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## **Monitoring Mass Media during the Campaign for Parliamentary Elections Anticipated on 29 July 2009**

Report No.1  
22–28 June 2009

## 1. General data

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

**1.2 Monitoring period:** 22 June–29 July 2009

### 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 media on public opinion: the more people who are exposed to a message, the stronger its impact on certain segments of society.

**Ownership** (public or private)

*Justification:* Public media are managed with public funds and are obliged to provide complete, accurate, impartial and fair information to the public about all political, social and economic developments in Moldova. Private media also have an ethical obligation to present multiple viewpoints and to cover major events on the public agenda.

**Broadcast language** (Romanian and Russian)

*Justification:* In addition to media broadcasts in Romanian, stations 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. Stations/newscasts analyzed

**Moldova 1** (“Mesager” at 21:00): public TV station, national coverage, broadcasts in Russian and Romanian

**Prime TV** (“Evenimentul” at 20:35): private station, national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian

**NIT** (“Curier” at 21:30): private station, quasi-national coverage, broadcasts in Russian and Romanian (Chişinău, Cahul, Edineţ, Comrat, Varniţa, Ungheni, Cetireni, Nisporeni, Soroca, Cimişlia, Căuşeni, Trifeşti, Străşeni, Mândreştii Noi, Leova, Criuleni)

**EU TV** (“Monitor” at 21:00): private station, quasi-national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian (Străşeni, Ocniţa, Floreşti, Trifeşti, Cimişlia, Briceni, Cantemir, Drochia, Făleşti, Glodeni, Sângerei, Ştefan Vodă, Taraclia);

**Radio Moldova** (“Panorama zilei” at 19:00): public station, national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian.

## **2. Methodological framework**

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

*Impartiality/objectivity:* According to the journalist 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 opinion and facts both through the selection of the angle of approach and through the details provided. Discriminatory elements in reports and news items are a prime indication 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.<sup>1</sup>

*Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions:* To be correct and balanced, the news should cover all the parties involved in a dispute, particularly when the subject matter is controversial, and should treat all opponents equally.<sup>2</sup> Also, the media should ensure the access of the public to a variety of views to help people reach 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 facts but also includes the use of correct, decent language. Deliberate exaggerations and licentious language such as pejorative labels for individuals or organizations and images manipulated to show certain parties in a negative light can raise serious questions about respect for ethical and professional standards. The ethical conduct of journalists is especially in question when videos show things that are not true and have been faked as well as when news items are illustrated with images that have no connection with the explanatory text.

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<sup>1</sup> Simona Ștefănescu, Riscurile comunicării mediatice în timpul conflictelor

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

### 3. Monitoring data



#### Moldova 1

*Involvement in the electoral campaign:* From 22 to 28 June 2009, this public station with national coverage broadly covered electoral subjects broadcasting a total of 53 news items related directly or indirectly to the activities of the candidates. Of those, 28 were included under the rubric "Elections 2009" that was launched on 23 June.

It is worth mentioning that the public TV station paid special attention to the situation in the municipality of Chişinău and to the problems faced by the city's residents, which it covered in a number of news articles that directly or indirectly attributed the responsibility for those problems to Mayor Chirtoacă who is a leader of the Liberal Party (LP). Excessively focusing on only the problems of the capital's residents ignores the problems in other towns in the country.

*Impartiality and objectivity:* Most of the electoral news aired by Moldova 1 was not impartial as it covered events more from the viewpoint of the government and of the Communist Party of Moldova (PCRM). Based on the news the station selected to broadcast and on the angle of those broadcasts, Moldova 1 presented information that perpetuated a positive image of the central public administration (CPA), of PCRM and of the People's Christian Democratic Party (PCDP) on the one hand, and a rather negative image of the opposition on the other hand. Thus, the activities of the current government and of PCRM were the subject of 21 news items portrayed in mostly a positive (17) or a neutral context (4). Opposition parties and the local public administration of Chişinău were mentioned in 22 broadcasts of which 16 were negative and 6 were neutral. LP was particularly covered in a negative light, especially in news items launching allegations against Chişinău Mayor, Dorin Chirtoacă.

The value judgments of reporters were obvious in some news articles. Thus, when presenting the press conference of opposition parties announcing the creation of a joint council (23 June at 21:15) the reporter said, "The participation of other parties is not regarded well by the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (LDPM) leader whereas the Our Moldova Alliance (OMA) chairman is more benevolent." The reporter also was ambiguous in quoting sources in the news about cases lost at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) due to failure of the Chişinău Mayor's Office to provide housing to state officials (23 June at 21:05). Thus, it is not clear who the author of the following statement is: "(...) but the local authorities seem to dodge solving this sensitive problem. The city mayor failed again to come to today's meeting although Iurie Roşca says that he was invited."

*Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions:* Moldova 1 reporters limited themselves to one source in most election news without including information and contextual explanations that would have helped the public to get an independent impression about the events described. The journalists usually did not specify whether attempts had been made to contact the parties mentioned in controversial issues. Of the 13 items that contained direct or indirect allegations about certain candidates, all the parties indicated were mentioned only in 6, and the reporter said in one case that the opponent rejected the allegations.

Another problem relates to the credibility of sources. Several sources were quoted in the news about the problem with the water supply for two blocks in Chişinău (24 June at 21:04), although some of them were not exactly the ones to address the problems mentioned (an ordinary employee of the city's water supplier cannot be a source to talk about the water situation in those sectors). It is worth mentioning the provocative tone of the reporter which was reflected in the answers given by the interviewees. One got the impression that some answers had been faked during editing.

The news broadcast under the Elections 2009 rubric was presented in different ways: neutrally for all news of an informative character (e.g., news from the Central Electoral Commission [CEC] about election procedures) and unfairly for all news about the controversial actions/statements of candidates. When opposition party representatives made statements about the ruling party, in every case the position of the party mentioned (ministry, PCRM, etc) was also included. This did not always happen when statements or attacks were made by PCRM or CPA against the opposition. An example is the news item about the press conference of PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin (24 June at 21.16) in which he harshly attacked opposition leaders four times and the opposition viewpoint was not included. Another example is the news about the joint press conference of the deputy chairpersons of the liberal parties which did not inform the public about the results of their visit to Strasbourg but instead quoted one of them who said that the parliamentary opposition had misled the Parliamentary Assembly in the past four years. Also, it was stressed that three members of parliament (MPs) had traveled to Strasbourg using Romanian passports. This news also included the opinion of the PCRM representatives who specified that the three MPs went to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) not as an official delegation representing the Moldovan Parliament but as MPs who had accepted the invitation of some of their Council of Europe colleagues (Mesager on 26 June).

The tendency was to include exhaustive and comprehensive information in the news about PCRM, while news about the opposition parties contained distorted information and sometimes misplaced emphasis. An example is the newscast on 23 June in which the PCRM representative said the elections of 5 April were the most correct and credible in the history of Moldova. The same program made allegations

that the opposition parties had started their electoral campaigns before the official beginning date without giving those parties the right to respond to this allegation.

In contrast, news about the events of opposition parties was not well focused, and the ideas of the events were distorted or even hijacked by confusing coverage such as, for instance, the news about the press conferences of LDPM, LP and OMA. Another news item that could serve as an example in this regard is the one about the launching of the campaign “Adevărul” (The Truth) by the youth organization of LDPM. Although the organizers mentioned at the event that they would visit towns to tell people what really happened on 6 and 7 April, the message of the news broadcast by Moldova 1 was confusing and focused on the UN day to support victims of torture; thus, an uninformed viewer would find it hard to understand what the news referred to.

Moldova 1 registered only one violation of the CEC regulation that stipulates: “Except for programs on the subject ‘Elections 2009,’ individuals holding responsible positions in the public administration and involved in the electoral campaign shall not appear in videos, shall not grant interviews and shall not make statements communicating information about their areas of activity, in order not to use such opportunities for electoral propaganda purposes” (paragraph 16). This was the news item about the decision to denationalize Investprivatbank in which Prime Minister Zinaida Greceanii appeared and addressed the public (Mesager on 23 June). Since 24 June when President Voronin announced that state dignitaries would not any longer be covered on public stations outside the Elections 2009 rubric, Moldova 1 has broadcast only one other such news item; it referred to a meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Roșca (Mesager on 25 June).



### **Radio Moldova**

*Involvement in the electoral campaign:* In general during this period, Radio Moldova covered all the electoral activities of the parties registered with CEC except on Saturday when it ignored the meeting of local public authority representatives who were OMA members. Radio Moldova did not air electoral news at all on that day. In total, the public station broadcast 37 electoral news items, 18 of which were under the Elections 2009 rubric.

*Impartiality and objectivity:* Monitoring showed that except for the news about the electoral process using the CEC, electoral councils or a local public administration as sources, Radio Moldova did not strictly observe the principle of objectivity, fairness and impartiality in its news about the candidates. The examples provided below support this statement.

PCRM representatives were always allotted more air time. Thus, on 23 June when the press conferences of PCRM, LDPM and the Democratic Party (DP) took place, PCRM enjoyed nearly twice as much time as LDPM. In the same way, the news about the press conferences of PCRM representatives on 24, 25 and 26 June were the longest at 155 seconds, 210 seconds and 175 seconds compared with news lasting 55–100 seconds about the press conferences of all other electoral opponents.

The newscasts were organized in such a way that the news from PCRM conferences was the last to be presented. For instance, on 25 June the press conference of LDPM followed the PCRM conference and LDPM leader Vladimir Filat made references to the Communists' conference in his statements. Nonetheless, Radio Moldova presented the news about the LDPM conference prior to that of PCRM, and the reporter ignored Filat's references.

The press events of the opposition were covered in a biased way, either by stressing secondary or negative aspects, or by misrepresenting ironic and negative commentaries or by presenting them in such way that the listeners did not understand what they were about. Thus, the news about the DP press conference on 23 June was summarized as follows: "The DP welcomes the understanding between Moldova and Russia about contracting a loan of 500 million US dollars." In reality, the essence of what Marian Lupu said was not praising the PCRM but, on the contrary, that both the loan conditions and its use were unknown. When covering the LP press conference on 24 June, the reporter made several negative remarks saying that LP was "...one of the three parties that had provoked the anticipated elections," and that the LP leader "...was dissatisfied that his party was not supported financially by rich people," although Mihai Ghimpu had said only that those making donations to LP were not rich people. The newscast of 22 June 2009 reported that, "Although it provoked the anticipated elections through its actions, the LP stated that it did not have money for the electoral campaign." The LDPM youth press conference on 26 June that launched the campaign "Adevărul" (The Truth) to inform the population about the events of 7 April was presented in such way that the listener did not find out what kind of truth it was about. The newscast of 26 June informed the listeners that, "The parliamentary opposition misinforms European institutions. The representatives of LP, LDPM and OMA say that this was the conclusion reached by PACE after meeting with them." In reality, this conclusion was reached about the representatives of the former opposition in the former Parliament. Reporting on the same press conference of LP, LDPM and OMA, the reporter said that they, "...recognized that they used Romanian passports, although they had formerly stated that they had given up dual citizenship." In reality, Corina Fusu, Deputy Chairperson of LP, informed journalists that they had had to travel to Strasbourg with Romanian passports because they had not been issued diplomatic passports. The reporter's attempt to insinuate that the opposition had lied was obvious. In addition to this, renouncing citizenship is a long-term process.

Radio Moldova tended to present the government in a positive context and the opposition in a negative context. Most of the news about the government was laudatory while criticism of the ruling party by the opposition was censored or “sterilized.” For instance, the news on 23 June about the LDPM press conference said the party had requested only broader information about the loan granted by Russia; it was not mentioned that the LDPM leader had accused Vladimir Voronin of violating the legislation in force which provides that external loans must be approved by Parliament and also of using his visit to Moscow for electoral purposes.

The tendency to favor PCRM was obvious also by the repetition of favorable news. Thus, the news on 26 June about the decision of the British Department for International Development to withdraw from Moldova in 2011 which emphasized that the bilateral program of technical assistance would be closed as a result of the, “...progress made by Moldova, which has gained the status of an average income country,” was repeated in the newscast of 28 June.

The attitude toward the opposition was the opposite. Even when an action was positive, some Radio Moldova reporters tried to “extract” a negative aspect from it. For instance, when the OMA leadership (“several OMA members”) laid flowers on the day when Moldova’s sovereignty was declared, this tribute was reduced to, “Urechean blamed Russia, Ukraine and Belarus for the break-up of the USSR.” At the same time, when reporting on a similar action by PCDP, the reporter abandoned his ironic tone and concentrated on the significance of this day for Iurie Roșca.

*Fairness and balance of sources:* Of the 13 news items with an electoral character that contained allegations against government opponents, the opponents’ opinions were included in only two of them, and the inclusion was obviously unbalanced in one of them.

As a rule, Radio Moldova journalists did not ask the opinion of the party mentioned in the news containing allegations against liberal parties. Thus on 23 June, a news article was presented in which the representatives of a transport company made serious allegations against the Chișinău Mayor’s Office and personally against Mayor Dorin Chirtoacă without offering any evidence. Although Chirtoacă was accused of exceeding his official powers and of aiming to maintain a “corrupt system,” he was not offered the floor. On 24 June, Radio Moldova informed the public that representatives from the Chișinău Mayor’s Office did not participate in the meeting of the government commission for the enforcement of ECHR decisions against Moldova. During the meeting, which was chaired by Iurie Roșca (PCDP), allegations were made that the Mayor’s Office did not cooperate in executing decisions on providing housing to certain categories of

public officers. The opinions of the accused parties were not quoted. The allegations about destabilizing the country made against the opposition parties by PCRМ representatives Vladimir Voronin and Igor Dodon were aired without the response of the liberal parties (Mesager on 24 and 26 June).



### ***Prime TV***

***Involvement in the electoral campaign:*** This second TV station with national coverage which relays many programs from the Russian channel “Pervii Kanal” aired 13 electoral news items during the reporting period, but none of them was under the Elections 2009 rubric. Some news broadcasts referred to procedures related to the electoral process in which viewers were informed about electoral campaign ceilings, the registration of the first electoral candidates, the decision about the voting procedures for students as well as about the process for verifying electoral lists by the citizens included in those lists. Others covered Vladimir Voronin’s visit to Moscow and the government’s promises to solve the problems of Investprivatbank and to protect depositors’ interests. Subsequently, CEC informed the public on 30 June that Prime TV had announced its decision not to get involved in covering the electoral campaign.

***Impartiality and objectivity:*** Six of the 13 news items with an electoral character broadcast by Prime TV were impartial; however, in the vast majority of cases, the news was not based on multiple sources that would have presented varied opinions. It is worth mentioning that facts were separated from opinions in all 13 relevant items.

Although a number of candidates organized press events during the reference period, Prime TV ignored them. The station did not interview politicians even when their positions would have been necessary, for instance, regarding President Voronin’s visit to Moscow on the first day of the electoral campaign. The journalists did not use alternative sources for other electoral news either, so it was more descriptive in nature.

Of the 13 articles, 6 featured CPA and PCRМ representatives. Vladimir Voronin’s press conference served as information source for the following broadcasts: allegations he made against the opposition which allegedly was led by “criminal elements” (Evenimentul on 24 June), Russia providing a grant for the renovation of Parliament and the President’s Office buildings (Evenimentul on 25 June) and allegations against Romania regarding its involvement in the organization of the violent protests of 7 April 2009 (Evenimentul on 26 June).

*Fairness and balance of news/diversity of opinions:* The vast majority of relevant news items did not offer diverse opinions to the public; they presented only one position, usually that of the CPA and PCRM. The station had only two controversial news items; neither of them presented the opinions of all the parties mentioned. The other candidates were altogether absent from Prime TV newscasts.



## **NIT**

*Involvement in the electoral campaign:* From 22 to 28 June 2009, this station with quasi-national coverage broadcast a total of 43 news items with an electoral character, 10 of which were under the Elections 2009 rubric. The news broadcast during this period mainly referred to the visits of President Voronin to Russia and Israel, the press conferences organized by PCRM and the working meetings chaired by Iurie Roșca. At the same time, NIT broadly covered all conflicts in which Mayor Chirtoacă was accused of corruption and protectionism as well as other subjects accusing the municipality of inadequately managing problems, including the subject of people attacked by stray dogs.

*Impartiality and objectivity:* The absolute majority of news items broadcast by NIT during the reference period (34 out of 43) was not impartial. As in previous campaigns, NIT distinguished itself through a tendency to keep silent about certain events and to emphasize others by repeating broadcasts and by selecting only information that put the government in a positive light and the opposition in a negative one. PCRM and CPA representatives appeared in positive contexts in 39 articles, while the other parties were mentioned 12 times in negative contexts and 2 times in neutral contexts.

Vladimir Voronin's visit to Moscow, for instance, was covered for several days. The messages conveyed to the viewers were that the government, implicitly PCRM, had acted correctly during the protests of 7 April, that Russia supported Moldova's efforts to maintain constitutional order and that "a friend in need is a friend indeed" (newscasts on 22, 23 and 24 June).

The news about an award to Vladimir Voronin by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and Palestine "for the attachment and devotion showed to the Sacred Tomb" bore an obvious electoral element, especially when taking into account the interview the President granted: "I have received today the highest decoration from the hands of the Jerusalem Patriarch which they gave me for the contribution we make in our country to the modernization, reconstruction and renovation of monasteries and churches and to the construction of new churches that is creating favorable conditions for Moldovan citizens who are Christian-Orthodox by religion." Note that the PCRM leader made reference to this distinction during his subsequent

meetings with the electorate, stating that no other party had done so much for the church as PCRM had which was recognized by that award (Curier on 27 June).

NIT covered events under the Elections 2009 rubric in a biased way. Thus, all news about the press conferences or meetings of PCRM representatives with voters focused on subjects that aimed to improve the party's image and to denigrate the opposition (Curier on 23, 25, 26 and 27 June). In contrast, the news about the activities of other electoral candidates, even though it was broadcast under the Elections 2009 rubric, failed to inform the public about the purpose and main issues discussed by displacing the emphasis so that either PCRM was not mentioned in a negative context, or attacks on candidates other than PCRM were brought into the foreground. PCRM was also favored under the rubric "News of the Day" which appears as a running subtext every 3 minutes (for instance the newscast of 22 June: Vladimir Voronin, Acting President: "The Communists' victory in the elections of 29 July will not allow Moldova to sink into a swamp of crisis and vexation").

An example of news disfavoring electoral candidates is the first item on the 25 June newscast during which for 5 minutes the reporter read out extracts from the interview granted by Vladimir Voronin to Voice of America radio. The extracts referred to the president's statements that liberal parties wanted to defeat state independence and that the opposition parties were corrupt, extremist, right-wing entities.

Facts were not separated from opinions in some cases. Thus, during the newscast of 23 June, the reporter ended the fifth item with the statement, "During the electoral campaign this spring, almost the entire city administration led by the chief city official and several councilors made propaganda in favor of the mayor's uncle, Mihai Ghimpu for two months instead of solving the city's problems. However, their result was not what they had expected." On 24 June the reporter stated during the news item about the acquisition of Investprivatbank by the state that the government proved that it did not let its citizens down.

NIT failed many times to observe paragraph 16 of CEC regulations as it broadcast a number of news items in which state dignitaries involved in the electoral campaign were interviewed and referred to their activities in the government (for example, the Prime Minister's address to Investprivatbank depositors etc).

*Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions:* The monitoring showed that NIT did not offer a diversity of opinions and, through the sources it selected, did not offer enough perspectives to the viewers so that they could form their own opinions about the candidates. Most electoral news was drawn either from one source or from several sources expressing the same point of view. For instance, in broadcasting news about the results of PCRM leader Voronin's visit to Moscow on the first day of electoral campaign, NIT initially limited itself to descriptive reports

without including the opinions of political analysts and politicians. On 22 and 23 June, NIT failed to quote economic or financial experts or the opposition regarding the loan negotiations, although LDPM and DPM leaders held press conferences during which they referred to this subject. In the following days, NIT came back to this subject with commentaries of economists that justified the need to contract that loan.

While 17 of the electoral news articles broadcast by NIT contained certain allegations against various candidates, those candidates were given the floor to present their opinions only in 3 cases. The allegations against opposition leaders made by President Voronin and the PCDP leader and all allegations of corruption, and mismanagement in the Chişinău Mayor's Office were broadcast without presenting the opinions of the parties accused.

On 23 June, NIT dedicated a block of four consecutive news broadcasts to LP which contained various allegations against it and Mayor Chirtoacă, including allegations of corruption. On 24 June, NIT resumed the subject of corruption in the Chişinău Mayor's Office, but the so-called investigation of the NIT reporter did nothing but repeat the allegations without bringing evidence to support the alleged corrupt actions (see the case study in the Annex). Although referring to controversial subjects, the news did not include the opinions of the individuals accused and thus disfavored LP and deprived the public of alternative opinions. This is in violation of the provisions in the Concept of Covering the Electoral Campaign for Anticipated Parliamentary Elections on 29 July 2009 by Moldovan Broadcast Media which provides that broadcasters are obliged to cover the electoral campaign in a balanced and impartial way and that electoral news must ensure, "...impartiality, balance and favoring the free formation of opinions through the presentation of opponents' viewpoints."

*Language and videos:* From 22 to 28 June, a few cases were registered when videos were used that had no direct connection with the subject covered. For instance, the news on 26 June that repeated extracts of the interview Vladimir Voronin granted to Voice of America radio used background images from a joint press conference of the three liberal party leaders and then a few shots later offered images from the destruction of Parliament and the President's Office buildings on 7 April 2009. The newscasts on 25 and 28 June contained news from the press conference of PCRM representative Grigore Petrenco who alleged that Dorin Chirtoacă supported Romanian neo-fascist organizations. The news contained videos showing the devastation of the President's Office and Parliament on 7 April; at the same time, an association was made between fascism and Dorin Chirtoacă by showing images of a swastika followed by Chirtoacă's picture.



## EU TV

*Involvement in the electoral campaign:* This station with quasi-national coverage broadcast a total of 42 news items with a direct or an indirect electoral character, 4 of which were presented under the Elections 2009 rubric. The station distinguished itself by broadcasting many articles in support of the image of PCDP leader Iurie Roșca, who also holds the office of Deputy Prime Minister. Roșca does not appear as a candidate on PCDP election lists and did not resign from office.

The subjects tackled focused on the electoral process, on CEC decisions, on the situation of Investprivatbank and on press conferences of electoral candidates. At the same time, EU TV aired extracts from two interviews granted by Vladimir Voronin to two foreign media outlets—ITAR TASS and Voice of America—but included only those parts that condemned and discredited the opposition parties. “The radical opposition compromised itself,” (22 June) and “Opposition’s Joint Council aims to defeat Moldova and its independence,” (26 June).

*Impartiality and objectivity:* A great deal of the news broadcast by EU TV was impartial without showing the attitude of the journalist to the subject; however, judging by the number of articles that favored certain candidates and disfavored others, a certain tendency toward bias in favor of the actions of the government, PCRM and PCDP was noticed. In total, the activities of PCRM and CPA, including those of Iurie Roșca, were covered in 21 news items in positive contexts while the opposition was covered in 21 items, 8 of which were in negative contexts. The PCDP was covered in 4 broadcasts.

As example of favoritism of PCRM is the newscast on 22 June that refers to the interview Vladimir Voronin gave to the Russian Agency ITAR-TASS during his visit to Moscow. The item had a pronounced electoral character which was obvious even from its title: “The acting President is sure that the radical opposition will suffer a crushing failure in the anticipated elections of 29 July.” The quotes from the interview presented by EU TV made electoral propaganda in favor of PCRM, “We are obliged to do everything possible for the victory of the Communist Party,” and put the opposition in bad light, “The opposition compromised itself by trumpeting about the rigged elections without presenting arguments in support of their statements.”

Another example of news disfavoring the opposition was aired during the newscast on 23 June entitled, “Mayor’s Office favors corruption in urban transportation” the title being an affirmative one.

EU TV had a very large number of news broadcasts on the meetings chaired by Iurie Roșca who does not appear as a candidate on the PCDP lists and has not resigned from his office but who nonetheless gets involved in the campaign for

instance by participating in the launching of the campaign “The 7 Magnificent” members of PCDP. He participated in the presentation of the PCDP’s list for the anticipated elections and was quoted in the news (Monitor on 24 June). On the same day, Roșca was quoted as “Deputy Prime Minister, leader of PCDP” in a news item in which he referred to the need to improve relations with Romania; the statement was repeated on the following day in news about the meeting in Bucharest of a Romanian official with Kalman Mizsei, the European Union (EU) representative to Moldova. This news was accompanied in both cases with videos from the launching of PCDP’s campaign.

During the reference period, EU TV broadcast eight items containing interviews with Iurie Roșca who was also the daily subject of many articles about his activities as Deputy Prime Minister.

*Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions:* Most news items (30 out of 42) presented one-sided information based on one or several sources all of which expressed the same points of view. Five out of nine controversial news items did not present the opinions of all opponents. Thus, the news aired on 23 June about the work of a government commission in which the Chișinău Mayor’s Office and Dorin Chirtoacă were directly accused of failing to execute ECHR decisions about providing housing to certain categories of citizens presents only the accusatory statements of Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roșca and Minister of Justice Vitalie Pârlog. The opinion of the Mayor’s Office was missing. Also, the news about Vladimir Voronin’s press conference on 24 June that made direct propaganda in favor of PCRM and denigrated the opposition lacked the response of the opposition. Another item referred to an article signed by the analyst V. Socor in an American publication in which he made disadvantageous comments about the opposition; the opposition was not asked to comment on those allegations (Monitor on 24 June).

*Language and videos:* The newscast on 24 June included an item based on an article published in an American publication. The quotation that made disadvantageous comments on the opposition’s actions was presented with a video background of the violent protests and devastation on 7 April 2009. On 25 June, the station used a video background of PCDP election candidates for the news about the meeting in Bucharest of a Romanian official with Kalman Mizsei, the EU representative to Moldova.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the monitoring results, the conclusion that can be drawn is that from 22 to 28 June, the stations monitored frequently deviated from ethical and professional principles and thus failed to cover the electoral campaign in a fair and balanced manner.

- The public stations Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova selectively observed the principles of fair, balanced and impartial coverage of the parliamentary elections. Most of the electoral news was not impartial and covered events more from the viewpoint of the government and of PCRM. They usually limited themselves to presenting only one source without adding contextual information and explanations that would have helped the public to independently form an impression about the events described. Some of the news broadcast under the Elections 2009 rubric was biased and presented PCRM events in detail and in context while information about events of other electoral candidates was distorted.
- Prime TV with national coverage did not provide enough electoral information to the public. Election-related news mainly referred to the activities of CEC. By deciding to not get involved in covering the candidates, this station deprived the public of information and thus limited its access to comprehensive information.
- As in previous campaigns, NIT, a station with quasi-national coverage, distinguished itself through a tendency to keep silent about certain events and to emphasize others by repeatedly broadcasting certain subjects and by selecting only information that put the government in positive light and the opposition in a negative one. NIT did not take into account the principles of diversity of opinions and, by selecting sources, did not offer enough viewpoints to its audience so that they could form their own opinions about the candidates. The absolute majority of news items broadcast by NIT in the reference period was biased.
- EU TV, also with quasi-national coverage, offered relatively impartial coverage of events directly or indirectly related to the electoral campaign and the candidates. The large number of news items favoring certain candidates and disfavoring others, however, indicates a certain tendency toward bias in favor of the actions of the government, PCRM and PCDP. As to diversity of opinions, this station maintained its tendency to present more one-sided information based on one or several sources that all expressed the same points of view. Nevertheless, this station was more balanced than the other stations monitored.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The media should use these monitoring reports as self-regulatory tools and should eliminate all weaknesses so that subsequently they will:
  - inform the voters fairly, impartially and in a balanced way;
  - take into account the political beliefs of various categories of the population thus ensuring political-social balance and pluralism as well as the freedom of expression;
  - cover truthfully the events without distorting reality by faking videos and making biased comments and by observing the principle of information from multiple sources.
- The Observers' Board of the public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova should monitor the broadcaster's journalistic products and should take measures to ensure that Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova work in the public interest.
- The Broadcasting Coordinating Council should take action and request broadcasters to not violate the right of the Moldovan people to complete, objective and truthful information, the right to the free expression of opinions and the right to free communication of information through radio and television.

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## ANNEX

**Case study (<http://www.azi.md/ro/story/3995>)**

**“Curier” on NIT on 24 June 2009. Material by Victoria Filip**

On 24 June, NIT, a TV station with quasi-national coverage, resumed reporting on allegations of corruption launched by a group of representatives of passenger transportation companies against the Chişinău Mayor’s Office and Mayor Chirtoacă who is participating in the campaign on the Liberal Party’s lists.

In the material that the presenter of the program “Curier” in Romanian at 21.30 calls investigation, the NIT journalist does not try to elaborate on the subject or to launch an assumption which she would set out to investigate; instead, she resumes the allegations launched by the transporters on 23 June during a press conference.

The material, which lasts around two minutes, does not meet even the lowest standard requirements of a journalistic investigation or of news or of a street survey. The information presented is one-sided, biased and unbalanced as the author failed to provide documentation, to quote credible sources or to present evidence that would support the allegations of corruption. The author does not quote the opinions of officials from the mayor’s office or of Dorin Chirtoacă, nor does she mention whether she tried to find those individuals to answer to the allegations brought against them.

The lack of impartiality and not separating facts from opinions appear in the first sentence of the lead (“Curier” in Russian at 20.00) read by the studio presenter: “The insatiable appetite of city’s officials has become unbearable for transporters.” This statement is not attributed to any source, and so we deduce that this is the author’s personal opinion.

Although the introductory sentence that precedes the inserts says that, “When filmed during our own investigation, the drivers recognized that the fees are collected depending on the route and they vary between 5 and 8 thousand euro” (“Curier” in Romanian at 21.30), those statements are not contained in the answers of the sources quoted. The confusing answers provided by the first and third sources show that the questions had been formulated in such a way as to receive ambiguous answers. The reporter’s text continues: “When asked how to obtain a route docket, which is a document that allows microbus owners to transport people, some drivers had “slipped” fees of tens of thousands of euros unofficially to officials of the mayor’s office.” The following inserts do not support these statements of the reporter.

*Insert 1.*

*Driver: “It depends on the car and the year of its production. I don’t know ...”*

*Reporter: „ ... a more adequate fee”*

*Driver: “It reaches 27– 27 thousand.”*

*Reporter: “Euro, you mean?”*

As the reporter did not include the question she addressed to the drivers, it can be deduced from their answers that some interviewees’ answers to questions about the cost of starting a route in general (the cost of a car which depends on the year of production as well as other

costs related to the administration of a route) do not refer to a bribe of tens of thousands of euro paid to officials as stated by the reporter.

*Insert 2.*

*Driver: “Unofficially? Well, do you know what this is? This is called swindle, you know. To see, to... No. Here, you go to the mayor’s office and ask – Mr. Mayor, how much does a route cost?”*

*Reporter: “It is not right; I for example want people to know...”*

It is not clear why the author chose to include the second source in the material which does not present a new perspective or confirm or deny the initial allegations. Moreover, judging by the tone with which he answers, the person is irritated and sees in the reporter’s question an attempt to attract him into dishonest games (the ‘swindle’ to which he refers).

The reporter’s text continues: “Other drivers refused to tell the names of those who collect fees for the distribution of minibus routes and for route dockets, but they made it clear that such practices exist at the mayor’s office.”

*Insert 3.*

*Driver: “You must give as much as they tell you. It depends how you agree with the person.”*

*Reporter: “I know that it costs around 27 thousand this year. Is this true?”*

*Driver: “No, it’s not true. 27 thousand? What costs this much?”*

*Reporter: “A route.”*

*Driver: “Including the car? It depends on the route. Not all routes bring the same income, for instance. One has a better route, for instance 103, 160, but other routes – not. Nobody gives 27 thousand on a car together with the route.”*

*Reporter: “But how much? 20 thousand?”*

*Driver: “Something like that, around that. It also depends on the year of production of the car”.*

This ambiguous information leaves room for interpretations. The interviewee is confused by how the question was formulated and tries to specify what exactly the reporter wants to find out. Even if the reporter’s first question was excluded from the dialogue, it is obvious from the discussion that the journalist wants to know “how much a route costs” and not how much the so-called route docket unofficially costs, to which reference is made prior to that. The fact that the first and the third person make reference to the year of production of the car clearly indicates that they refer to the initiation of a route as a business, which is confirmed by the statement “Nobody gives now 27 thousand on a car together with the route.”

The key words “unofficial fees” and “bribe” do not appear in the sources’ answers, even though the author tries to accredit the idea in the accompanying text that the drivers allege that the mayor’s office is corrupt and that they allegedly pay unofficial fees of 5 to 8 thousand euro.

The videos used in the material also raise serious questions. At the beginning of the discussion, the image of the third interviewee appears in the picture in which he can be easily recognized, after which the camera is focused on the branches of a nearby tree. Using such a method can have several explanations: either the person did not agree to be filmed, but the reporter included his image in the picture anyway, or this was done in order to more easily manipulate the audio text.

In conclusion, by using this material NIT flagrantly violates both ethical and professional standards as well as the Regulation on Coverage of Electoral Campaign in the Anticipated Parliamentary Elections of 29 July 2009 by Moldovan Media.