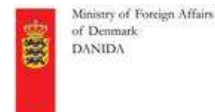


Monitoring Mass Media during the Campaign for Local General Elections on 5 June 2011

Report no. 3
16–29 May 2011

This report is produced as part of the Monitoring of Media in the Electoral Campaign Project with the financial support of the East European Foundation from funds granted by the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (Sida/Asdi) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (DANIDA). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the points of view of the donors.



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 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 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 contents 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. Broadcast Monitoring Data



Involvement in the electoral campaign

In the 14 newscasts broadcast from 16 to 29 May 2011, Prime TV included 64 items with a direct or indirect electoral character. Materials referring directly to the campaign activities of candidates were presented in the special segment "Elections 2011" in which Prime TV informed its viewers about the main electoral events/actions of the past two weeks, especially those organized by candidates for the position of Chisinau mayor. The station also covered conflicts and accusations by the candidates and the parties they represent. At the same time, some events also connected with the electoral campaign were covered outside the election segment (17 May report about starting to check the lists of voters and the news about freeing the Ukrainian citizens suspected of editing sham newspapers with defamatory information about some candidates; 19 May article on the protest of the personnel of the newspapers "cloned" for electoral purposes who requested speeding up the investigation and excluding the candidates from the race who ordered the sham newspapers).

In this reporting period, Prime provided broadcasting time for educating citizens so viewers could learn about the means for checking the electoral lists, about the illegality of candidates offering gifts to voters, about the documents required for voting and about the right of residents of Corjova and Dubasari to vote.

Objectivity and impartiality

¹ Simona, Stefanescu, "Riscurile comunicarii mediatice în timpul conflictelor"

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

There were no significant problems at Prime TV regarding separating opinions from facts or of grave deviations from ethical norms that could have distorted reality. Nevertheless, the frequency of its appearance in newscasts and the angle of approach to events clearly demonstrated the editorial board's favoring of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and the leaders and candidates of this political entity. In some cases, in fact, material broadcast in newscasts was electoral propaganda for the PDM.

During the monitoring period, the PDM candidate for Chisinau mayor, Valentina Buliga, was provided the most coverage of all the candidates; events with her participation were nearly always broadcast at the beginning of the "Elections 2011" segment. In some cases Ms Buliga was present in two news items in a single newscast. In all, the PDM candidate was directly referred to in 16 news items in a positive or neutral context, including 13 sequences from the candidate's speeches during events covered. Viewers could find details about the PDM platform and promises to attribute municipality status to some cities and for the development of suburbs (18 May), the development of education and providing graduates with jobs (19 May), providing hospitals with modern medical equipment (24 May), cooperating with businesses in Chisinau (25 May) and the construction of multi-level parking facilities (28 May) among others. Also, the station covered her position regarding the distribution of sham newspapers containing defamatory information (16 May), regarding the "misogynistic" declarations of the Communist Party (PCRM) candidate, Igor Dodon (17 May) and regarding vandalizing electoral boards (27 May).

Prime TV also broadcast reports that presented Valentina Buliga from a perspective different from her political image (singing on stage on Family Day on 17 May and visiting an equestrian school on 27 May). In the newscast on 21 May, the TV station announced the opening by the PDM of blood pressure and blood sugar checking facilities in the capital, and videos showed tents with the appeal to vote for the PDM and for Valentina Buliga. On 24 May in the report about the presentation of the PDM political platform to actors, the reporter mentioned that Ms Buliga said that, "If she became mayor, actors and ballet dancers would retire earlier." Often, the reports referring to Ms Buliga lasted longer and were presented in more detail than items about her competitors.

The other candidates for mayor appeared more rarely on Prime TV and in mostly neutral contexts making speeches, presenting their programs or responding to their opponents' accusations. In some cases, candidates were presented in a slightly ironic manner. PCRM candidate Igor Dodon appeared as a primary source in six news items, and another eight items made a reference to him or required his right to reply; the Liberal Party (LP) candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca, was the subject of four news items, and he was referred to or replied to other candidates' statements or accusations in another seven news items; Sergiu Coropceanu of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) appeared in eight items; Mihai Godea, independent candidate, was in six items and Valeriu Plesca of the Third Force and Oleg Oniscenco of Our Home Moldova were featured in one item each. Also, five other news items were broadcast referring to the participation of Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) representatives in the elections for the Chisinau City Council, and there was one item about Maxim Braila, independent candidate for the position of city councilor.

In some cases, Prime TV did not limit itself to presenting the information about the candidates' campaign activities but also introduced information in different contexts that contradicted or emphasized the initial message of the candidate in question. For example, in the news item of 16 May regarding the suggestions of PCRM candidate Igor Dodon about maintenance of historic monuments and his declarations that the current situation is "genocide," the station reminded the audience that during Communist rule a monument near the Presidential Building had been

demolished while current Interim President Marian Lupu had stopped the construction of a building threatening the Pushkin House museum in Chisinau.

Prime TV also covered the PDM electoral campaign outside Chisinau. In the newscast on 22 May, the “Elections 2011” segment included a report about the participation of Interim President Parliamentary Speaker Marian Lupu and Vice Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy Valeriu Lazar in the celebration of Mingir’s village day which involved laying the foundation for a new memorial honoring the victims of wars and famines. Several people were interviewed who promised to contribute to building the memorial including Haralambie Lazar, the current mayor of the village who was running for a new term of office as a PDM candidate although that was not mentioned in the report. Also, nothing was said about the fact that Ms Lupu and Mr Lazar were president and, respectively, vice president of the PDM.

In the same newscast, Prime TV broadcast a report with elements of electoral advertising in favor of Alexandru Botnari, the PDM candidate for mayor of Hancesti City. At an electoral meeting, PDM leader Marian Lupu asked the audience, “...to provide adequate support for the no. 1 candidate for the *raion* council, and actually no. 1 in reality, the best mayor here in Hancesti, Alexandru Botnari.”

In the newscast on 23 May, Prime TV broadcast another report with elements of electoral advertising in favor of PDM candidates, this time in Stefan-Voda *raion* where the “election caravan” with the participation of the PDM leader Marian Lupu arrived and was “welcomed with honors” by the locals. The item also included direct appeals by some PDM candidates for votes.

On 29 May, Prime TV broadcast a report about a PDM electoral event in the village of Temeleuti in Calarasi in support of Zinaida Turcanu. Party representatives Valeriu Lazar and Andrei Popov presented uniforms to young football players mentioning that Zinaida Turcanu had already started her campaign.

Prime TV did not cover the other candidates’ activities outside Chisinau.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Prime TV mostly observed the principle of diversity and balance of sources/positions/opinions, especially in the 15 items referring to conflicts, accusations or controversial subjects involving candidates. In three cases, however, accusations were launched in newscasts, and reporters did not provide the right to reply. In the newscast on 20 May, PSD candidate Sergiu Coropceanu accused the mayor’s office of inadequately repairing Cogalniceanu Street, and the accusation lacked a response. Even if Interim Mayor Nistor Grozavu rejected the invitation to the event organized by Coropceanu, the reporters should have asked for comments from the persons responsible for road repairs. On 23 May, the same PSD candidate accused Igor Dodon (PCRM) and Dorin Chirtoaca (LP) of knowing about the fraud at Chisinau-Gaz but doing nothing to stop it. The Prime TV reporter did not ask for the accused persons’ opinions, mentioning only that they, “...have not yet commented on the accusations.”

During this monitoring period, there were several instances when officials participating in events with an electoral character in support of the PDM candidate for Chisinau mayor were presented in Prime TV reports not as party leaders/representatives but as ministers or members of Parliament (MPs), which transfers the image of the public institutions they represent to them and works in their favor. Examples include the following: on 19 May Valentina Buliga’s electoral meeting with the

students and teaching staff of the Technical University in which Vlad Plahotniuc participated where she was presented as Prime Vice-President of Parliament; on 20 May at another electoral meeting of the PDM candidate at Ion Creanga University accompanied by Vlad Plahotniuc (this time, presented correctly as Vice-President of the PDM) and Pavel Filip presented as Minister of Information Technology and on 24 May when Ms Buliga had an electoral meeting with actors with Marian Lupu presented as PDM leader and Boris Focsa presented as Minister of Culture. It should also be mentioned that the report about the PDM candidate's participation in the concert dedicated to Family Day (17 May) included as part of the "Elections 2011" segment pointed out that the show had been organized by the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family.

Language and videos used

During the monitoring period, the videos and language used by Prime TV were generally acceptable. In some cases, the language in an introduction/title was slightly sardonic, for example, on 17 May the news item "Like the Wild West" began with the following statement: "The candidate of the Third Force block for the capital's leadership gets inspiration from wild western traditions. Valeriu Plesca promises 25 thousand lei to those who provide the truth about crime in Durllesti." Another example is the 20 May news item about Mr Coropceanu's (PSD) accusations that the paving on Cogalniceanu Street done several months earlier was inadequate and would soon require repairs that was entitled "The Visionary Candidate."



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 16 to 29 May 2011, NIT, a TV station with national coverage, broadcast 76 relevant items in the "Curier" newscasts at 22:00. Of these, 58 had a direct electoral character, i.e. these items either covered the elections or referred to candidates for the positions of mayors or councilors in Chisinau and other places in Moldova.

During this period, NIT included ample reports on the "protest marches" held by the PCRM on 22 May in Soroca, Orhei and Cahul (23 May item 4, duration 18 minutes) in its newscasts, and from 23 to 29 May, its broadcasts included several items referring to the marches and announcements about an upcoming "protest march" in Chisinau on 29 May. The articles included substantial quotes from the speeches of the PCRM leaders present at the marches on 22 May as well as *vox populi* with participants in the marches who unanimously agreed that the country was in a state of disaster because of the Alliance for European Integration (AIE) government and that the only solution was for the PCRM to return to power. On 25 May, "Curier" broadcast two lengthy items (total duration 16 minutes) about the 70th birthday of PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin including *vox populi* unanimously agreeing that Voronin was the only "true leader" Moldova had ever had.

The campaigns of the PCRM and its leaders were covered daily in NIT newscasts. During the monitoring period, the station broadcast 19 news items about Igor Dodon's meetings with voters as well as news about Vladimir Voronin's visits to Falesti (16 May), Balti (22 May), and Cahul (24 May), with ample quotes from the speeches he gave with direct campaign content: "Where are the salaries of 500 euro promised by the AIE? Where are the 300-euro pensions?"; "The capital is experiencing clinical death" (20 May); "As you vote so you shall live" (16 May). As a rule, items

presenting PCRM members lasted about 4–5 minutes and exclusively reported the PCRM point of view.

A number of items broadcast during the monitoring period expressed PCRM warnings about the AIE tampering with the results of local elections on 5 June (26 and 27 May). Also, the station broadcast items about violations of electoral legislation by the parties in the AIE (24 and 26 May).

Objectivity and impartiality

During the monitoring period, NIT presented 48 items referring to PCRM activities and those of its candidate for Chisinau mayor. The subject of 19 of those items was Igor Dodon. For example, on 16 May alone he was referred to in four consecutive news items (5, 7, 8 and 9) and another 29 items were about other Communist leaders as well as its candidates for the positions of mayors and local councilors elsewhere.

The Christian Democratic People's Party (PPCD) team and its candidate for the position of mayor were present in five news items all criticizing the actions of Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca during the last four years and the LP as an entity without offering solutions for the problems listed.

Valentina Buliga, PDM candidate for Chisinau mayor, was present in a single news item in a negative context, and the PDM itself was in seven negative news items. The PLDM also appeared in a negative context in seven items. The LP appeared in only three items, but the work of the mayor's office and of Dorin Chirtoaca was mentioned in 23 news items, all in a negative context. Overall, PCRM opponents were presented in a negative context 40 times.

During this period, the NIT team adopted a specific means for presenting non-PCRM candidates: they discredited the statements and declarations in the electoral advertising of Valentina Buliga (PDM), Dorin Chirtoaca (LP) and Vlad Filat (PLDM).

The first campaign advertisement of Dorin Chirtoaca was fully analyzed (19 May at 22:18) and his statements were countered in a multitude of ways: *vox populi*, journalists' replies and a montage of videos and music (see case study no. 1 annexed to this report).

On 24 May (from 22:01 to 22:07), NIT discredited the statements in the PLDM campaign ad "It's morning again in Moldova." After presenting excerpts from the campaign ad of Ronald Reagan in 1984 for the US Presidency as a source of inspiration for the PLDM advertisement, the reporter discredited Filat's statements by various methods. For example, Filat says, "Thousands of kilometers of European roads are being built now," and the reporter counters with "Here is a sample of a European road" and includes a number of opinions of people on the road claiming that the money intended for its repair had been stolen. When Filat says, "Today, 100 children will be born in Moldova, and 100 persons will return home," the reporter follows with a *vox populi* claiming that everybody is leaving and concludes, "Only the elderly and Filat will remain in Moldova." The same method is used with other statements from Filat's advertisement in violation of 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 stipulate that, "Electoral advertising shall not be included in 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).

The modality for selecting topics for newscasts at NIT and the reporters' attitudes display this station's tendentiousness. An example is the news item presenting the statements of EU Ambassador to Moldova Dirk Schuebel on 26 May ("The honeymoon is over; EU financing for Moldova will be decreased"). NIT did not mention the main reason Schuebel pointed out for the decrease which was the fact that Moldova still has far to go on anti-discrimination and protecting the rights of minorities. He specifically made a reference to the withdrawal from Parliament of the Law on Anti-discrimination and to the discussions about the annulment of the decision on registering Islam as a religion. Instead, reporters presented Schuebel's statements as an acknowledgement of the disaster the AIE had brought the country inserting comments from PCRM leaders interpreting Schuebel's declarations to be in support of that position.

The message in the news item on 27 May (at 22:23) stating that the Broadcast Coordinating Council (BCC) had levied the maximum fine on NIT for, "...presenting deficiencies of local public authorities, especially those of the Chisinau mayor's office..." was also discredited. Although the BCC report presented the violations committed by NIT and listed the news items that lacked reference to a second source, the violations for which NIT had been fined and the reasons behind the fine were concealed. NIT used denigrating language about BCC members ("you unmasked yourselves," "you are servile," "we don't serve your masters") and reminded the audience that the role of the media is to criticize those in power. Thus, this item sought to generate the feeling that NIT had been fined for presenting the deficiencies of the local public authorities and not for violations committed when covering certain subjects.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Article 7 c) of the Broadcasting Code provides that when covering conflicts the principle of getting information from several sources should be used. Of the 40 controversial news items covered by NIT in which a second opinion was necessary, only 10 included the opinion of the parties referred to. The others presented a single point of view, usually that of the PCRM, or opinions of citizens expressing the same point of view as the PCRM. Reporters often claimed that the person responsible for the problem could not be found or did not reply when telephoned (e.g. news items 6 and 7 on 26 May, item 4 on 18 May).

On 24 and 26 May, news items were broadcast about the PDM and PLDM violating electoral legislation by distributing food packages. In addition, articles from various places where mayors were members of the PDM or PLDM were produced following the same pattern: community problems were introduced first followed by the opinions of several dissatisfied persons who blamed the PDM or PLDM mayor for the situation described without presenting the position of the mayor or of the local authorities in question.

On 18 May (at 22:10), NIT presented an electoral meeting in Chisinau by M. Ciobanu, candidate for councilor from the LP, where he was addressed with questions about the problems faced by city residents. The Chisinau residents' statements included in the report contained harsh criticism of the mayor's office. The montage version included only citizens' questions and statements without any answers from the LP representative. In other instances, the second source of information was a sham. For example, on 20 May (at 22:10) the news item stating that the trolleybuses purchased from Belarus cost less than the mayor's office had paid lacked the position of the local authorities. The alleged reply of Gh. Morgoci, Director of the Electric Transport Department of Chisinau, was taken from another article referring to the technical condition of the trolleybuses purchased that year that had been broadcast on 17 May (at 22:01).

Language and videos used

During the monitoring period, NIT used videos and language violating ethical standards in 14 news items. The authors resorted to caricatures, music and montage of archive videos. For example, on 18 May item 3 (at 22:10) had a montage of videos with piles of garbage and walls with falling plaster accompanied by Dorin Chirtoaca's voice, "Vote for the change, vote for LP." The item broadcast on 19 May at 22:18 contained three melodies accompanying videos of Chirtoaca that created a satirical and derogatory context for the presentation of this candidate. News item 3 on 27 May had bright videos with green fields and sunflower plantations and inserts of "Moldova—the most beautiful country" and "Moldova—the most fertile soil" and other statements of this kind over the images, then suddenly the screen went black and the inscription "Moldova is deteriorating" appeared along with similar statements. Next, the viewers were called to the march on 29 May to stop the disaster into which the AIE government had thrown the country.

These presentations violate the provisions of the Broadcasting Code which forbids, "...distorting reality through montage, comments, devices or titles."



Involvement in the electoral campaign

The monitoring performed between 16 and 29 May showed that approximately every second news item broadcast by Euro TV directly or indirectly referred to the campaign (49 of a total of 109 items). Of them, 14 reports had a direct electoral character and were in the "Elections 2011" segment. They referred mainly to the presentation of the candidates' platforms and of the events they organized.

The topic dominating the reports with an indirect electoral character during the reporting period was the creation of the National Council for the Reform of Legal Authorities. This subject was addressed in three items. Other items of a tangential electoral character included the issues of the Prime Minister's fight against high salaries for directors of state agencies, the demonstrations by Orthodox Christians for a review of the Law on Cults and the identification by the government of projects for the development of villages in the security zone among others.

Euro TV also broadcast two reports about events involving representatives of regional local public authorities that did not clearly state whether these people were or were not involved in the electoral campaign.

Objectivity and impartiality

Euro TV reports were produced in a fair manner and did not deviate from ethical norms to distort the candidates' messages. Monitoring did not reveal problems regarding separating facts from opinions or screening information that might have modified the context of speeches or the events referred to.

Furthermore, we cannot speak about the station favoring certain candidates during the reporting period as they all appeared in newscasts in connection with their involvement in the campaign. Of the 14 reports in the “Elections 2011” segment, three referred to the PCRM and its candidate for mayor, and the PDM, PLDM candidates and independent candidate Mihai Godea were addressed in two reports each. The PPCD, the Party for the Country and the People and LP, as well as the Party of Law and Justice appeared in one item each.

With regard to items with an indirect electoral character, the monitoring showed a slight tendency toward positive coverage of events organized by the government. Of the 12 items referring to the Executive and to the Prime Minister, eight were positive, three were negative and one was neutral. Chisinau local authorities appeared in three items produced in a balanced manner.

We should mention the report broadcast on 24 May about the inauguration of a bridge in the village of Cuhnesti in Glodeni *raion*. The item presented Ion Betisor several times as the village mayor. It is unclear whether he was or was not registered as a candidate. On 25 May we viewed an item about the protest of a group of residents from the village of Molovata Noua in Dubasari *raion* in front of the Supreme Court of Justice in which the protesters were presented several times as village councilors. The authors of the report did not specify whether they were or were not involved in the campaign.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Euro TV observed the principles of diversity and balance of sources during the entire reporting period. The eight controversial items broadcast presented all the parties involved indicating that journalists knew and observed the norm of diversity of opinions. Examples are the item on 16 May in which refugees from Transnistria protested in front of City Hall against a decision of the city council obliging them to pay rent for housing received from the state. The local authorities rejected the accusations for the reason that the protesters had misunderstood the decision of the council. Another item on the same day portrayed Valentina Buliga, PDM candidate for mayor, claiming that the Communists were the ones behind the sham newspapers that had appeared during the campaign. The PCRM qualified her accusations as ridiculous. Examples in which reporters maintained a balance of sources include another six items of a controversial nature in which accusations were addressed to candidates who were provided with the right to reply.

Language and videos used

During the monitoring period, we registered no cases of discriminatory language about candidates or of videos that could distort reality or question the observance of ethical and professional standards by the journalists of Euro TV.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During this reporting period, Jurnal TV became more passive in covering the campaign, broadcasting a total of 46 news items of a direct or indirect electoral nature. As a rule, the station included one, two or sometimes three items in the “Local Elections 2011” segment though on some days the newscasts had no electoral items. The station informed viewers about events held by the

candidates, about the results of the first opinion poll regarding election results, about incidents related to the campaign involving various opponents and about the detention and release of persons suspected of falsifying two Moldovan newspapers and the picketing of the General Prosecutor's Office by those publications' journalists who demanded disclosure of the names of candidates suspected of ordering the falsification.

In addition to the special segment, several relevant news items were broadcast that were indirectly related to the electoral campaign including the following: items about the creation of the National Council for the Reform of Legal Authorities and the reactions that followed (20, 23, 24 and 25 May); a news item about the Information and Security Service tapping Mihai Ghimpu's and Dorin Chirtoaca's telephone calls in 2009 (23 May) and an item about floods in Chisinau and the reaction of city residents (23 May). Also, articles with an indirect electoral character included news items about various accusations brought by Sergiu Mocanu against Vlad Plahotniuc (19 May, 25 May and 29 May).

Objectivity and impartiality

Overall, Jurnal TV covered the relevant subjects in a fair and impartial manner. No evident bias was detected in favor of or against candidates with good chances to be elected Chisinau mayor or to obtain a majority in city and *raion* councils. However, judging by the frequency and context in which it appeared in newscasts, preferential treatment was shown to the LP, especially to Dorin Chirtoaca who appeared seven times in positive or neutral context and Mihai Godea, independent candidate, who also appeared seven times in a neutral or positive context. The PDM and PCRM were referred to six times each, mainly in a neutral or negative context. It should also be mentioned that Jurnal TV broadcast three news items mentioning Victor Busuioc, candidate for mayor of Tudora in Stefan Voda *raion*.

Most of the news items (81%) were impartial and did not display the personal attitudes of reporters toward the subjects addressed. In some cases (nine items), however, parts of the text read by presenters or reporters were not attributed to a source and could thus be interpreted as the authors' personal opinions. For example, in the newscast on 28 May, the reporter stated that, "Before the elections, candidates make great promises" and on 23 May the title on the screen was "Does not apologize, but enjoys his time" for the news item that presented details about Igor Dodon's reaction to accusations brought by a victim of 7 April 2009. On 20 May the teaser (short info about the news that followed) said, "Electoral candidates compete in expenditures. The greatest wasters are the liberal democrats and communists. Millions of lei flow from their pockets," although the item itself was fair and neutral. On 16 May in an item about Vlad Filat's present to Mihai Godea in the latter's time as the party's vice-president, the reporter claimed, "Suspensions are alive in politics, too. Only two weeks later we learn the reason behind Godea's withdrawal from the PLDM—a watch worth about 20 thousand euros." Viewers could be misled by this statement because in fact the real reason for Godea's withdrawal from the party was different. All these examples demonstrate the subjective character of news items since the authors' attitude to the subjects was evident.

On 25 May another item included in newscasts deviated from professional standards because it was a reporter's commentary rather than news:

For more than a year politician Sergiu Mocanu has been making disclosures to the media about political life in the country. Everything predicted by Mocanu has come true. Yet another proof was the politician's latest prediction—Plahotniuc, one of the most controversial business dealers, was

nominated to make reforms in justice! At the end of October 2010, shortly before parliamentary elections, Sergiu Mocanu was the first to announce that Vlad Plahotniuc would be included on the list of the Democratic Party. Several weeks later that came true. The businessman appeared, and not inconspicuously but second on the list after Marian Lupu. The reform of justice brought Plahotniuc to the fore again. By a decree of Interim President Marian Lupu, Plahotniuc was designated over night Vice-President of the National Council for the Reform of Authorities for Protection of Legal Norms. This move was also anticipated by Sergiu Mocanu about a week before.

Since the item quoted no sources but instead presented the conclusions of the reporter based on certain declarations and events, we assume that the text totally belongs to the reporter. According to ethical principles and professional standards, newscasts should not include comments or opinions signed by journalists. In newscasts, facts should be separated from opinion, and opinions should be included in appropriately labeled articles.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Most items broadcast by Jurnal TV during the reporting period were fair and balanced, presenting varied opinions about the events described. The majority of controversial articles, a total of 18, presented the opinions of the parties referred to/accused though in 4 of the 18 items reporters failed to include a second opinion or to explain whether they had attempted to find the persons in question. In the news item on 29 May about the electoral meeting of Victor Busuioc, a candidate from the Party for the People and the Country, Sergiu Mocanu (the party's leader) accused the PDM of faking the case of Busuioc shooting an officer of the Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption. The item lacked the PDM representatives' reply. On 29 May, in the item about the protest organized by the Ravnopravie Movement, Valeri Klimenko (candidate for Chisinau mayor) accused the authorities of closing Russian-language schools; the item did not include opinions of authorities about the subject. On 28 May, the PLDM accusations addressed to Posta Moldovei claiming that the company had failed to perform according to its contract remained without reply, and on 26 May an item gave the impression that the PDM had distributed electoral gifts, but the party's replies were not included.

In eight cases news items lacked diversity and failed to provide a pluralism of opinions, presenting instead information from a single perspective. Thus, the items about the opinion poll (27 May), about the expenditures of electoral candidates (25 May) and about the reform of justice from the perspective of Sergiu Mocanu (25 May) required contextual information or quotes from additional sources to provide details that would help viewers to better understand the context of events.

Language and videos used

The language used by Jurnal TV in the items broadcast in "Jurnalul orei 20:00" ("Newscast at 20:00") was appropriate. There were no cases of manipulation with videos.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

Between 16 and 29 May, TV station N4 broadcast a total of 10 newscasts that included 50 items with a direct or indirect electoral character. First, N4 informed the public about the media events organized by some candidates, namely the representatives of PCRM, PLDM, PSD, LP, PDM, PPCD, the electoral block Third Force and of the Party of Law and Justice. The station's reporters also referred in a number of items to the sham issues of the newspapers *Timpul* and *Ziarul de Gardă*. In addition, viewers could learn about the results of the first opinion poll conducted during this electoral campaign by the Association of Sociologists and Demographers. As in the previous period, items with an electoral character were not isolated into a special segment.

N4 also broadcast a number of reports with an indirect electoral character such as those featuring Prime Minister Vlad Filat. The Prime Minister appeared in 19 of the 50 items with a direct or indirect electoral character. Items in which Vlad Filat appeared as Prime Minister were qualified as those with an electoral character, especially considering that N4 newscasts usually ended with the "Electoral Advertising" segment in which the first advertisement was that of the PLDM and presented Filat against a background of the party's symbols and flag. This could influence the perception of viewers who could attribute all Vlad Filat's achievements as Prime Minister to the party.

Objectivity and impartiality

The monitoring clearly reveals that N4 favored Prime Minister Vlad Filat, President of the PLDM, as he appeared in only a favorable or neutral context. An example of favoring Filat is the news item on 19 May about the Moldovan Prime Minister's meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. In the lead the reporter said, "The German government has a liking for the courageous political course of Prime Minister Vladimir Filat, and for this reason it will support Moldova." Further, the lead of item no. 8 in the newscast of 23 May said, "Europeans are coming to support Filat. Chisinau is visited by the vice president of the largest party in the EU, the European People's Party, of which PLDM is also part, to announce his support for the entity led by V. Filat." It should be mentioned, however, that other PLDM candidates (especially Victor Bodiu) appeared in only three electoral items. Another example of bias is the item on 19 May about the PLDM project to transform a portion of Mitropolitul Varlaam Street into a pedestrian zone which N4 journalists called an "unprecedented project."

PCRM candidates appeared in the majority of relevant news items—13 out of 50—and the PSD candidate Sergiu Coropceanu appeared in five. Dorin Chirtoaca, the LP candidate for Chisinau mayor, appeared in most cases in the context of accusations brought by his opponents. For example, on 18 May, the president of the Party of Law and Justice, General Nicolae Alexei, accused the LP candidate of having been unable to combat corruption (Chisinau Mayor's Office is, "...one of the most corrupt institutions in the country") and of the fact that there are family clans in the institution that invest the city's money into their own businesses. Also, Alexei said that, "He (Dorin Chirtoaca) may be a talented, capable, intelligent boy, but I think he is good for 'Surprise, Surprise' (a TV show) or something else. Here we need a manager who would take the institution into his hands, not do political show." In reply, 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 several news items the N4 reporters used slightly ironic expressions such as “the marathon of promises by the PCRM candidates continues” or “the PPCD candidate has grand solutions” which revealed a slight bias of the reporter against some candidates.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Between 16 and 29 May, N4 broadcast 12 controversial articles that contained accusations addressed to electoral competitors. Of those 12, 5 lacked the opinion of the second party. For example, on 25 May (item no. 6), some participants in the debates organized by N4 accused the employees of the Chisinau mayor’s office, especially Dorin Chirtoaca, of corruption. The opinion of the parties referred to was unavailable. The N4 reporter said only the following, “You will find Dorin Chirtoaca’s reply at the next round of debates where he was invited.” The opinion of the LP representative Mihai Carlig could be found only on 27 May when he spoke about the problems that had been solved by the local administration during the LP mayor’s term of office. The material, however, did not include a direct answer to the accusations of corruption brought against Chirtoaca.

On 26 May (item no. 2) other candidates for the position of the capital’s mayor who participated in the N4 electoral debates brought new accusations against the city council. Vitalia Pavlicenco, for example, spoke about “petty interests,” “terrible corruption,” “huge tax evasion” and “lack of transparency” in the council. The opinion of the parties referred to was also unavailable in this item.

It should further be mentioned that as a rule N4 reporters did not include the opinions of experts or of political commentators in news items which could have complemented and balanced their articles. Thus, nine of the items failed to provide a diversity of opinion that would have presented the events from various perspectives necessary for the voters to better understand the subjects covered.

Language and videos used

During the monitoring period, N4 videos did not deviate from ethical and professional standards.³ The language used was appropriate. Reporters did not resort to labeling candidates.

4. Print Monitoring Data

adevărul.md

Involvement in the electoral campaign

In the reference period, the daily *Adevărul* published 47 stories with a direct or indirect electoral character. Of them, 13 maintained the reporting standards in force.

This daily had 21 items that directly tackled electoral subjects among them the articles about publishing sham newspapers and detaining two suspects; the problem of unauthorized construction in the capital; analyses of electoral messages and reports about events organized by candidates. Another 13 items had an indirect electoral character. They referred to the actions of Prime Minister

³ Because of technical problems, the videos on 23 May could not be viewed.

Vlad Filat and of President Ad Interim Marian Lupu as well as to the scandals related to the establishment of the National Council for the Reformation of Law Enforcement Bodies.

Impartiality and objectivity

During the monitoring period, *Adevărul* showed impartiality and objectivity to all electoral candidates. The stories were written separating facts from opinions and did not contain subjective information.

Most of the subjects of an indirect electoral character were analytical items. They contained commentary on actions undertaken by the government, but they were made with maximum precautions and without attacking electoral candidates. For instance, in the issue of 16 May in the article "Projects left still as stone," the author spoke about big projects launched by various governments on the eve of elections. "Governments have made it a habit to launch grand projects without, however, making sure that they have the necessary funds for implementing them," the journalist wrote and then offered examples such as the power plant in Ungheni and the monument in memory of victims of Communism among others.

Another leading article that tackled problems in the capital was "Wooden platform forest in the capital's parks" published on 23 May in which the journalist wrote about unauthorized construction. Unlike the previous article in which the author made an analysis, this item offered various comments from a number of sources both in the central public administration and the local one. The conclusion is that the lack of discipline in construction was due to the imperfect law. Both articles were balanced and objective.

These 21 stories did not favor anyone focusing instead on covering the actions and stands of the various candidates for the position of Chisinau mayor.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

None of the 34 items with a direct or indirect electoral character posed problems related to the observance of diversity of opinions. In the period monitored, only one item was published that made allegations against an electoral candidate, a former municipal councilor. The story "Transporters are on a Japanese strike" on 17 May talked about a firm that allegedly was headed by Oleg Onișcenco and was accused of violating regulations to obtain a license for operating 12 minibus routes in the capital. Mr Onișcenco denied the allegations brought by the local administration and minibus drivers.

Language and images used

Adevărul did not use pejorative language or words that would contravene journalistic standards and provisions or images that violated ethical standards.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 16 to 29 May 2011, *Timpul de dimineață* published 94 items with a direct or indirect electoral character including advertisements. Of these, 23 were opinions (editorials and commentaries, opinions of bloggers and readers) and electoral advertising identified as such (28 in total, mainly posters⁴). The newspaper also published 14 items that could be catalogued as hidden advertising for electoral candidates.

Several stories referred to the publishing of the two sham papers *Timpul Chișinăului* and *Ziarul de Chișinău* mainly about the investigations conducted and journalists' picketing the General Prosecutor's office. Also, *Timpul de dimineață* wrote about the official launch of a number of candidates and their platforms, the behavior of political entities in the campaign, the participation of women in local elections, the protests organized by the PCRM in a number of districts, testing electronic voter registries and organizing an exit poll on 5 June. The publication also tackled the problems faced by the residents of the village of Căpriană in the district of Strășeni and those of the village of Bozieni in Hâncești as well as the problem of parking lots in the capital (item published in the segment "One thousand and one nights in Chișinău" started by the newspaper at the beginning of the electoral campaign listing the problems to be solved).

Impartiality and objectivity

Most of the informative items with a direct or indirect electoral character were impartial and objective; however, two items were slightly subjective. The story "Who ordered *Timpul Chișinăului*?" (16 May, pages 1 and 3) did not separate facts from opinions.

The hidden partners of the "clones" certainly have political egg on their faces and have definitely thrown themselves into the electoral contest (...) So this is another reason for the police to move quickly and find the ones who have an interest, for voters must be sure that on 5 June they are invited to vote for honest candidates. Cherchez le parti! as the French might say ..." Facts again are not separated from opinions in the story "Protest of minibuses at the Supreme Court of Justice" (17 May) because the subtitle says "Councilor Oleg Onișcenco promoted a conflict among the transporters.

In the reference period, *Timpul de dimineață* favored the LP and/or its candidate for mayor Dorin Chirtoacă in 14 stories (especially in editorials, commentaries and interviews). An example of advertising in favor of Mr Chirtoacă is the interview with sociologist Dan Dungaci, published on 20 May in which he said, "...it is important for Dorin Chirtoacă that he has achieved a remarkable administrative performance and that he knows how to present his case in a manner that spotlights him as a politician with great perspective ... Dorin Chirtoacă can shut the mouths of his adversaries—PCRM representatives—in any administrative dispute..." The newspaper also published a number of interviews with cultural personalities (Spiridon Vangheli, Vasile Iovu, Ninela Caranfil) who said that they would vote Dorin Chirtoacă on 5 June. The PDM candidate for mayor, Valentina Buliga, was favored in 4 stories.

The newspaper also published 14 stories that could be categorized as hidden advertising for Dorin Chirtoacă (10 items), Valentina Buliga (2) and independent candidate Mihai Godea (2). All these items did not appear in the segment "Elections 2011" and were not accompanied by the specification

⁴ Note that not all items marked "Elections 2011" were accompanied by the statement "Paid for from the Electoral Fund." The banner "Together with Dorin Chirtoacă for Chișinău" that appeared at the top of the page did not always carry this label.

“Paid for from the electoral fund” but did refer to the activities and platforms of these candidates. For instance, on 20 May the newspaper published an extensive interview (pages 14 and 19) with Dorin Chirtoacă entitled “5 June will mean the end of the Communist ideology in Moldova” that talked about the current electoral campaign and listed the mayor’s achievements during his first mandate as well as his priorities for a future mandate. This item was published in the section “Interview.”

Note that all the electoral items of PCRM candidate Igor Dodon were marked as such.

In this monitoring period, the newspaper published 16 items that to a certain extent disfavored the PCRM and its candidate Igor Dodon. Negative information also appeared about candidate Valeriu Pleșca of the Third Force block in 2 stories (19 and 23 May, “Electoral vultures” and “In 2011, people will vote again in Chisinau politically, geopolitically and less effectively”), about the PLDM in 2 stories (on 19 and 20 May and the pamphlet “Planet greets Filat’s decision!”) and about Oleg Onișcenco from the party Our Home Moldova in one story (“Protest with minibuses at the Supreme Court of Justice” on 17 May).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Timpul de dimineață continued to promote a diversity of opinions in segments in which various commentators and also ordinary citizens expressed their opinions about the electoral campaign (for instance, the rubrics “Journalist wandering through blogs,” “Press review,” and “Opinions”). From 16 to 29 May, three of the seven controversial items making allegations against electoral candidates presented only one side in the conflict. For instance, on 25 May the newspaper published the story “Communists’ luxury palace” in which LP candidates made allegations about the PCRM but the latter’s opinion was missing. A diversity of opinions was also missing in 13 items (this was especially true for hidden advertising that contained information only from one perspective).

Language and images used

The language of the electoral news in *Timpul de dimineață* was fair while that in commentaries was slightly ironic but did not exaggerate by labeling or making allegations against candidates. One story (“Communists’ cloning started” on 18 May) was accompanied by a photo collage that contravened ethical and professional standards.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 16 to 29 May 2011, the eight issues of *Moldova Suverană* included 46 items of an electoral nature including 8 stories indirectly related to the campaign for general local elections. The genre of the articles was mainly opinions (22). Advertising with the notation “Paid for from the Electoral Fund” was included, but items that were not so marked were also.

In this reporting period, *Moldova Suverană* covered the campaign mainly in analyses and opinions and offered only a few concise news stories. The large amount of space allocated to opinions and paid electoral items to the detriment of informative items was noteworthy and did not offer readers enough information to independently form opinions. As a rule, the audience got the opinions either

of the newspaper's staff or of the PCRM electoral candidates (in items published in the "Elections 2011" segment with the notation that they were paid for from the electoral fund).

Campaign events were selectively covered mainly informing readers about those organized by the PCRM, sometimes specifying that the items were advertisements and sometimes not. (Text marked in other newspapers as paid for from the electoral fund appeared without that specification in *Moldova Suverană*.)

Advertisements were extensive and were sometimes signed by political commentators on the PCRM electoral list for the municipal council. Like the editorials in this newspaper, they were mostly defamatory and abounded in allegations against other candidates, usually Dorin Chirtoacă, using pejorative language and images and collages that contravened ethical and professional principles.

Objectivity and impartiality

Eighteen of the items published in *Moldova Suverană* in the reference period were biased displaying the obviously tendentious attitude of the author toward the subjects discussed. Most of the items clearly favored PCRM candidate Igor Dodon and disfavored Dorin Chirtoacă (LP). Thus, Igor Dodon was mentioned in 10 items, all in a positive context for example, "'I love Moldova' develops a spirit of patriotism," a news item that told us that Igor Dodon had launched a CD entitled "I love Moldova." According to the PCRM candidate, this was not an electoral event but was instead a stage in the "I love Moldova" campaign (18 May p.1). Additional examples are the items about the visit of the PCRM candidate to Brussels and his return to Chisinau with solutions (20 May p.1 and 24 May p.3) and Dodon's meeting with the heads of diplomatic missions to Moldova who were informed that the PCRM would not allow election results to be falsified (25 May p.1). A number of editorials and opinions further presented the advantages of Igor Dodon over his opponent Dorin Chirtoacă.

In contrast, all 16 items referring to candidate Dorin Chirtoacă presented him in a negative light sometimes using false, defamatory information. In the article entitled "Budget irregularities since Ghimpu was also head of the Chisinau Municipal Council at the Mayor's Office" (19 May p. 1–2), after the derogatory introduction about Chirtoacă and Ghimpu, the audit report on the Chisinau municipal budget for 2009 appeared in a series of articles. The author mentioned that the report was for the period when the Chişinău Mayor's office, "...was exclusively controlled by the Ghimpu and Chirtoacă families," a period when, "...huge thefts were committed along with incompetent and negligent work." Note that the author either out of incompetence or in bad faith distorted reality and conveyed false messages to the readers (see case study no. 2). The story continued in the issues of 20, 24, 25 and 26 May. The text was long, and the images presented were those of Ghimpu, Chirtoacă and Urechean laying the blame for the problems discovered in the audit report on Ghimpu and Chirtoacă.

Other examples of biased items that did not meet the standards of quality journalism were "Rehabilitation of road infrastructure in Chişinău, a priority only in electoral campaigns" (20 May p.2), "Chirtoacă, a TV bully and incompetent in life" (19 May p.3), "Chişinău has come to be the criminal capital of a poor Moldova and the Mayor's Office a kind of headquarters of corruption" (20 May p.3) and "Chirtoacă—a curse for Chişinău" 26 May p.3.

Most of the analyses in *Moldova Suverană* were biased in how sources were quoted and in the angle of approach selected. The general impression left by these analyses was that the authors' goal was to

compile information with a view to discrediting certain candidates by selectively including details and by omitting the replies of the accused. The arguments of the other side were not part of the discussion. The authors' opinions were clear, but the opinions often did not have a factual basis. Analyses by definition should aim to examine a subject in depth and to present various opinions and reasoned criticism to help the audience better understand certain moments, events and phenomena.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

In 21 items, the information was presented from several sources but from just one perspective; thus, *Moldova Suverană* failed to ensure a diversity of opinions. The newspaper further ignored the principle of quoting both sides in controversial items. Of the 14 items that tackled a controversial subject or that launched allegations against a candidate or party, the right to respond was offered in only one case.

Language and images used

Nineteen items published by *Moldova Suverană* used pejorative, insinuating and somewhat licentious language, collages not appropriately labeled or images distorted for purposes of manipulation. The most frequently attacked candidate was Dorin Chirtoacă who was dubbed "extremist 'politruk'" (political leader – Russian), "inhibited male," "dummy," "extremist and manipulated clown," "little Dorin" and "the liberal rebel." Most of the time, such language appeared in editorials and in advertising. According to the journalists' code of ethics, "Opinions by their nature are subjective and should not be subjected to the criterion of fairness in relation to reality, but should still fall under the standard of honest and ethical expression."

Also, collages and caricatures mostly presented Mr Chirtoacă in an unfavorable light such as the one in which he wears a Nazi uniform ("Chirtoacă, the TV bully and incompetent in life" 19 May p.3) or the fake photograph in which Dorin Chirtoacă and Mihai Ghimpu are back to back with axes in their hands with the image of the mayor's office in the background in the article entitled "Chişinău has come to be the criminal capital of a poor Moldova and the mayor's office a kind of headquarters of corruption" on 20 May p. 3.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

In this monitoring period, the 8 issues of *Nezavisimaia Moldova* published 56 stories with a direct or indirect electoral character. The favorite topics of the newspaper were the "protest marches" held by PCRM in some towns, the 70th birthday of PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin, the presentation of the platform of PCRM candidate Igor Dodon, criticism of Dorin Chirtoacă's work as mayor of Chişinău and criticism of the AIE.

In general, the newspaper selectively covered the electoral campaign writing only about the activities conducted by the PCRM and its candidate for mayor Igor Dodon. The other candidates were mentioned only in the context of allegations and criticism signed by the publication's staff, readers or experts close to the Communist Party. LP candidate Dorin Chirtoacă was accused of insufficiently managing the municipality's affairs in all items referring to him. *Nezavisimaia*

Moldova repeatedly presented the statements of representatives of the Party of Law and Justice (Marcel Darie and Nicolae Alexei) who accused the mayor's office and Dorin Chirtoacă personally of corruption. During this period, the newspaper published 14 items accompanied by the specification "Paid for from the Electoral Fund," all of them promoting PCRM candidates, especially Igor Dodon.

Impartiality and objectivity

The only electoral candidate seen in a favorable light by *Nezavisimaia Moldova* was Igor Dodon. In addition to the positive items about this PCRM candidate in which readers were informed that they were paid for from the electoral fund of this party, the newspaper published other stories that clearly favored Dodon compared to the other candidates. Thus, the edition of 17 May published the item "In the next four years the city must be managed by an anti-crisis manager" signed by economist Mihail Poisie who criticized Dorin Chirtoacă and stated that a person with managerial skills and abilities should be selected to head the mayor's office. At the same time, the author argued that the future mayor should not necessarily be from the ruling alliance. Even if Igor Dodon's name did not appear in the text, the item made it clear that it was the PCRM candidate who had the qualities necessary to rule the city. On 18 May, the newspaper published the comment of Communist MP Zurab Todua, "5 June is the day when we must defend victory and peace," in which liberal authorities are associated with fascism. Letters were frequently published in Dodon's support including the following: on 18 May "Igor Dodon already helping Chisinau residents" in which the author writes that she was helped by the PCRM candidate to cure her 3-year-old son and expresses her hope in Dodon's victory in the local elections and on 20 May in the column "Review of letters to the newspaper" an article entitled "Moldova – our common home" published a number of letters that criticized candidates Dorin Chirtoacă and Valentina Buliga but praised Igor Dodon and others. In the 24 May issue, the newspaper published a press release from the campaign staff of the PCRM candidate about Dodon's visit to Brussels ("European support for Chisinau's development") noting that as a result of that visit the Communist candidate managed to establish relations with the mayor's offices of Belgian towns including that of Brussels. In the commentary "Intelligence of a professional" published on 27 May, author Tudor Soroceanu tries to convince readers of Igor Dodon's strengths over his opponents. In total, the PCRM candidate benefited from 22 appearances in *Nezavisimaia Moldova* in the monitoring period, all in a positive context.

Regarding the other candidates, *Nezavisimaia Moldova* had a totally different attitude: some were vehemently accused of mismanagement, double standards or corruption (Dorin Chirtoacă, Valentina Buliga, Mihai Godea and LP and AIE candidates as a whole) while others were overlooked or mentioned only when launching allegations against Dorin Chirtoacă (Marcel Darie and PLDM).

Dorin Chirtoacă was the preferred target of criticism and allegations as over 20 articles directly or indirectly referring to him all presented him in a negative and unfavorable context. Thus, the readers could find out Chirtoacă was accused of implementing corrupt schemes for raising funds for LP (17 May), of "profaning" the Arch of Triumph (19 May) and of incompetence, irresponsibility and inability to do anything good for the city (25 May). He was further mocked in the caricatures and images that illustrated certain stories. For instance, the commentary entitled "Intelligence of a professional" on 27 May is illustrated with a caricature representing Chirtoacă as a three-headed dragon with the caption *Mayor, Producer, Liberal!*

Valentina Buliga, PDM candidate for mayor of Chişinău, was mentioned directly or indirectly in six items in this reporting period. On 20 May in the column "Review of letters to the newspaper,"

reporter Ana Meleca refers to readers' letters accusing Ms Buliga of lying. Similar allegations were launched in letters published in the same column on 27 May. In the comment entitled "Sugar and salt: the white death of Moldovan democracy" (26 May), the PDM and its representatives are accused of corrupting voters.

The independent candidate for mayor Mihai Godea is directly referred to in an item that accuses Igor Țurcanu of the National Tennis Federation (who is part of Mr Godea's group of trustworthy friends) of protectionism and mismanagement (20 May "Dirty games") in which the author alleges that Godea is involved or protects violations committed by Țurcanu.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of sources

A lack of diversity and balance of sources quoted are the two most serious ethical problems identified in *Nezavisimaia Moldova*. Thus, 12 items that referred directly or indirectly to the electoral campaign presented information from only one source, and 9 of the 13 items tackling a problem/a controversial subject presented the opinion/position of only one party, in most cases that of a PCRM representative or a follower of this party. A lack of balanced reporting was particularly evident in the article on the debate between Chirtoaca and Dodon on Publika TV (see case study 3)

The right to respond was not granted even though it was necessary due to serious allegations made. Thus, in no case when allegations were made against candidates Chirtoacă, Buliga and Mihai Godea were they asked for their opinions or reactions, and only rarely (when news was taken from other media outlets) did the paper indicate that the respective candidates "had not yet commented on the allegation." In addition, no right to respond was offered to the PLDM when *Nezavisimaia Moldova* published allegations launched by the 2011 Civic Control Coalition that the party had used data from the national population registry for electoral purposes (26 May).

Language and images used

Some of the stories published use pejorative language and labels, especially with regard to the government in power. In some cases, to amplify the unfavorable effect, the newspaper used images that did not refer to the event covered which contravenes journalist ethics. On 24 May, for example, referring to an information portal, the item "While the mayor is dancing..." reported the consequences of the deluge the day before that had paralyzed traffic on certain streets. This news item was illustrated with two images: one of flooded cars and the other of Mayor Chirtoacă dancing at a party. These images and the title selected suggest to readers the false idea that the mayor partied while the city was flooded.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

Jurnal de Chișinău published 50 stories during the monitoring period monitored that could be classified as direct or indirect electoral items (including 12 advertisements). Most of them presented points of view or analyses about events or statements from the electoral campaign; only nine were of a purely informative character. Noteworthy among them were the stories about the refusal of the Ministry of Interior to make public the names of those who ordered the sham newspapers (17 May), the creation of the Communist Party (20 May) and Dumitru Pulbere's withdrawal from the Council

for the Reform of Law Enforcement Bodies (27 May). On 20 and 27 May, *Jurnal de Chișinău* included the supplement *Activ* published by the Association of Independent Press that included another 11 items offering the reader information about the development of the campaign, the behavior of the candidates, voting rules that should be known by voters and other items.

Impartiality and objectivity

During this period, there was no open favoring or disfavoring by *Jurnal de Chișinău* of political entities involved in the campaign for the general local elections of 5 June. Nonetheless, the newspaper published several stories in which the authors took stands that tended to offer some support to certain parties. Thus, we note that four stories favored the PLDM and its leader Vlad Filat who appeared as an engine for this party in a number of electoral ads (“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 LP and its candidate for Chisinau mayor Dorin Chirtoacă (“Electoral sport” 17 May; “Chișinău could be conquered in the first attempt” 27 May). The items point out Chirtoacă’s advantages compared with those of the other candidates but especially those of the PCRM candidate.

The attention paid to the two parties mentioned above contrasts with that given to PCRM which was mentioned in 10 items all with a negative character though it was sometimes carefully veiled. 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” offered by Igor Dodon: “The solution for cleaning grease from bowls, for killing kitchen bugs,” 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.”

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Of the four items of a controversial nature, two offered space for the persons mentioned to respond. On 17 May, *Jurnal de Chișinău* published the story “Prime Minister sabotaged. Often, the Prime Minister’s directions remain unexecuted.” The item notes that many of the Prime Minister’s requests are not executed by ministers, including Valentina Buliga, because she was involved in the electoral campaign. She 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 this party on her accusation.

In order to follow the code of ethics and to offer both sides in controversial stories, the journalists at *Jurnal de Chișinău* referred to vague sources, for example in the story on 24 May “Communist Dodon regains Romanian citizenship?” The author notes that, “The PCRM MP was not happy, as other Moldovans were, when finding out that he had regained Romanian citizenship but said it was instead a ‘political diversion’.” That response would appear to be the author’s surmise because in the end he made the statement, “It is not known for sure yet that 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

In general, the local election news published in *Jurnal de Chişinău* observed the standards of journalistic ethics and conveyed objective and fair information as well as presenting various opinions on a subject. Also, no exaggerations of language or fake images were identified in the opinions or analyses published in the newspaper.

5. Conclusions

Based on the monitoring results, it can be concluded that in the period 16 to 29 May 2011, the media outlets monitored behaved differently when covering the electoral campaign. Some of them did not follow ethical and professional principles.

- On *Prime TV*, serious deviations from ethical standards were found that could have led to distortions of reality. At the same time, the frequency of appearance of certain candidates in the news and the angle of approach to electoral events clearly denoted the editorial sympathy of this TV station for the PDM. Some of the items broadcast by this station during its newscasts were in fact electoral propaganda in favor of the PDM.
- Private station NIT with national coverage continued to be a rostrum for manipulating public opinion by openly promoting PCRM ideology. Most of the news broadcast by NIT distorted the messages of the party's electoral opposition and presented them in a negative context without giving them the right to respond. NIT used caricatures and images from its archives that distorted its messages and the realities of the campaign.
- Euro TV was impartial and ensured a diversity of opinions without deviating from professional and ethical standards.
- Station N4 with regional coverage slightly favored PLDM both in news about electoral events and through images where Prime Minister Filat was present.
- Jurnal TV did not show an obvious bias in favor of or against a candidate; however, judging by the frequency and context of appearances in the news, preferential treatment was granted to the LP, especially to Dorin Chirtoacă and to independent candidate Mihai Godea.
- The daily *Adevărul* covered the campaign in a balanced manner without taking sides. No obvious deviations from professional and ethical standards were registered.
- Some problems were noted at *Timpul de dimineaţă* with regard to balance of sources in controversial items and with identifying items that could be classified as hidden advertising. The newspaper favored LP candidate Dorin Chirtoacă and disfavored PCRM candidate Igor Dodon.
- *Jurnal de Chişinău* tended to promote a correct and objective attitude to all candidates by observing professional and ethical standards; however, a number of opinions or pamphlet-like items clearly disfavored the PCRM.
- The publications *Moldova Suverană* and *Nezavisimaia Moldova* were openly partisan to the PCRM candidate to the detriment of the others, especially those of LP. Both newspapers showed a tendency to present information unilaterally based on one or several sources that expressed the same point of view. The language used, especially in opinions, was often pejorative, and fake images contravened ethical standards.

6. Recommendations

- The media outlets monitored should use these monitoring reports as self-regulatory tools and eliminate deficiencies so that in future they:
 - inform the electorate correctly, impartially and fairly;
 - stop assessing/commenting on electoral events of the political parties or of their representatives in news items;
 - eliminate discrimination in applying the principle of diversity of opinions 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 reality through editing and commentaries, observing the principle of information from a number of sources.
- The Broadcast Coordinating Council should take action and sanction, in accordance with the provisions of the Broadcasting Code, broadcasters that violate the right of Moldovan residents to complete, objective and truthful information, the right to free expression of opinions and the right to free communication of information through broadcast media.

ANNEX

Case Study No. 1 **NIT, “Curier,” 19 May, 22:00**

Reporter: Sergiu Strungaru

On 19 May (at 22:18, news item 5), TV station NIT presented a “report produced by Sergiu Strungaru” that even at first sight did not exhibit the characteristics of = journalism built on data collected on the spot in a realistic and unbiased manner.

The item referred to an electoral ad for Dorin Chirtoacă that according to the reporter “caused debates” and further that “Internet users are rushing to comment on the ad.” The reporter identified “two camps” among the ad’s commentators: in the first one are those who appreciate, “the voice, videos, good music, the tie that matches the shirt,” while the second camp is skeptical about the content of the clip and “doubts some of the achievements of which Chirtoacă boasts.” By making this division into two camps, the reporter believed that he had formally addressed the need for diversity of opinions without, however, acknowledging that the first camp refers to how the candidate looks and the artistic quality of the ad while the other refers to the achievements of the candidate for mayor. This classifying of opinions using different principles is cheating from the outset.

The reporter then proceeds to counter five of the nine statements Mr Chirtoacă makes in the ad. The LP candidate for mayor first mentions, “...solving the issue of the unpleasant smell from the water cleaning station after 42 years,” after which the reporter says, “Let us remind you that hundreds of tons of toxic mud were moved near Bubuieci which brought a protest from an environmental organization.” To add credibility, the opinion of a councilor from Bubuieci who talks about the ecological risks of the mud is aired instead of that of a representative of an environmental organization. In the background the audience sees trucks unloading mud. The station does not specify where the videos were taken but does accompany the video with a song by Ada Milea: “Its snowing mud on us/ A grey layer has set ...” This is not the real and unbiased information that should appear in a report.

Another statement by Chirtoacă about the “implementation of the road repair program” is followed by the reporter’s conclusion that, “This subject is one of the most painful ones as in recent years holes have turned into real craters.” Three opinions about the quality of repairs on Alba Iulia Street follow, then videos of roads and Dorin Chirtoacă are shown all accompanied by the Russian song “my dear, dear, you were walking and gods were helping.” The combination of music and videos puts the candidate in negative light without offering counter arguments to his statements in the electoral ad.

The reporter then raises doubts about the next achievement presented by Chirtoacă: “the procurement of 100 new trolleybuses of European standards.” Mr Strungaru states that, “More than half of the trolleybuses brought to Chişinău had technical defects and have been taken out of service.” As proof, an interview with a trolleybus driver is included.

Reporter: “What happened?”

Driver: “It broke down. The mechanic will come to look at it.”

Reporter: “Did it break down while you were driving on the road?”

Driver: “Yes, while driving it on the road.”

This dialogue is followed by a video clip shot from a mobile phone, as indicated on the screen, that contains a discussion between two people near an allegedly dysfunctional trolleybus: “Call Chirtoacă, ask for the password, (laughter). So should we vote for Chirtoacă or not?” (laughter) Again, viewers are not offered facts that dispute the achievements of the incumbent mayor but instead hear allegations from vague sources and circumstances.

Chirtoacă’s claim that he set up, “...over 100 playgrounds for children” is counteracted by the reporter’s statement, “In parallel people were complaining that scores of playgrounds have been transformed into parking lots or multistory blocs.” This is followed by a report from a Chisinau site where an old playground has been demolished that includes only two opinions. One person regrets that the playground has been demolished because many generations grew up playing there, and the other voice states that there is no need for the old and rusty iron because it is dangerous for children. It is not clear from this segment that the playground was demolished in order to build a parking lot. This same segment appeared in another news item in the same newscast (item 7) in which it is clearly stated that the playground was demolished in order to build a new one according to documents presented by the mayor’s office and that the decision to renovate the playground was made in February 2011 as part of the reconstruction of a number of old playgrounds. The item ends with a rhetorical question from the reporter: “Why such sudden concern from the authorities for children and playgrounds?” His conclusion is that their concern is part of the electoral campaign. The reporter’s intention to prove that the playgrounds have been transformed into parking lots is nothing more than a distortion of reality and a manipulation of public opinion by presenting false information.

Chirtoacă’s statement that he granted aid and compensation for pensioners and needy families is followed by the reporter’s conclusion that, “As gratitude, Dorin Chirtoacă was one step away from being stepped on by the needy families and by pensioners.” This conclusion is accompanied by videos from the archives—without specifying this fact—of a protest by pensioners organized by the non-government organization Salvagardare and Maia Laguta, in which the protesters pushed the mayor. The item does not make it clear that the protest took place before the granting of the aid referred to by the candidate.

Chirtoacă’s last statement, “These are real results that we have obtained together” is followed by the song “If you for vote me, hear this: I will build houses and kindergartens/ for mothers and children/For you to have sport and stadiums/for working people/I will proactively plead/for budgets to grow/To put the country on a track/of normal development.” The song is accompanied by a video of Chirtoacă serving wine, videos from the celebration of his birthday and tables with food, drinks and a lot of empty bottles. The item ends with Chirtoacă bursting into laughter while the song says “to put the country on a track /of normal development.”

This approach flagrantly violates the provisions of the Broadcast Code that say that reality cannot be distorted through editing tricks, commentaries, devices or titles (Art. 7). Also, the provisions of the Regulations of the Central Electoral Committee on Covering the Campaign for the General Local Elections of 5 June by the Moldovan Media are violated. They clearly stipulate that, “Electoral advertising cannot be included in news programs, sport programs, children’s programs, religious programs,” (p.12) and, “Electoral items published or broadcast, both those of the Central Electoral Commission and of the electoral candidates, cannot be accompanied by commentaries” (p.17).

Case Study No. 2

Moldova Suverană, 19 May 2011, p.1–2

Budget Irregularities When Ghimpu was Also Head of the Chisinau Municipal Council at the Mayor's Office

Author: anonymous

Moldova Suverană published the Audit Report on the Execution of the Municipal Budget for 2009 in a series of articles on May 19, 20, 24, 25 and 26. The first installment, which was not signed, was accompanied by an introduction that explained why the newspaper chose to republish this huge document in full without editing “even a comma.” The author explained to the readers that the report was made when the Chisinau Mayor's Office was, “exclusively controlled by the Ghimpu and Chirtoacă families, a period when huge thefts were committed along with incompetent and negligent work.”

Either out of incompetence or ill will, the anonymous author distorted reality and conveyed false messages to the readers. First of all, the title is tendentious and false. The report presents information from 2009, a period when Mihai Ghimpu was not head of the Chisinau Municipal Council (CMC) as insinuated in the introduction. He was head of the CMC from October 2007 to June 2008.⁵ In fact, in January and February 2009, the period covered by this audit report, this position was held by Eduard Mușuc (currently MP from the PCRM) who headed CMC from June 2008 until February 2009. After his dismissal,⁶ the CMC presidency was held by rotation, and a new president was elected only in the summer of 2010.⁷ For various reasons, however, the author does not mention this and puts the blame for the irregularities found on Ghimpu and Chirtoacă.

Note that the texts are very long and are accompanied by pictures of Ghimpu, Chirtoacă and Urechean. The use of those images next to a title and text that present various violations and fraudulent uses of public money aims to insinuate the idea that Ghimpu and Chirtoacă are to blame for what is mentioned in the report.

In conclusion, this series was of an obvious derogatory character and bore the risk of getting the newspaper sued for defamation and for spreading false information in bad faith.

Case Study No.3

Nezavisimaia Moldova, 19 May 2011

⁵ Mihai Ghimpu was legally elected to the position of head of the CMC: <http://politicom.moldova.org/news/mihai-ghimpu-a-fost-ales-legal-in-functia-de-presedinte-al-cmc-129835-rom.html>. Mihai Ghimpu's dismissal on the agenda of the CMC: <http://www.protv.md/stiri/politic/demiterea-lui-mihai-ghimpu-pe-ordinea-de-zi-a-consiliului.html>

⁶ Eduard Mușuc was dismissed by secret vote: <http://www.azi.md/ro/story/1338>. The head of the CMC was elected by rotation: http://www.capitala.md/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=133%3Apreedinte-al-cmc-ales-prin-rotaie&Itemid=4&lang=ro

⁷ CMC has a new president: <http://www.allmoldova.com/ro/moldova-news/society/1249050007.html>

Discussions on TV: Dodon wishes to conduct administrative activities while Chirtoacă is concerned with political posturing (<http://www.nm.md/daily/article/2011/05/19/0103.html>)

On 19 May, the newspaper *Nezavisimaia Moldova* published a report about the electoral debates that took place on 17 May on Publika TV between Igor Dodon, the PCRM candidate for mayor, and Dorin Chirtoacă, the LP candidate for the same office. The intention, a good one at first sight, of conveying to voters the most important segments from the program in fact turned into a model of biased selection of information and manipulation of public opinion.

Judging by the content of the story, the PCRM candidate was the most active in the debates as approximately 90 percent of the quotations from the program belong to Igor Dodon. He is quoted precisely each time while Chirtoacă's responses are missing. The few paragraphs in the newspaper contain the entire electoral program of the Communist candidate for the capital's office of mayor.

"Chişinău residents expect from us constructive discussions and not a political war; they expect solutions to real problems and not ideological confrontations," Igor Dodon said and added, "Unfortunately, there has been too much politicking in the management of the capital's mayor's office, much more than resolving real problems." The Communist candidate offers more answers and suggestions for overcoming any eventual misunderstandings with the ruling coalition if he should become mayor. "Reality proves that in the past months many AIE members have admitted they have supported the Alliance because they needed positions. I do not expect the Alliance's configuration to change, but I do expect constructive support if I don't get involved in politics. I will find common ground with Prime Minister Filat and with other persons."

Dorin Chirtoacă is quoted only at the end of the article. He offers a response to the final statement of his opponent and is introduced with the help of an assessment by the author. "Dorin Chirtoacă was **obviously dissatisfied** (s.n.) when Igor Dodon alluded to possible changes on the political arena."

Finally, the author remembers that, "According to publika.md, 14 candidates are fighting for the office of the capital's mayor." It is not clear if this is a reference strictly to this information or to the entire news item. In reality, this information was not on the website of the TV station where the two candidates met, so it would appear that newspaper made a reference to a source that does not exist.

The manner in which the information for the article was selected and the title was written prove the newspaper's lack of objectivity and impartiality. Although at first sight the article respects the principle of diversity of opinions by quoting both sides, the significant discrepancy between the amount of space offered to Igor Dodon and that reserved for Dorin Chirtoacă shows that a balance between the two sides was not observed. These two observations plus the author's opinion about the behavior of the candidates during the TV debates (it was a news item, not a commentary) denotes a tendentious attitude in favor of the PCRM candidate for mayor of Chisinau.

Coalition 2009 is a voluntary union of Moldovan non-government organizations that aims to contribute to ensuring free, fair, transparent and democratic parliamentary elections in Moldova and to continue promoting free, fair, transparent and democratic election of the Parliament of Moldova, 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.