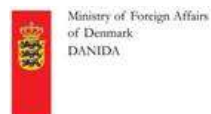


Monitoring Mass Media during the Campaign for Local General Elections of 5 June 2011

Report No. 4
30 May – 12 June 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 the mass media during the electoral campaign including the access of candidates to media outlets and whether the outlets guarantee pluralism of opinions. The aim is to analyze the 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. Monitoring Data



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 30 May to 12 June 2011, Prime TV, a private station with national coverage, broadcast 76 news items with a direct or indirect electoral character. In the first half of the monitored period, during the last five days prior to the elections, the "Elections 2011" segment included 28 news items. These referred to the declarations and events organized by candidates for the position of regional mayors, as well as to some accusations and reactions from them. News with indirect electoral character included a number of subjects about the activity of the Government and of the Interim President.

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 newscast of 4 June, Prime TV drew attention to the last preparations for the local elections. Journalists in three news items spoke about the number of citizens expected at polling stations, about the voting model, and offered details about the voting procedure for persons with provisional or lost documents.

On the day of the local general elections, Prime TV had a newscast that was twice as long as usual weekend newscasts. Of the 15 news items, 13 concerned the ongoing local elections in the capital and in other places. Journalists prepared reports from Comrat, Balti and a number of villages, and showed reactions to the voters' performance, opinions from the Central Electoral Commission as well as declarations by the main electoral competitors and political leaders in the country.

Objectivity and impartiality

During the monitored period no grave problems were registered regarding the separation of opinions from facts which could have distorted reality. The majority of news items presented information correctly, and we cannot speak about obvious tendentiousness in the journalists' promotion of certain ideas or persons.

However, figures indicate a higher presence in Prime TV newscasts of leaders and candidates for elected local positions from the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM). The main characters of 19 items were Interim President Marian Lupu, ministers from the PDM, the PDM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor Valentina Buliga (6 electoral reports) and other PDM candidates for mayor in other places around the country.

On the other hand, the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) and its candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor were present in 14 reports. Some of them were structured as controversial materials, in which Igor Dodon appeared either in relation to accusations addressed to the candidate of the Liberal Party (PL), Dorin Chirtoaca, or giving his reaction to counter-accusations coming from this -opponent. Overall, the Liberal Party and Dorin Chirtoaca were present in 10 items.

The Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), its leader Vlad Filat and its candidates for elected local positions were present in 5 reports, all of them clustered together in the week prior to the local elections. Other political entities and actors involved in the campaign and referred to in Prime TV newscasts included the Social Democratic Party (PSD) – 2 items, the Party of Socialists "Patria Rodina" – 1 item, and the independent candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, Mihai Godea – 2 items.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Of the 76 news items with a direct or indirect electoral character, 8 items were controversial, with accusations addressed to some electoral competitors. All of them provided the accused party with the right to reply. The majority of conflicts concerned the electoral dispute between the candidates of the PCRM and of the PL for the position of the capital's mayor. According to the monitoring, accusations intensified in the week immediately following the elections, when the fight between Igor Dodon and Dorin Chirtoaca heightened as they passed into the second round of elections. Five of the eight controversial items were broadcast after 5 June.

On 31 May, at a press conference, the PCRM brought accusations against the PL, claiming that it was preparing documents to import garbage from abroad. The Liberals rejected the accusations and declared that such a document was edited by the former leadership of the Republic of Moldova, i.e. by the PCRM. The attacks by the two candidates who passed to the second round of the local elections, for the position of the capital's general mayor, and their representatives began immediately after the announcement of the final results of the first round of the local elections. On 7 June the PL leader claimed that the PCRM paid people to vote for its candidates to the Mayor's Office and the city council. On the other hand, Igor Dodon claimed that he would have won in the first round if the election results had not been forged. The item ended with "Ghimpu is looking for proof, and Dodon requests repeated elections in some constituencies". Shortly after the accusations regarding the forged elections, Dodon and Chirtoaca proceeded to direct attacks. On 10 June the Liberal candidate accused the Communist candidate of forging some official documents, while Dodon accused Chirtoaca of money laundering through the purchase of trolleybuses for the capital. Dodon was laconic and stated that all the evidence had already been submitted to the Prosecutor's Office.

The controversial nature of the news items was characteristic not only to items about the dispute for the City Hall between Chirtoaca and Dodon. On 2 June, Vlad Filat, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), demanded that the Democratic candidate Valentina Buliga withdraw from the electoral race in favor of the PL candidate. Buliga declared that she would not withdraw, since there were no guarantees that her center-right voters would vote for Dorin Chirtoaca.

Language and videos used

During the monitored period the station displayed no grave deviations from the ethical norms regarding the writing and approach to electoral subjects. The same can be said about the elements of montage and presentation, which were generally correct and without offensive exaggerations.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 30 May to 12 June the NIT TV station broadcast an impressive number of items with direct and indirect electoral character - a total of 132 news items relevant to this monitoring. Every *Curier* newscast broadcast during this period included only 2-3 short items of general public interest; the rest were materials referring to various aspects of the electoral campaign. Until the date of the local general elections NIT widely covered, in long reports (3-6 minutes each) the campaign actions of Igor Dodon, the PCRM candidate for the position of the Chisinau general mayor, and the electoral meetings of the PCRM president Vladimir Voronin with voters in various places around the country. Such materials contained elements of electoral advertising in favor of the PCRM candidates for elective positions. At the same time, the station's editorial policy was directed toward producing constant and absolute criticism of the PL candidate for the capital's Mayor's Office, Dorin Chirtoaca, and of the entire governing alliance. Both were referred to in disfavoring items and addressed messages with negative connotation. The other candidates for the position of

Chisinau mayor were either absent in NIT newscasts, or referred to only when they made declarations accusing Dorin Chirtoaca or favoring the PCRM and its candidate. The campaign events and meetings with voters conducted by electoral competitors other than those of the PCRM were overlooked.

After 5 June, NIT broadcast news items and reports which on the one hand presented the results of the local elections through the prism of the PCRM, and on the other hand accused the parties of the governing group of using administrative resources in elections and of forging the voting. NIT also claimed that the Central Electoral Commission and the Chisinau District Electoral Council intentionally delayed the announcement of election results to provide the time necessary to forge the results. NIT editors selected news items, commented on them and made montages in such a way as to generate the viewers' feeling of stolen elections and faked results.

Objectivity and impartiality

Out of a total of 132 news items with direct or indirect electoral character broadcast by NIT during the reported period, the absolute majority – 112 – were unbalanced and biased, presenting information subjectively and failing to separate facts from opinions. The PCRM was directly favored in all materials which referring to it, both by detailing coverage of all events/reactions of this electoral competitor and by the frequency by which declarations by the representatives and candidates of the PCRM were broadcast. Thus the president of the PCRM, Vladimir Voronin, and this party's candidate for the position of Chisinau general mayor, Igor Dodon, were the most intensely featured people during the reported period, being referred to in exclusively positive materials. At the same time the leaders of the governing alliance, especially the PL candidate for the Mayor's Office, Dorin Chirtoaca, were always presented in disfavoring context, and were sometimes labeled and/or censured.

During the last week before the elections, for example, the station broadcast in its evening newscast 30 items that presented the PCRM and its candidate, Igor Dodon, in a positive light, and 31 negative items about the Alliance for European Integration (AIE) and the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca. Thus, the viewers of NIT could find out the following about Igor Dodon during this period: together with Zinaida Greceanii he visited Moscow, where he met Moscow's mayor, Mr. Sobianin, and the head of the Russian presidential administration, Mr. Nariskin, and established collaborative relations (30 May); he collected over 200 thousand requests from Chisinau residents concerning the capital's problems, and promised to present reports every 6 months (30 May); he launched a set of proposals regarding city development (31 May); he is an exemplary father (1 June); he was a victim of dirty attacks from Dorin Chirtoaca (2 June); he has solutions for increasing the efficiency of the Mayor's Office (3 June); he founded the setting of a cross on the dome of a church in Chisinau (3 June). During the same period, it was said that Dorin Chirtoaca was unable to solve the problem of unauthorized buildings at the "Artico" Center in Chisinau (1 June); he was accused of involvement in corruption schemes and conflicts of interests (1 June); the Mayor's Office was blamed for non-observance of a court decision, which could result in payment of damages amounting to MDL 10 million to a business entity, money that would be paid by the capital's residents (2 June); Dorin Chirtoaca was accused of directing the campaign of denigration against Igor Dodon (2 June); etc.

On 30 May, NIT broadcast a 22-minute-long (!) item about the “social action” performed by PCRM the previous day, and it was specified that on 29 May, the day of the action, which had been covered by NIT, according to “some viewers” the station had been intentionally jammed, and in some places the broadcast signal had even disappeared. *“Let’s now see what was so insistently jammed yesterday”*, said presenter Lia Nichiforova. The duration, character and frequency of declarations, the selection and montage of images, including the application of inscriptions like “A single voice”, “Down with the Alliance!”, “Moldova chooses victory”, the tone of comments and the revolutionary musical background chosen for this material, make it very clear that NIT did not aim at informing viewers about the event, but at transmitting a message of propaganda and manipulation, with an evident electoral connotation. At the end of the material the NIT presenter thanked, on behalf of the PCRM, the participants in this and other actions of the party, and read the full address of the PCRM, by which citizens were called to vote for the candidates of this electoral competitor. On 2 June, the TV station broadcast the address of the PCRM leader to voters, which included the following electoral appeal: *“Say a definite NO to the parties and candidates of the Alliance at the Sunday local elections! This is the only way for you to be able to save schools, city halls and hospitals from collapse! Only the convincing victory of the Party of Communists in regions – in city halls, local and raion councils – will save the country from chaos and degradation, and the people – from poverty and derision! On 5 June, vote only for the PCRM candidates!”*

In the period prior to the elections of 5 June, NIT also intensely promoted the PCRM candidates for elective positions in other places in the country. They broadcast disfavoring materials about the Communists’ counter-candidates at the local level, failing to provide them with the right to reply, which required by the Broadcasting Code and by the Journalists’ Code of Ethics. Thus, the station’s newscasts included messages with an electoral and propaganda-esque character by PCRM candidates for mayoral positions around the country - Elena Bondarenco for Soroca (30 May), Constantin Sibov for Comrat (31 May), Anatolie Covalenco for Ciniseuti village, Rezina raion (1 June), and Vasili Panciuc for Balti (3 June).

In most of the materials about the results of the local general elections broadcast by NIT the electoral authorities were accused of favoring the violations of the electoral legislation, or this fact was implied. The manner and tonality of the reports, the use of facts without context and partisan interpretations display the station’s intention to raise hysteria among the people, generating a feeling amongst citizens that the elections had been massively forged. A vivid example was the newscast of 5 June, which included 18 items, 12 of which were about situations declared by NIT to be violations of the electoral legislation and attempts to forge the elections. All of them referred to representatives of the parties in the governing alliance, with the situations being mainly commented on by PCRM observers and only in some cases by electoral officers from the polling stations and representatives of the Central Electoral Commission. NIT continued with accusations in the newscast of 6 June, speaking about “*misdeemeanors*”, “*obvious forging*”, and “*unprecedented*”. They presented the declarations of the PCRM representatives accusing the government of attempting to forge the elections, the comments left on the NIT website (all accusing and pro-PCRM), the opinions of some citizens interviewed in the streets (all said that the election results had been faked), the opinion of blogger Veaceslav Valiko, which had the

same character, and who was quoted for 4 (!) minutes, etc. Thus a truncated image of reality was transmitted, and in conditions when 46.5% of voters voted for Dorin Chirtoaca it is clear that this opinion is not shared by all residents of the capital. NIT selected only the responses from citizens which were convenient to the station's editorial policy, distorting the real situation.

The absolute majority of NIT newscasts were filled with reporters' comments/assessments, and with reporters' opinions presented as facts. The reactions/releases/declarations/appeals of other electoral competitors in general were not covered by this TV station or were commented upon maliciously. Thus, NIT became a mouthpiece of the Party of Communists, and the content of news items suggests that from an editorial point of view NIT is a politically partisan TV station. This is contrary to the professional ethics and to legal provisions (the Broadcasting Code, Article 7 (3): *To encourage and facilitate the diversified expression of opinion trends, broadcasters shall make truthful, balanced and impartial coverage of electoral campaigns*).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

The deontological principle of diversity of opinions was neglected by NIT; the majority of the news items broadcasted presented a single opinion, the one of PCRM representatives, or several opinions, but the PCRM opinion was dominant and detailed, while the other opinions/positions were presented briefly or contested by opponents or reporters. Sources of information for NIT reporters are usually PCRM representatives or supporters, and other attitudes and ideas are not encouraged by this TV station. In materials with controversial subjects the right to reply was provided in extremely rare cases and in unequal conditions compared to the accusations. Thus, of the 67 controversial news items broadcast by NIT during this period, only 14 presented the opinions of all parties involved. The other materials presented a single party, usually the PCRM.

At the same time, 96 of the 132 news items lacked diversity of opinions, although several sources were necessary, including experts, persons directly involved, etc., to make news more precise. Examples in this regard can be news items broadcast during the reported period about the Communist leader's meetings with voters, where direct or indirect accusations were launched against authorities, and the governors' position was not presented. In the newscast of 31 May, the Comrat city authorities were accused by the PCRM candidate of doing nothing to solve the problem of water supply for the residents, but the authorities' reply was unavailable. Another item in the same newscast regarded an "electoral fight", with the only source of information being the secretary of the Cimislia raion council, a PCRM representative, who said that the fight had been provoked by the PLDM representative, but the latter was not provided with the right to reply. On 2 June NIT reported about a conflict between the Chisinau Mayor's Office and a construction company. At one point the reporter said the following: *"They (Vice-Mayor Grozavu and Chief Architect Modarca – our note) are understood to be expecting a bribe amounting to 10% of the total cost of works..."*, again without giving a reply from the two officials. No right to reply was provided in a number of materials about the voting on 5 June, and in the *Curier* newscast on 6 June NIT speculated on a case of suicide attempt at the neurology hospital in Branzeni, Edinet raion, presenting the information from a single source, including accusations against a representative of the Democratic Party, whose opinion was

unavailable. The station also failed to provide the right to reply to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) when Igor Dodon was said to be convinced that CEC stole his victory (7 and 8 June), to the representatives of the parties accused of corruption by Marcel Darie, ex-candidate from the Party of Law and Justice for the position of Chisinau general mayor (10 June), in other items with controversial subjects. This is contrary to Article 7 (c) of the Broadcasting Code, which stipulates that in cases of subjects regarding conflict situations the media shall observe the principle of providing information from several sources.

Language and videos used

In criticizing materials with direct or indirect electoral character that referred to the AIE and the candidates of the parliamentary parties other than the PCRM, NIT continued using various editorial tricks, such as integrating/applying irrelevant images to the presented subject, focusing and repeating images, applying inscriptions on the video and musical background aimed at amplifying the manipulating message. This fact was especially observed in items about the “social action” performed by the PCRM on 29 May, in the item about the American influence and implications in Moldovan policy (*see case study*), in other news items and reports.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 30 May to 12 June 2011 Euro TV, a station with regional coverage, broadcast a total of 52 news items with direct or indirect electoral character. During the week prior to elections (30 May – 5 June), the station reported about the opinion poll performed by the Institute of Public Policies and the candidates with the best chances to be elected, covered electoral events of the candidates from the PCRM, PL, PLDM, PDM and of the independent candidate Mihai Godea. At the same time, Euro TV informed viewers about the actions of the CEC regarding the organization of the voting day and actions of electoral education, as well as, about the reports of the civil society that monitored the correctness of the electoral campaign.

Of the total of 52 analyzed news items only 8 had an indirect electoral character. They were news items that informed viewers about the conferring of Prime Minister Filat's Award for Freedom, about relations within the AIE and the possible joint session of the alliance after 5 June, about the PCRM president, Vladimir Voronin, launching in journalism, about the increase of salaries for public sector employees starting with June, about the assassination of the Moldova Tennis Federation president, etc.

During the week following the elections (6-12 June), the station presented a number of news items about the preliminary results of the elections, as well as the reactions of both politicians and international and civil society organizations.

Objectivity and impartiality

Materials broadcast by Euro TV during the reported period were mainly impartial and objective, without grave deviations from deontological norms. During the first week of monitoring, the station provided space in its newscasts for several electoral competitors: the

PL, PCRM, PLDM, PDM, and Mihai Godea, an independent candidate. However, we observed a slight favoring of the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca, who appeared in 16 items in mainly positive and neutral contexts. Thus, Euro TV informed viewers about the press conferences organized by Dorin Chirtoaca, his testing of the cars purchased by the Mayor's Office for the traffic police, about Chirtoaca's participation in unveiling the bust of the academician Testemiteanu, and about the electoral support announced by the AIE and Mihai Godea for the PL candidate in the second round of elections. On the other hand, the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon, appeared in as few as 9 news items, mostly neutral or negative. They covered specifically his electoral events, the results of the public opinion barometer, the preliminary results of the elections, and his replies to the accusations against him.

It's to be noted that out of the total of 52 news items, only 2 displayed problems with objectivity and impartiality. These materials covered the preliminary results of the elections, broadcast on 6 June. Thus, the station announced that *the PCRM steals from raion councils*, which was the reporter's conclusion. The negative connotation of the term *steal*³ used in the text and in the inscription displays the author's attitude towards the subject. In the same newscast, in the item about the victory of the PCRM candidate in Balti, the reporter claims that "*the Northern capital stays in the hands of Communists*", which also reveals the reporter's attitude towards the PCRM.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

During the reported period, Euro TV broadcast several items (8) which, although not controversial, required several sources and background information. Thus, the news about the opinion polls, which covered the top list of candidates with good chances for winning in elections and the top list of politicians trusted by the people, contained only data from the poll that was announced at the press conference. They did not include opinions of experts on the subject, although this was necessary. Also, the item about the need for AIE unification in order to increase Chirtoaca's chances in the second round presented only the discourse of the experts supporting the idea of unification (7 June); in the item about the election results announced by the CEC the only speaker was Iurie Ciocan, the President of the Commission (7 June); the item about the candidates' expenses during the campaign presented only figures, without the opinions of experts in the field (6 June).

The station had certain problems with observance of the principle of the balance of sources. Of the 16 items with controversial character, 7 (43%) failed to present all the sides. These items were those regarding the Promo-LEX report containing accusations against some candidates and electoral offices, without their reply (3 and 6 June); the item from the press conference held by Mihai Godea, who accused the AIE of inactivity (31 May); the IJC report presenting data about the defective performance of some media outlets in the electoral campaign, without requesting their opinion (2 June); the press conference held by IDOM (Institute for Human Rights in Moldova), launching accusations against managers of some psychiatric hospitals (7 June); etc.

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

Language and videos used

During the monitored period we observed no cases where Euro TV journalists used pejorative or licentious language or images to deform the reality and question the observance of ethical and professional standards.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the reported period Jurnal TV broadcast 68 news items with direct and indirect electoral character⁴. Most of the materials with direct electoral character were included in the “Local Elections 2011” segment (to be mentioned that the station included in this segment news items referring to the candidates for the position of mayor or councilor). Other materials relevant to this monitoring (regarding the leaders of parties participating in the campaign but not candidates themselves, as well as news items based on information from the Central Electoral Commission, the District Electoral Council, etc.) were not included in this special segment. At the same time, the “Local Elections 2011” segment was not aired during the week after the elections, although most of the electoral materials were broadcast during this period.

During the reported period Jurnal TV informed viewers about the results of the Public Opinion Barometer; about the opinions of some candidates regarding this poll; about some campaign events performed by the candidates Dorin Chirtoaca, Igor Dodon, Radu Busila, Mihai Godea, Valentina Buliga and Victor Bodiu; about campaign incidents (the case of a PDM candidate in Criuleni raion); about the request of the PLDM president, Vlad Filat, for Valentina Buliga, PDM candidate for Chisinau Mayor’s Office, to withdraw from the race, etc. Several materials referred to the mutual accusations of the main candidates for the position of the capital’s mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca and Igor Dodon (from 30 May to 5 June the accusations were connected to the purchase of trolleybuses from Belarus, and after the announcement of the first round results the accusations concerned the forging of the election results). On 5 June, election day, the station broadcast several materials about the voting process (7 electoral items in the 20.00 newscast), and in the period immediately after Jurnal TV covered the results of the first round of elections, the contending of some electoral competitors, the irregularities perceived by observers and competitors, the launching of Dorin Chirtoaca and Igor Dodon into the second round of campaigning, etc.

Objectivity and impartiality

Jurnal TV generally covered the relevant issues in a fair and equal manner. The PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca, and the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon, often appeared in the same items, in the context of mutual accusations. Overall, Jurnal TV referred to Chirtoaca and Dodon in 21 materials each. However, the context in which they appeared was different: the PL candidate appeared in a neutral and positive light, and the PLDM candidate – in a neutral and negative context. Some electoral materials with direct or indirect character displayed a disfavoring of the PCRM and implicitly of its candidates. On 31 May, for example, Jurnal TV broadcast an item about the “Heroes Cemetery” in Chisinau, which, according to the reporter, is “*rather the object of some*

⁴ For technical reasons (lack of signal) the 20.00 newscast on Sunday, 12 June could not be watched.

dubious business of the Communist ex-government than an honorary cemetery". On 11 June, the 20.00 newscast included the material "500 lei for each of the formerly deported" (item no. 8 in the newscast, about Prime Minister Vlad Filat's meeting with a group of formerly deported persons and political prisoners), in which the presenters said that *"Filat mentioned that everyone must know what happened during that period, which some people consider to be one of glory and welfare"*. At the same time, the reporter said that the president of the Association of the Formerly Deported and Political Prisoners, Valentina Sturza, mentioned that *"for two years, since the change of government, the attitude towards the formerly deported and political prisoners has changed as well"*.

Igor Dodon was disfavored in the item "Damian Hancu calls to elections" (8 June, no. 7), in which presenters began in the lead with: *"come home and **vote against the Communist plague** (our bold type). It is the appeal of Damian Hancu, a victim of the April 2009 events. He pleads for Chisinau residents to **not let themselves be allured by Igor Dodon's promises and vote for Dorin Chirtoaca**" (our bold type). The same item quoted excerpts from D. Hancu's declaration, saying that *"the hands of the PCRM candidate are stained by the blood of the people killed in April 2009", "let's not allow the criminals that killed peaceful protesters in April 2009 steal our European future"* (our bold type). And an explanatory inscription said, *"The young man believes that the capital's residents will be in danger if Dodon becomes mayor"* (our bold type). It is also to be mentioned that in some items referring to Igor Dodon, presenters called him "comrade" (and PCRM representatives – "comrades").*

The vast majority of news items were impartial, with no perceived personal attitude of the reporters to the covered issues. However, several materials were identified in which some of the expressions used represented journalists' personal perspectives. Thus, on 3 June, in news item no. 5, the presenter said that *"promises flow in abundance"*, and *"the candidates try hard to win the trust of the undecided voters"*. On 8 June, in item no. 6, the presenter said that *"The show from the Parliament could move to the Chisinau city council"*. On 9 June, in item no. 6, the reporter said that *"AIE leaders finally unite against the common enemy"*. Also, on 10 June item no. 7 (about the session of the PCRM-representing councilors at the city hall) was titled *"Dodon plays boss"*, while the text stated that *"Dodon is already bossing at the city hall", "the Communists' impatience to start work is, however, illegal"*. The text was not attributed to any source, the opinions belonging solely to the reporters.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

The majority of materials broadcast by Jurnal TV during the reported period were fair and balanced, presenting varied opinions regarding the events described in newscasts. Almost all controversial materials, a total of 13, also presented the opinion of parties referred to or accused. The exception was a single item, in which reporters failed to include a second opinion or to explain whether they had made any attempts to find the persons involved. Thus, in an item on 31 May (no. 6 in the newscast), *"Stop the destruction of the historical center"*, in which the PPCD candidate, Radu Busila, and the party's president, Victor Ciobanu, *"accuse the local administration of corruption and fraudulent schemes in construction"* (according to the item's lead), while *"appeals to the Ministry of Culture, the*

Prosecutor's Office, and the Mayor's Office were unsuccessful” and “the destruction of monuments continues”, required the inclusion of the accused persons’ reply.

It is to be noted that in the item *“Political fight in Orhei”* (8 June, item no. 5 of the newscast), which covered a conflict between the incumbent Mayor of Orhei city, who unsuccessfully ran for a new term, Ion Stratulat, and the candidate for the position of councilor, Nicanor Pulbere, the Head of the city’s housing and public utilities company, who was discharged from his position by I. Stratulat, it was said that some of the persons involved in the conflict refused to discuss it with the Jurnal TV reporter (meaning I. Stratulat and the new head of the housing and public utilities company). Further, the item *“Damian Hancu calls to elections”* (8 June) specifies that attempts were made to reach Igor Dodon for a reaction.

Language and videos used

During this period no deviations from the deontological norms regarding the language and videos used by Jurnal TV in the monitored newscasts were identified.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

N4, a private TV station with regional coverage, broadcast 68 news items with direct or indirect electoral character in the period 30 May – 12 June. During the week of monitoring prior to the 5 June elections, the station continued to inform the public about the ongoing electoral campaign and to present the events organized by the main candidates for the position of the capital’s mayor.

Special attention during this period was drawn to the events attended, or produced, by Prime Minister Vlad Filat. During the five monitored days prior to the elections Filat was the subject of 12 news reports (30 May – visit to Cotul Morii, the most popular politician and donation for a children’s rehabilitation center; 31 May – last day of school celebration in Sangera; 1 June – International Children’s Day and laureate of the Award for Freedom; 2 June – two items from the press conference organized by the Prime Minister and his meeting with the national football team; 3 June – financial aid for a weightlifter and declarations in Nisporeni; etc.). Besides these subjects, there were other reports in which Prime Minister appeared with reactions and opinions about some events or accusations created by electoral competitors. It is worth mentioning that immediately following the newscasts a segment of electoral advertising began with an advertisement in which the Prime Minister is seen against a background of PLDM symbols appealing to citizens to vote for the party’s team. The way that the Prime Minister’s image was transferred from the news, in which he is seen to be actively managing and/or involved in public affairs, into advertising for an electoral competitor was very vivid and could influence the viewers’ perception.

In the second half of the monitored period (6-12 June), i.e. after the local general elections of 5 June, the majority of the monitored news items (34 subjects) covered the presentation

of the local elections results and their interpretation by various political actors. At the same time, during this period the station also broadcast 6 pieces involving of the two electoral competitors continuing in the fight for the capital's leadership, Dorin Chirtoaca and Igor Dodon. These items focused rather on the mutual accusations (7 June – the Liberals accused the PCRM of forging the Sunday elections; 8 June – the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon, declared that the *Puppeteer* financed the electoral campaign for the Liberals' Dorin Chirtoaca; 9 June – the Communist candidate Igor Dodon requested the General Prosecutor's Office to investigate Dorin Chirtoaca regarding the misappropriation of public money; 10 June – Dorin Chirtoaca accused Igor Dodon of forging the Official Monitor of Romania).

Objectivity and impartiality

Of the 68 news items with direct or indirect electoral character, 7 failed to be objective and separate facts from opinions. In the race for sensation, and to make the issue more attractive, N4 reporters forgot to separate their own opinions from the information presented in the news items. Instead, they resorted to generalization and their own perspectives of the facts and events. For example, on 31 May the Prime Minister attended the last day of school celebration at a lyceum in Săngeră. The reporter said, *“And as is customary for Vladimir Filat, he came with presents for the lyceum students”*. This generalization makes Prime Minister look like a politician who always has presents for people. Or, on 3 June, N4 broadcast a material about the reply of Valentina Buliga, PDM candidate for the position of mayor, to Filat's request for her to withdraw from the race. The manner in which the reporter began the item, *“Valentina Buliga doesn't want, period”*, creates the impression that she is headstrong, and for those who failed to understand, the reporter added, *“the PDM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor **categorically** (our bold type) refuses to withdraw from the electoral campaign in favor of Dorin Chirtoaca”*. The highlighted word and the reporter's emphasis can disturb the perception of a news consumer.

The list of personal perceptions presented by to N4 reporters can be seen also in other examples. We will mention only two other cases when they showed their astonishment and surprise by their expressions. On 8 June the station broadcast a report about the reaction of the State Enterprise “Registru” to multiple cases of granting the residential registration before the elections. The reporter exclaimed, *“**And to crown it all** (our bold type), the law does not forbid for a residence of several square meters to be the place of registration for a hundred people, for example”*. The same happened on 9 June, when the authors of the report, about the consolidation of the Alliance for European Integration prior to the second round of the capital's mayor elections, rejoiced *“Finally the AIE officially supports Dorin Chirtoaca in the second round of elections for the general mayor”*.

The above observations aim at drawing the reporters' attention to the manner in which they write and express themselves in connection with certain issues. The information above suggests that they showed exaggerated expectations or maybe failed to check their emotions.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

During the monitored period the N4 TV station generally provided a diversity of opinions in its newscasts. However, reporters should be more careful in structuring their reports, since

even if the right to reply was observed, some materials were not balanced. An example in this regard is the item of 3 June about an anti-PLDM coalition in Carpineni village, Hancesti raion, formed by three parties, the PL, PCRM and PDM. The item implied that these parties had advanced a single counter-candidate to that of the PLDM. The PLDM candidate and Vlad Filat were present in the report. For diversity of opinions reporters presented the position of the PL as well, through Dorin Chirtoaca, who rejected the accusations. The authors, however, returned to the idea voiced in the beginning and finish the report with the following expression, “*Liberal Democrats insist that the PL, PCRM and PDM have a single candidate*”. This ending overturned any frail balance of sources that the reporters had attempted to build, and gave the item a touch of tendentiousness.

During the monitored period, every fifth item with direct or indirect electoral character (12 of 68) was controversial, and all included the reply of the party involved.

Language and videos used

With some exceptions mentioned in the segment *Objectivity and impartiality*, the language of the N4 newscasts tended to be correct and balanced from the point of view of deontology. The same thing can be said about the use of videos and other elements of montage.

PRINT MEDIA



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the reported period, the daily *Adevărul* had a total of 38 articles with direct or indirect electoral character, including correspondingly marked electoral advertising. Up until election day articles covered the ongoing campaign, the declarations/reactions of electoral competitors, the assessment of opinion polls, editorials and comments about elections and their importance, details about the voting procedure, information about the violations identified by observers, etc. After polling day the newspaper wrote about the results of the exit poll and its errors, the preliminary data of the CEC, the results of elections in some places in the country, their appreciation by various politicians and experts, the criticism of the correctness of elections by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the performance of the second round of elections in the capital and the decision of the Alliance for European Integration to support the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca, etc. Also *Adevărul* covered the assassination of the Tennis Federation president, Igor Turcan, former head of campaign for the independent candidate for the position of Chisinau general mayor, Mihai Godea. On 10 June, the newspaper published the article “*The Communist Dodon lies about being censured by us*”, as reaction to the accusations of censure launched by the PCRM candidate against *Adevărul*.

Objectivity and impartiality

The deontological principle of journalistic impartiality and objectivity was observed by the *Adevărul* journalists in all electoral news items published in this period. The principle of

separation of facts from opinions was also observed, and the value judgments expressed in editorials were based on facts and did not aim at distorting the truth.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

From the editorial point of view the newspaper was unbiased and fair; it did not present information from a single perspective, and the diversity of opinions and the right to reply was observed in the absolute majority of materials in *Adevărul*. The article “*Communist march against the Alliance*” (30 May), which had a controversial character since it contained the PCRM accusations and the request for the AIE to resign, did not present the opinion of the representatives of the governing alliance, but did quote the opinion of an anonymous passerby speaking against the Communists. The other news items presented the opinions of all the parties involved.

Language and images used

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



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 30 May to 12 June 2011 the eight issues of the *Moldova Suverană* newspaper contained 60 articles with direct and indirect electoral character, including materials appearing in the “Elections 2011” segment. As journalistic genre, they were analyses and opinion articles. Like in the previous period, news articles were few and often abbreviated (most often – news items of the Moldpres agency or unsigned). The newspaper included 5 advertising texts in the “Elections 2011” segment, with the note “Paid from the electoral fund” (all were published in the period 31 May – 3 June), and also some advertising materials without corresponding marking (for example, the article “*Igor Dodon: on 5 June I won in Chisinau, on 19 June I will win in the entire municipality*”, published on 10 June, see case study).

The publication continued to provide a lot of space for opinion articles (most often signed by the newspaper’s employees) and for paid electoral articles, which usually began on page 1 and continued on page 2 or 3 (belonging to the staff of the PCRM candidate or to political analysts writing for the website *ava.md*, supporting the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon), to the detriment of informative materials. Thus readers were not provided with sufficient information to be able to independently form opinions.

Moldova Suverană continued selectively covering events from the campaign; the readers were especially informed about the electoral events organized by the PCRM, in some cases mentioning that articles are advertising, and in other cases not.

The majority of opinion articles in this newspaper were defamatory against the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca, the PL president, Mihai Ghimpu, the PLDM president, Vlad Filat, or against other representatives of the AIE. These articles were filled with accusations, their authors using pejorative language, and images were faked - contravened ethical and deontological principles.

Objectivity and impartiality

The majority of the materials published in the eight issues of the newspaper in the period 30 May – 12 June displayed a clear favoring of the PCRM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, Igor Dodon, and disfavoring of his counter-candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca (PL). Igor Dodon and the PCRM leader, Vladimir Voronin, were mentioned in 30 articles, all in a positive context. Examples in this regard are articles "*Igor Dodon met several Russian officials in Moscow*" (31 May), "*Dodon is not only the solution, he is Chisinau's salvation*" (31 May), "*Chisinau needs an anti-crisis manager*" (3 June), "*Igor Dodon – the season of civilized change*" (3 June), "*Moldova chose the Party of Communists*" (9 June), "*Igor Dodon: on 5 June I won in Chisinau, on 19 June I will win in the entire municipality*" (an interview with Igor Dodon, published on 10 June), etc.

On the other hand, all of the 26 articles referring to Dorin Chirtoaca presented him in a negative light, sometimes introducing false and/or defamatory information. During the reported period, *Moldova Suverană* continued publishing, in every issue of the newspaper, a series of articles under the general heading "*Irregularities from the time when Ghimpu was the president of the Chisinau City Council*". During this period the newspaper published the title "*Is Chirtoaca a non-corrupt mayor?*" or "*Was Dorin Chirtoaca a non-corrupt mayor?*" (regarding an audit report about the execution of the Chisinau municipal budget for 2009). All these texts were accompanied by images presenting Dorin Chirtoaca and Mihai Ghimpu (sometimes Serafim Urechean, too), and the blame for the problems identified in the audit report was transferred to Chirtoaca and Ghimpu. Other examples of tendentious materials failing to meet the standards for qualitative journalism were the articles "*The great evil*" (which has a general heading "*Do not fear, Chirtoaca will fail!*" (1 June); "*After the privatization of IPTEH, Filat aims at the 'Toma Ciorba' hospital*" (1 June); "*How far one can get with lies, or Alliance has lost the reins of government*" (2 June), "*With Filat and Chirtoaca we are like in a trough!*" (2 June), "*Liberal invalids!!!*" (3 June); "*Filat – contraband, Basescu – propaganda!*" (9 June); etc.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

During this monitoring period *Moldova Suverană* again failed to provide diversity of opinions. In 24 articles information was presented from a single source or from several sources, but all from the same perspective. The newspaper continued to ignore the compulsory principle of quoting both sides in controversial materials. Thus, none of the 17 articles covering a controversial subject, including accusations against some electoral competitor or the party by representatives of another, provided the right to reply as required by deontological norms.

Language and images used

In 20 materials published in *Moldova Suverană* journalists used pejorative, insinuating and semi-licentious expressions, caricatures, collages without corresponding marking or images

faked for manipulation. Like in the previous period, the most frequent attacks were against the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca. He was called *Dorin Kirtokoiul* (31 May), *this elderly pimpled boy* (1 June), *already former youth Dorin Chirtoaca*, *Chirtoaca-Chishtoaca*, *the old youngster*, etc. (in an article published on 2 June), *invalid city rulers* (3 June), etc. The AIE was described as *a union of financial interests of some clans, political and oligarchic cartels, Liberal rogue, adventurous governors, highwaymen governors* (31 May), *political abortions* (1 June), *some batty politicians, corrupt, conceited, blackmail-able and easy to buy for abandonment of national dignity* (3 June), etc. Most often these labels were contained in opinion articles, and according to the deontological code, *opinions, by their nature, although are subjective and need not observe the criterion of correctness regarding the reality, nevertheless must be expressed honestly and ethically*.

At the same time, the photographs or photo collages most often portray Dorin Chirtoaca in disfavoring light, unconnected to the subject of the article. For example, an article from the series “Is Chirtoaca a non-corrupt mayor?” had a photo made at a divine service, and the PL candidate for the capital’s mayor and Mihai Ghimpu were holding candles in their hands (2 June, p. 2). The issue of 2 June also had a faked photo which depicted Mihai Ghimpu tying an apron to a woman and Dorin Chirtoaca near him, although he did not participate at the electoral action when the PL president gave aprons to some saleswomen at a market in Chisinau (article “*With Filat and Chirtoaca we are like in a trough!*”, p.3). Another example in this regard: a faked photo in which Dorin Chirtoaca is on the stairs of a trolleybus (article “*Chisinau needs an anti-crisis manager*”, 3 June, p. 3). Also, the article “*Liberal Democrats declared open war against democracy*” (8 June, p. 1 and 3) had two photos, one of which suggested that D. Chirtoaca was one of those who on 7 April 2009 stole computers from the Parliament, and the second was a caricature of a man praying and the text “*Give us, Lord, good judgment for elections...* ”.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

The newspaper *Timpul de dimineață* during the monitored period published 95 articles with direct or indirect electoral character. The majority of them – a total of 60 – were opinion articles; other 28 articles were informative and 7 were advertising texts and announcements. During the reported period *Timpul de dimineață* also had interviews with various people in which praise was given to an electoral competitor and which can be classified as masked advertising. Among them we shall mention the dialogue with student Orest Dabija, “*Participation in voting is not an option, it is an obligation*” (31 May), with Constantin Becciev, head of the Apa Canal Chisinau company – “*Apa Canal became a profitable enterprise*” (2 June), and composer Eugen Doga – “*There is a single solution: Chirtoaca – mayor*” (3 June). All, along with the majority of the opinion articles, support Dorin Chirtoaca for the position of the capital’s general mayor.

It is to be mentioned that after the elections, the newspaper published three times more news items compared with the period before 5 June (7 in the first week of monitoring and 21 in the second week). These items covered the results of elections in a number of places in the

country, but the focus was still on the post-electoral situation in the capital, where a second round of elections will be held.

Objectivity and impartiality

The news items and other informative materials published during the monitored period observed the principles of impartiality and objectivity. Items about opinion polls and about election results were correct from the point of view of structure and approach to information.

Opinion articles, which prevailed in the newspaper, had an absolutely different approach. Every fifth item (20 of 95) openly, or subtly, supported Dorin Chirtoaca for the position of the capital's mayor. Authors appealed to voters to actively participate in the elections on 5 June and support democracy and continued reforms. The candidate of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova for the position of the capital's general mayor appeared in a number of articles comparable to that of the Liberal Party (17 versus 20). There was a difference though: they were not favorable. On 1 June in the article "*Who votes for Dodon?*" the commentator reaches the conclusion that "*The Communist electorate (i.e. the Sunday voters for Dodon) is a compact, dulled mass of people, manipulated above the limit of good sense*", and about their elected one he said that, "*...not a single day passes without him saying a lie, sometimes even two*". The same irony addressed to the Communist candidate can be found in an article of 31 May, republished on 3 June, "*Mal-do-va attacks Moldova!*", which spoke about the last preparations of Igor Dodon prior to the elections of 5 June: a visit to Moscow, marches through the capital. After this listing, the article ends with the appeal to save, on 5 June, "*Moldova from Mal-do-va, Va-ro-nin and Da-don*".

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

News items about the ongoing electoral campaign and the election results were correct, although the newspaper did not always manage to provide diversity of sources. During the monitored period the newspaper had some problems with the pluralism of information by only presenting a single point of view (8 articles). After the elections of 5 June, the publication informed readers about the voting in several places, quoting official sources – the Central Electoral Commission and the District Electoral Councils. Local observers and voters themselves were left out of the coverage.

In 4 of the 5 controversial articles, in which accusations were brought against electoral competitors, only one party was represented. Thus, two days before the elections, *Timpul de dimineață* published an article almost two pages long about the PCRM candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, explaining "Why Dodon is a danger for Chisinau!" The article was not signed and admitted several violations of journalistic norms by accusing the candidate and not requesting his reaction. "*The Communist candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Igor Dodon, lies outrageously. The statement is not our subversion, as he has lately taken the habit of buzzing, but is, unfortunately, a sad truth. Dodon says that he fights against corruption, when in fact he contributed to its flourishing. Dodon declares modest income, though lives like a lord*" – these are just some of the anonymous statements provided without concrete and well documented details. The article is based only on media sources, and to be more "convincing", it is accompanied by several caricatures and photos with cars, which are claimed to be Dodon's.

During the monitored period we observed in *Timpul de dimineață* several articles which did not always manage to provide the balance of sources and revealed the authors' bias. For example, on 8 June Pavel Padureanu said to the readers, "*Here is who I. Dodon wants to make order in Chisinau with!*" The author made an evaluation of some members of the PCRM and people close to the party who were accused of misappropriation of millions from the state budget. It was an examination of the most resonant cases in the media, but the journalist did not try to study other sources. "*These are not fairytales, but facts proved by revision from the authorized institutions or criminal investigation bodies*", says the journalist, but his judgment is different: "*Thus, conclusions about the order such a person will create in Chisinau – with such a team! – are clear*". As reaction to readers' confusion, the newspaper republished the article in the issue of 10 June.

Language and images used

In this regard we can conclude that the language of electoral news items in *Timpul de dimineață* was correct and balanced, and that while the language in the comments was sometimes slightly ironic, it was without exaggerated labeling or accusations against candidates. Only one article was accompanied by caricatures supporting the statements from the text, specifically that Igor Dodon "*lives like a lord*". ("*Why Dodon is a danger for Chisinau!*", 3 June).



Involvement in the electoral campaign

From 30 May to 12 June *Nezavisimaya Moldova* published 87 articles with direct and indirect electoral character. The publication draws special attention during this period to electoral events organized by the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) and its candidate for the position of the capital's mayor, Igor Dodon. On 31 May three pages were given to detailed coverage of the so-called social march of 29 May, organized by this party to support its candidates for the elected positions in Chisinau - the city councilors and mayor. Photos, impressions, appeals: all aimed at convincing the reader that the current regime needs to be ended and the only solution is the PCRM. The same tonality was maintained during the entire electoral week in news items (14 subjects) and opinion articles (21 subjects). The ratio between news and opinion articles changed after the elections. In the four issues, on 7, 8, 9 and 10 June, the newspaper published 31 news and 21 opinion articles. These items referred to the victory of the PCRM in local elections and to the not-quite-correct behavior of some electoral competitors and observers at elections.

Objectivity and impartiality

According to the monitoring, during the reported period about a quarter of the published materials (21 of 87) failed to be objective and separate facts from opinions. Within the background of these violations of journalistic norms a tendency develops (which has been remarked about in previous monitoring reports as well) where the entire information from newspapers is presented through the prism of a dichotomy. One pole is given to the PCRM candidate Igor Dodon, clearly advantaged in the 18 materials with positive character, and the other is given to the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca. The latter was directly mentioned in

8 articles with negative content. Other 17 articles, news items and comments criticized the Alliance for European Integration.

In the opinion of journalists from *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, on 5 June the voters in the capital were called to participate in a truly historic event. *“Let’s vote for Moldova to have a future!”* - appealed the journalist and Member of Parliament from the PCRM, Zurab Todua, to voters in the issue of 3 June. According to him, only the PCRM can save Moldova from chaos and degradation. This option was supported by a number of letters received by the publication from its readers. The *“I can’t keep silent”* segment contained several excerpts in which candidate Igor Dodon was presented as the most suitable for the position of the capital’s mayor. It is not clear why a Falesti resident needed to make such assessments, as happened in the issue of 2 June. The series of messages from readers continued in the segment *“Newspaper-Reader-Newspaper”* of 3 June, managed by Ala Meleca. The journalist made a collage of comments and fragments from the editorial office’s mail, in which the AIE was labeled as a “regime of thieves” that promotes a pro-Romanian and fascist policy. Igor Dodon is the one who comes with a solution for all the city’s problems, and Dorin Chirtoaca is good for nothing.

Through letters from readers, the newspaper launched several attacks against the candidate of the Liberal Party for the position of the capital’s mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca. On 1 June, in the article *“The people do not forgive betrayal. Yet again about Dorin Chirtoaca...”* reader Stella Grossu accuses Chirtoaca of incompetence and immaturity. “The people are already tired of him, whose place is in clubs and discos...”, said the author, who also believed that Dorin Chirtoaca reached this miserable state because of his uncle Mihai Ghimpu, who betrayed Moldova for Romania. Even after elections the readers did not stop sending letters to the editorial office. In the above-mentioned segment, *“Newspaper-Reader-Newspaper”*, on 10 June journalist Ala Meleca brought new comments regarding the messages in the article *“It is convenient for the Alliance that the City Hall be managed by a dummy”*. The article’s title sets the tone for the rest of the piece, in which Chirtoaca was accused of various evils in the capital, and the solution for them all, according to the author, is the PCRM candidate, Igor Dodon.

The multitude of messages published during the monitored period creates the impression that journalists tried to transfer a part of their own ‘for’ and ‘against’ convictions to their readers. Beyond the choice of those who sent messages to the editorial office, attention should be given to the manner in which they were selected and commented on by the journalists responsible for the segments containing the readers’ messages.

With this polarization between the candidate of the Liberal Party and that of the Party of Communists, other contenders for the position of the capital’s general mayor did not appear in *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, the exception being the candidate from the Party of Law and Justice, Marcel Darie. The latter was the subject of two news articles, where he brought accusations against Mihai Ghimpu, Dorin Chirtoaca and his brother Lucian Chirtoaca. He accused them of corruption schemes at the capital’s city hall and of monopoly in certain sectors. The candidate of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) was present in three materials, all with a negative character. On 1 June the editorialist Tudor Soroceanu published the article *“Every time has its clowns”* (subtle reference to the PDM slogan *“It is*

time” – our note). The author criticized in a pejorative language the idea of appearance on the electoral boards around the city of the PDM candidate for the position of mayor next to the party’s leader.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

Diversity of opinions and the balance of sources are two problems that marked the activity of *Nezavisimaia Moldova* journalists. During the monitored period, almost every second item (37 of 87 articles) was written from a single source or with the presence of one source in addition to the main source.

On 2 June, in the article *“Corruption in the law enforcement system of Moldova”*, the Adjuta Civis organization accused raion police commissariats of working for the PLDM. This information was based, according to the authors, on a monitoring proving that the corruption index in the country is growing considerably, and the following observations were given as examples: to be allowed to work, the drivers of minibuses in Orhei need to pay the police, and the money is later used for the maintenance of the territorial organizations of the PLDM. The publication’s reporters made no efforts to request the position of decision makers from Orhei or from the Ministry of Internal Affairs mentioned in the Adjuta Civis accusations. It is also difficult to follow the coherency of information in this article, but in the end the authors of the monitoring delivered an appeal - *“The Association appeals to voters to think clearly about who they will vote for on 5 June”*.

In the same issue a Communist Member of Parliament, Miron Gagauz, the former general director of the Moldovan Railroad, provided accusations that the Government has begun proceedings to sell the Moldovan Railroad Company to a Romanian firm. Gagauz said that this transaction is illegal and mentioned that the company is a strategic object and cannot be privatized. The article quoted no other sources, neither from the Government, nor from the Moldovan Railroad. The subject continued to be explored, however, the following day with other news from the Omega agency, including a reply given by the PCRM leader, Vladimir Voronin. The article was titled *“The sale of the Railroad is yet another betrayal of national interests”* and returned to the news of the previous day, but this time with interpretations coming exclusively from Voronin.

It is to be noted that none of the 23 controversial materials with direct or indirect accusations against electoral competitors provided them with the right to reply. For example, on 7 June the newspaper published the article *“The Nisporeni Commissariat is investigating three cases of mass payoff to voters by the Democratic Party”*. The item had no other sources than a declaration by a police commissar. It is dubious as nowhere in his declarations was the name of the Democratic Party mentioned. Only in the background did the journalist state that one of this party’s leaders comes from Nisporeni, but the author concluded that nothing is known about his involvement in sharing money for votes in this raion. Another news article with accusations against an electoral competitor was published on 10 June, *“Chirtoaca deliberately violates legislation”*. The article mentioned that Igor Dodon filed a notice to the General Prosecutor’s Office about fraudulent schemes of misappropriation of city money, protectionism and methods of influence employed the General Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca. The item had no other sources but the PCRM candidate.

Nezavisimaia Moldova also had news articles without any source at all! On 7 June the newspaper published a piece of information from the Moldnews agency about the fact that the supporters of Dorin Chirtoaca had started to promote the idea of a new 7 April, through social networking sites. The article contained no address for the website purported promoting this idea. No sources were mentioned that confirmed or disproved this information. Instead, all three paragraphs of the article reminded of events from 7 April 2009. The newspaper's attitude to these events is seen in the title "*Another 'Black Tuesday' is inadmissible*".

Such a news article without sources was not an isolated incident in *Nezavisimaia Moldova*. The same issue had another piece of information about the violations that occurred during local elections of 5 June – "*There are cases of violations*". It spoke about 50 people who voted, having the same residential registration in an apartment in Stauceni village, Chisinau municipality. The newspaper found out about it from "informed sources", but gave no names. Even if journalists fully trusted these sources, the information should have been checked at the authorized bodies so to have at least one source.

Language and images used

The language of the opinion articles was colorful and sometimes pejorative and accompanied by caricatures of the parties from the governing alliance and of the Liberal Party candidate. News articles were generally written without grave deviations from the norms of editing informative articles.



Involvement in the electoral campaign

During the reported period, *Jurnal de Chișinău*, a bi-weekly with national coverage, published four issues with a total of 49 materials relevant to this monitoring, 8 of which were advertising materials with corresponding marking, and 1 – masked advertising. 18 of the analyzed materials were opinion articles, debates and pamphlets.

The subjects covered by *Jurnal de Chișinău* during the reported period included the results of the Public Opinion Barometer published by the Institute of Public Policies, the mutual accusations of Chirtoaca and Dodon, the methods employed by competitors to create publicity with banners on balconies, and electoral debates in the segment "*I want to be councilor*". The newspaper also inserted a page of electoral education, edited by the Association of Independent Press (3 June).

Issues produced after the elections chiefly contained materials and reports from the electoral staff of the main competitors, analyses of the data from the Central Electoral Commission, an editorial about election results, reactions and correspondingly marked electoral advertising.

Objectivity and impartiality

During the reported period, Dorin Chirtoaca, the PL/AIE candidate for Chisinau Mayor's Office, was referred to in 8 materials, mostly in a positive and/or neutral light, and his counter-candidate Igor Dodon appeared in 10 materials, mostly in a negative and/or neutral context.

Out of a total of 23 informative materials, 4 displayed the reporters' bias and lack of objectivity towards the discussed subjects. Thus, the article "The battle of balconies" (3 June, p. 3), despite giving several opinions of persons who chose to place banners onto their balconies or gates, placed a subtle emphasis on anticommunism. The article "Dodon gets fixed to Chirtoaca's trolleybuses" (3 June, p. 4) contained details about a televised debate with the participation of I. Dodon and D. Chirtoaca, who accused each other of corruption. At first sight the article seemed balanced, since it contained the opinions of both parties. However, judging by the space given to Dorin Chirtoaca to express his accusations and provide details, the reporter was clearly biased in favor of Chirtoaca and disfavored Dodon.

"*Dodon lost in his village*" was the title of an article on page 3 of the 10 June issue – despite the fact that the material spoke about several situations which occurred during the elections in various places, including the home village of the PCRM candidate. Although the subjects were diverse, the reporter chose a confusing title which presented Dodon as a loser, despite his not being a candidate in his home village. In fact, the reference was to the PCRM in general, which gathered few votes in the said village. Another internal title *People don't want to go back to Communism* reveals the tendentiousness of the newspaper with regard to the PCRM.

It is to be mentioned that *Jurnal de Chişinău* published in the reported period a material, which can be categorized as masked advertising – the appeal "*Together for Moldova!*" was signed by the PLDM president Vlad Filat, who urged voters to go to vote (3 June, p. 3).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions

From 30 May to 12 June 2011, *Jurnal de Chişinău* published 5 controversial materials, 4 of which presented the opinions of both sides. The only material in which the reporter failed to include the reply of the persons involved was the one titled "AIE in 3D for Chirtoaca" (10 June, p. 9), in which accusations of corruption against Chirtoaca were balanced by his reply referring in fact to electoral fraud (!) "*All municipal enterprises purchase fuel from companies affiliated to the PL; materials for road repairs, including for Alba Iulia Street, were purchased from a single source; microbus routes are sold through a fraudulent scheme*", said Dodon. In reply, Chirtoaca announced that the PL requests repeated counting of votes for Chisinau Municipal Council (...)

Language and images used

The analyzed articles of *Jurnal de Chişinău* used appropriate language and images that are not contrary to the deontological code. In only one item, "*Geoana's ghost. Electoral campaign. Watchfulness at the PCRM head office*" (7 June), the journalist quoted a Communist Member of Parliament who used licentious language. Although the term used was not quoted exactly, some letters being replaced with three dots, the term can be recognized, as well as the meaning of the expression (*It is time..., It is time to f... from the train station*). In such situations, however, reporters could avoid using the expression,

mentioning only that the said Member of Parliament used licentious language/swearing addressed to an electoral competitor.

4. Conclusions

Based on the monitoring results, it can be concluded that from 30 May to 12 June the monitored media covered the electoral campaign differently, some of them making grave deviations from professional and deontological principles. Thus,

- Prime TV, a private station with national coverage, observed professional and ethical standards in covering subjects with electoral character. The station continued to slightly favor the Democratic Party and its candidates for the positions of mayors and local councilors.
- NIT, another private station with national coverage, openly promoted the PCRM, becoming mouthpiece for this party. The large volume, and content, of news items suggest that from the editorial point of view NIT is a politically partisan TV station. This is contrary to professional ethics and legal provisions. The majority of NIT news items were biased and sometimes denigrating. The station actively used aggressive journalistic language and videos that are contrary to professional and ethical principles.
- The Euro TV and Jurnal TV stations had a balanced performance, without grave deviations from professional and deontological standards. From the point of view of the frequency and the context in which candidates appeared on Euro TV and Jurnal TV the stations displayed a slight favoring of the PL candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor.
- The N4 TV station largely observed the deontological and professional standards of reflecting the campaign. N4 slightly favored the PLDM through the high frequency of news items referring to the leader of this entity, who is also the country's Prime Minister.
- The newspaper *Adevărul* covered the end of the campaign in a balanced manner, without siding with any electoral competitors.
- *Jurnal de Chișinău* showed no obvious violations of professional and deontological standards; however, it displayed a slight favoring of the PL candidate, Dorin Chirtoaca.
- *Timpul de dimineață* actively covered the electoral campaign, without grave violations of ethical and professional standards. Judging by the frequency of materials favoring/disfavoring certain candidates, we observed a favoring of the PL candidate and disfavoring of the PCRM candidate.
- The publications *Moldova suverană* and *Nezavisimaia Moldova* continued to openly campaign for the PCRM candidate and disfavored the other electoral competitors from the PL, PLDM and PDM. Both newspapers had flaws regarding the impartiality and balance of sources, as well as, diversity of opinions. The language used, especially in opinion items, was often pejorative, and many articles were accompanied by faked images violating deontological norms.

6. Recommendations:

- The monitored media should use the monitoring reports as self-regulatory tools and should eliminate the deficiencies so that in their further activities they are able to:
 - Inform voters correctly, impartially and fairly;
 - In news items, refrain from generalising about or commenting on the electoral events of the political parties or their representatives;
 - Eliminate all discrimination by 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 providing 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 the broadcast media.

ANNEX

Case study no. 1

NIT, Curier, 10 June 2011, 20:00, minute 09:50
Reporter: Sergiu Strungaru

NIT, a station with national coverage, included in its newscast of 10 June a 4.05-minute-long item titled “The meeting of losers”, which covered the subject of the expected visit to Chisinau of the American Senator John McCain, ex-candidate for the US presidency. Although it appeared in a newscast, the item is rather an attempt to analyze the American influence and implications in Moldovan policy, based on the statements of anonymous experts. Contrary to deontological norms, the reporter acted as an expert, commenting and making assessments, being obviously biased, providing information from a single perspective, using video and sound to manipulate with public opinion. In the end, with reference to unnamed sources, the author concludes that *“some analysts are increasingly persuaded that Moldova is being transformed into an American colony”*.

“The meeting of losers. On Sunday, Marian Lupu and Vladimir Filat, who had modest results in the local elections of 5 June, are receiving the visit of the American Senator John McCain, who lost the election for the US presidency in 2008”, announced the presenter in the studio, specifying that “it is not yet known what the three will be discussing, but this visit is in line with the current government’s policy of coordinating their actions with American officials”. Thus, from the start NIT viewers were provided not with objective information/news about the American Senator’s visit to Chisinau, but with an assessment of

this visit from the perspective of the presumption that the current government is serving foreign interests.

The reporter began with the statement that *“Moldova remains an American target”*, reminding viewers that in March Chisinau had been visited *“for inspection”* by the Vice President of the US, Joe Biden, who praised the governing alliance and said that Moldova is a success story of democracy. *“The American envoy was not really convincing. Biden cannot know that since the Alliance came to power, Moldova has been transformed into a horror story...”*, said the reporter, further presenting “facts” that are at the very least erroneous, if not false: *“...with dozens of social and investment projects blocked, with frozen salaries and pensions, with uncontrolled increase of prices, with liquidation of schools, with massive waves of criminality”*, while videos showed poor, homeless people, banners and protesting people. Thus, NIT violated deontological norms and the Broadcasting Code, which provides that it is the broadcasters’ obligation to place every news item into informative programs, so that: “a) the information behind the news item to be true; b) to not deform the sense of reality by montage, comments, formulation or titles” (Article 7).

To prove that the government is ruled from outside the author of the material reminded viewers about disagreements inside the governing alliance, which was stated to be close to dissolution, *“because of oligarchic interests”* during the examination of the state budget, before *“Americans reentered the game”*. NIT repeated the declarations made in the Parliament of Moldova on 26 March this year, including those of the PCRM leader, Vladimir Voronin, who said that *“last night they had a last consultation at the said Embassy and received the corresponding indications to vote...”*. As “proof” of the supposition that the current administration of the country receives indications “from Americans”, the TV station presented archive videos depicting the car of the country’s interim president, with the reporter mentioning that *“Marian Lupu was seen at 7 in the morning leaving the residence of the American Ambassador in an official car”*.

Further, the videos broadcast by NIT showed the US Ambassador climbing the stairs of the Palace of the Republic, while the author of the material asked a rhetorical question: *“After this a question appeared: who in fact governs Moldova and who dictates rules to these people?”* In the context of Senator McCain’s visit on Sunday, 12 June, the reporter again made reference to *“analysts”*, without naming them, who allegedly stressed that the meeting was that of *“political losers”*, reminding that McCain lost the presidential elections in the US to Barack Obama, and *“on the other hand, Marian Lupu suffered a devastating defeat in Chisinau, gathering on 5 June 3% of the citizens’ trust. The same is true for Vladimir Filat, who lost in Chisinau half of his supporters”*. This statement is exaggerated and speculating since neither Marian Lupu, nor Vlad Filat ran for elective positions in local elections.

At the end of the material the reporter again made reference to anonymous sources and concluded that *“some analysts are increasingly persuaded that Moldova has been transformed into an American colony”*, with the background of a suggestive melody and videos depicting on the one hand miserable and poor people, and on the other hand – Senator McCain laughing and the PL leader Mihai Ghimpu yawning at a Parliament

session, as well as other leaders of the governing alliance in situations showing their contentment. Such a video montage clearly indicates the author's, as well as the station's, intention to transmit a manipulating and propagandistic message.

Case study no. 2

Moldova Suverană, 10 June 2011, no. 83 (1105)

Headline: *Romanian newspaper Adevărul [Romanian word for "truth" – translator's note] in Chisinau maims... the truth!*

Title: *Dodon censured because of winning!*

The article was signed "*Truth that laughs*"

In the issue of Friday, 10 June, *Moldova Suverană* published, on page 3, an article with the heading "Romanian newspaper *Adevărul* [Romanian word for "truth" – translator's note] in Chisinau maims... the truth!" and the title "Dodon censured because of winning!", as well as an interview with the PCRM candidate for the position of Chisinau mayor, Igor Dodon. The interview was titled "Igor Dodon: on 5 June I won in Chisinau, on 19 June I will win in the entire municipality". The materials were accompanied by two photos (one of them with Igor Dodon and members of his family, and the second with the PCRM candidate at a meeting with voters. The images also bore the slogan "Igor Dodon – SOLUTION for Chisinau").

In the article "Dodon censured because of winning!" the Chisinau editorial office of the *Adevărul* newspaper was accused of censoring an interview with Igor Dodon. The author claimed that the reporters of the *Adevărul* newspaper asked Igor Dodon to answer some questions, and the interview was to appear on Thursday, 9 June. (...) "*One of the newspaper's editors intervened in the text of his answers, eliminating phrases, ideas, fragments inconvenient for the newspaper's editorial policy, probably. Moreover, the newspaper's editor even insisted that Dodon agree with the publication of the interview in its mutilated form. Of course he did not agree!*"⁵ announced the anonymous author.

Despite accusing the publication of censure, *Moldova Suverană* did not provide the right to reply to the journalists of the daily *Adevărul*, and did not mention whether it tried to obtain their opinion. In fact, the official opinion of the said newspaper was published on 9 June on its site ("*The Communist Igor Dodon lies of being censured by Adevărul*"⁶), and the article was published in the newspaper the following day. Regarding this subject, *Adevărul* mentioned that it was an **article of electoral advertising** requested by Igor Dodon's staff based on a contract signed with the PCRM. "*Igor Dodon's answers contained attacks against other politicians, contrary to our editorial policy, journalistic deontology and common sense*", mentioned the newspaper. *Adevărul* also specified that "*even in an advertising material we follow the journalist's deontological code, the current legislation*

⁵ <http://moldova-suverana.md/politic/2206-ziarul-romanesc-adevrul-de-la-chiinu-mutileaz-adevrul.html>

⁶ http://www.adevarul.ro/adevarul_moldova/actualitate_md/Comunistul_Igor_Dodon_minte_ca_Adevarul_l-a_cenzurat_0_496150997.html

and the rules of common sense and do not publish unproven accusations, rumors and opinions of one person about another one, without the reply of the party involved”.

Thus, *Moldova Suverană* displayed lack of objectivity, intentional distortion of reality, presenting erroneous information aimed at misinforming its readers.

It is to be noted that *Moldova Suverană* did not place the above-mentioned interview with Igor Dodon in the “Elections 2011” segment. It did not accompany it with the specification “Paid from the electoral fund”, as it should have done since it is an advertising material of an electoral competitor, in which he makes public the details of his electoral program and brings accusations against his counter-candidate Dorin Chirtoaca.

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 of over 70 non-government organizations.