontological Code. Also, the item contains archive images that were included to support the author's opinions.

The author's bias is evident in his failure to separate facts from opinion at the very beginning of the item when the author shares his opinion: *"After 5 June, the Dorin Chirtoaca phenomenon will be long remembered by the people of Chisinau"*. By using the expression *"will be ... remembered"* the reporter tried to inoculate the viewers with the perception that Chirtoaca will lose the elections. Further, the author appears as a political analyst, stating that *"He won, in 2007, the capital with a strong ideological anticommunist slogan and a simple platform. After the first year of the mandate, however, few Chisinau residents saw him as a manager. He was mainly engaged in political debate, in anticommunist and unionist campaigns"*. To emphasize his statements regarding participation in

“unionist campaigns”, the author included archive images, from a public manifestation in the Great National Assembly Square, where Chirtoaca declaimed: “Long live and flourish Moldova, Ardeal [a region of Romania – translator’s note] and Wallachia [“Țara Românească” in Romanian, literally “Romanian country”, a region of Romania – translator’s note]”.

The journalist’s bias is also evident in the extracts from the vox populi filmed in 2008, which were included to confirm the reporter’s above-mentioned statements: *“The people revolt, they are dissatisfied with the activity of the city administration”, “with this conduct, with all his help, we will die, that’s clear” or “We need a good manager for the city...”*

Next, emphasis is moved to the fact that during the third year of his mandate *“the capital’s mayor left city issues aside and went to campaign for the Liberal Party in the parliamentary elections. Thus he further consolidated the idea among Chisinau residents that the mayor used the Mayor’s Office only to make his political career. People were already asking for his resignation”*. Other four voxes follow (year 2009 is shown on the screen), in which people say: *“he must resign”*, or that *“he did nothing special”*, and another person said, *“What was it that he did? He only goes to Romania... Here he does nothing. Only garbage everywhere”*. The material includes images with heaps of garbage in the street, and then the conclusion comes: *“And by the end of his mandate, Dorin Chirtoaca remains in the people’s memory as a mayor who carried Moldovan soil to Romania, who made a fuss about a Christmas tree and feasted with young girls in his office at the City Hall”*. Again, archive images are used and several anti-Chirtoaca voxes (year 2010 shown on the screen).

After the series of voxes the reporter continues his biased commentary: *“After these four years, Chirtoaca wants the Mayor’s Office again, with the same strongly ideological and anticommunist slogan. He goes to the voters with the same words as in 2007, that communists are to blame for all evil in the world. Even yesterday Chirtoaca called the media to lecture about the history of soviet communism”*. Then comes a declaration taken from the conference held by Chirtoaca, where he speaks about the crimes of the soviet times. In parallel several photographs from Dorin Chirtoaca’s birthday party appear on the screen.

The reporter also says that *“even the appearance of electoral handbills criticizing Chirtoaca’s activity of the past four years (the image displays the poster in which Chirtoaca is shown making an obscene gesture – our note), the liberal interprets as being an act of Igor Dodon, the PCRM candidate for the Mayor’s Office”*.

The material ends with Igor Dodon’s declaration suggesting that he, unlike the PL candidate, will come with solutions for the problems of people in the city.

In conclusion, the material in question fails to observe the principles of fair, balanced and impartial coverage of the general local elections, flagrantly violates ethical and professional standards and the regulations on covering the campaign for the general local elections of 5 June 2011 in the Moldovan media.

Case study no. 2

Moldova suverană, 5 May 2011

“The main conclusion of a report by the foundation Soros-Moldova about the reform of the central public administration. Corruption, lack of transparency and low salaries are the biggest problems created by the current administration”, agreed – Vlad Leghin

The article begins with the conclusions of a report performed by a group of authors regarding the reform of the central public administration in the period from October 2009 to November 2010, a publication edited at the initiative and with support of the foundation Soros-Moldova. From the start it is not quite clear whether these conclusions come from the report or from Veaceslav Bulat, the coordinator of the group of authors of the report. *“Extension of corruption, filing of information about the activity of the government, of the ministries, of other central public structures and decrease of salaries for public servants are the definite failures of the central public administration reform realized by the Alliance for European Integration, **this is the essence of Veaceslav Bulat’s conclusion...** (our bold type)”*. The manner of referring to the source leaves room for interpretations concerning the mode of quoting the author of the report and the correctness of choosing conclusions from the report.

Next, the journalist gives appreciations to the conclusions made by the authors of the report and says that *“It is suggestive that this negative appreciation does not come from some experts, analysts, but is based on the results of some questionnaires and interviews...”* and that *“...there is nothing new, sensational in the reports from Soros-Moldova. A study by Transparency International showed already last autumn that the phenomenon of corruption during the AIE administration intensified enormously in our country”*. The first appreciation makes the readers understand that the material does not present information about the results of the report, but an opinion, and that the journalist used the results of the study only to prove his point of view supported by another study of Transparency International, and it is unknown under what conditions and how correctly it was quoted, just as it was with the manner in which the fragment from the Soros-Moldova’s report was taken.

To better support his statements, the journalist makes a review of some successes and failures of Filat’s government regarding the reform of the central public administration, and they are offered to the public with approximation: *“Filat constantly boasts of concluding contracts, agreements for external financing, of receiving grants of millions of Euros, US dollars from various foreign donors, but fails to provide information about the purpose of **immense influxes** (our bold type) of foreign financing, about the purposes of spending them... prices grew during the time when the current governing alliance has been in power **by dozens of percent** (our bold type), and they grew **by several times** (our bold type) for some goods and services”*.

The author makes reference to the fact that the reform of the central public administration began in 2006 and that the former government adopted *“a strategy in this regard, which set certain objectives, methods of their realization, and people started working”*. He says that the new power *“threw this document to trash. Those who are in power today were good at throwing away, but the problem is that they made nothing to replace it. So the country is in chaos, just like the minds of the leaders of political formations governing our country”*. The journalist does not specify from any sources the attitude of the current government towards this reform, and to be more credible he quotes from the report, *“The only criterion for reorganizing the structures of the central public administration were, according to the authors of the publication, “the goals of the political parties that formed the governing alliance in autumn 2009” and “their visions about the system of the central public administration”, which, in the popular wisdom, would mean sharing a good piece between the leaders of the Alliance for European Integration”*. The truncation of the reporters’ conclusions and the journalist’s explanations again question his good faith. Still, the Government’s position and that of other specialists regarding the course of the reform of the central public administration remain unknown.

The article includes some numbers taken from the report realized with the support of the foundation Soros-Moldova, which show that *“political instability and reorganizations from 2009 and early*

2010 resulted in the increased perception of the system's corruptibility", after which the author makes the following conclusion: "In other words, we are reaping what we sowed".

Finally, the article has great problems with the selection and the manner of quoting the sources. Many times the author fails to separate his own opinion from the information used and hurriedly makes conclusions on the basis of data that raise more questions. Beyond bias, the article presents serious problems with correctness and balance of sources. The material does not present any other source except for some quotes that raise more questions rather than confirm those quoted by the author.

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 more than 70 non-government organizations.