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

Report No.3
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Coalition 2009 is a voluntary union of Moldovan non-government organizations that aims to contribute to ensuring free, fair, transparent and democratic parliamentary elections in Moldova and to continue promoting free and fair elections as started by coalitions 2005 and 2007. ***At present Coalition 2009 comprises over 70 non-government organizations.***

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: 6–12 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, balanced 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, Varnița, 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, Ocnița, 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 either a direct or an indirect electoral character. Each news item was subject to an assessment of content and context to

establish whether it was favorable or unfavorable to one party or another or to one political entity or another. The news was 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 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.[1]

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.[2] 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 or have been faked as well as when news items are illustrated with images that have no connection with the explanatory text.

3. Monitoring data

Moldova 1

***Involvement in the electoral campaign*:** From 6 to 12 July 2009, Moldova 1 broadcast a total of 53 news items with a direct or an indirect electoral character, including 47 news items under the specialized rubric "Elections 2009." Note that some of the news was included under the "Elections 2009" rubric even though it had no relation to the current electoral campaign. Thus on 6 July, this station broadcast a report about allegations brought against the mayor of Sângera Village, located in the Municipality of Chişinău (mentioning that the mayor was a member of Our Moldova Alliance [AMN]) and on 11 July presented a report about the sports competitions organized in the Râşcani district of Chişinău by the Avante Social Development Center (mentioning that the sports field was prepared with the support of the youth organization of the Communists' Party of Moldova [PCRM[). The events organized during this period by the electoral candidates and the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) were covered differently. In the case of PCRM, this station always observed the requirements for covering the electoral campaign provided in the regulations approved by CEC, including the right to respond which was offered to

[1] Simona Ştefănescu, *Riscurile comunicării mediatice în timpul conflictelor*
[2] Fico, Sofin, and Dragger, 2007. *Fairness and defamation in the reporting of local issues*

this party in an absolute majority of cases when direct or indirect allegations were brought against it. In covering the Liberal Party (PL), the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), AMN and the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), however, this station generally ignored professional standards and presented these candidates in a mainly negative light, distorted their messages and usually did not offer them the right to respond.

A major part of the newscasts on Moldova 1 was further reserved for items that presented the current government in a positive light, as being concerned with solving the country's economic and social problems (e.g., paying salary arrears, indexing bank deposits, etc.) Also, this public television station allotted much of its broadcasting time to covering the work of Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roşca (8 July visit to the Main State Tax Inspectorate; 9 July meeting with the Executive about the work of law-enforcement bodies; 10 July meeting at the Ministry of Health about reducing corruption in healthcare; 11 July meeting of the government's anti-drug commission; 12 July meeting of the State Incorporation Commission). By heavily covering the activities of Iurie Roşca, this station offered de facto election coverage to the People's Christian Democratic Party (PPCD) that has been PCRM's ally for many years.

Impartiality and objectivity: As in the previous week, most of the electoral news broadcast by Moldova 1 from 6 to 12 July favored electoral candidates from PCRM and PPCD and disfavored the other candidates, especially those from the liberal parties. The government and PCRM were mentioned directly or indirectly in 19 news items, 12 in a favorable context and 7 in a neutral context. PPCD was mentioned in 9 items, 6 of which featured Iurie Roşca in a positive context. The liberal parties (PL, PLDM and AMN) and the local public administration of Chişinău were mentioned in 28 news items, 19 times in a negative context and 9 times in a neutral context, PDM was mentioned four times, once in a positive context and three times in a negative context; the Social Democratic Party (PSD) was mentioned three times in a positive or neutral context, and the European Action social political movement (MAE) was mentioned once in a neutral context.

The newscasts on Moldova 1 were structured in such way as to offer the most air space to PCRM. Thus, the "Elections 2009" rubric first presented the electoral events of the opposition parties that as usual included the response of a PCRM representative who denied any allegations against this party and launched counter-allegations against the liberals. The events organized by PCRM, during which the counter-allegations against the opposition were repeated, were presented last in the newscasts so that they could be better remembered by the viewers (the press conferences of PCRM were presented last during newscasts as follows: 6 July Igor Dodon; 7 July Eduard Muşuc; 8 July Vasile Şova, 9 July Iurie Muntean; 10 July Oleg Reidman). In the news on the press events of the opposition parties, Moldova 1 reporters frequently distorted their messages by excluding important statements from their speeches and by emphasizing certain moments in order to disfavor them in the voters' eyes. Thus, during the press conference of PLDM on 10 July in which candidate Alexandru Tănase announced that he had appealed to the agencies in power to investigate and sanction the journalists who had distorted the message of PLDM candidate Iurie Leancă on 1 July about the need for a strategy to integrate national minorities into society, the Moldova 1 reporter Marina Cojocaru instigated a controversial discussion on this topic that was immediately broadcast by this station. Even though it is one of the TV stations that distorted Iurie Leancă's message and thus provoked adverse responses from national minority representatives to a proposal that Leancă did not even make in reality, Moldova 1 did not try to prove the opposite

by repeating the report broadcast on 1 July and superposing it on the speech of the PLDM candidate but instead produced another report that discredited him.

Moldova 1 acted in the same way when presenting fake disclosures about the involvement of foreign secret services and of Serbian agents allegedly posting as Council of Europe experts who organized the violent protests of 7 April allegedly advised the opposition leaders in "the attempt to overthrow the constitutional regime." On 8 July under the "Elections 2009" rubric, Moldova 1 presented the article "Serbian long-distance driver overnight became European expert and importer of revolution," published by the newspaper *Moldova Suverană*. Although this article made allegations and serious insinuations without supporting evidence against the Serbians, the Chişinău opposition leaders and the Council of Europe, Moldova 1 did not offer them the right to respond. Moreover, in order to amplify the seriousness of the allegations, this station repeated the videos of 7 April showing the opposition leaders with a view to convincing the viewers that they had organized the violent protests with help from foreign secret services and the Council of Europe (see Case Study Number 1).

The partisan character of the editorial policy of Moldova 1 was also demonstrated by broadcasting items under the "Elections 2009" rubric that were not related directly to the electoral campaign but that complied with the general strategy of presenting the liberal opposition negatively. Thus on 6 July, this station broadcast a biased report on the allegations against the Mayor of Sângera who is an AMN member. After announcing the title "Anarchy in the town of Sângera," the reporter says, "An unprecedented case in Moldova," namely the decision of the Court of Appeals was the, "dismissing of the entire village leadership headed by the AMN-member mayor." The reporter offered biased interpretations of the conflict in Sângera, did not precisely present the procedure provided by law for removing a mayor, did not mention whether the court's decision was irrevocable or could be appealed and only presented the opinions of citizens who were dissatisfied with the mayor's performance while the opinions of the persons accused of misuse of power and of the illegal sale of land as well as the position of the councilors who, according to the reporter, refused to repudiate the mayor, were missing. At the end of the report, the journalist Aurelia Leorda-Paniş declared, "The decision [of the Local Council refusing to suspend the mayor] makes us think that in Sângera, which is led by a mayor who is member of AMN, justice does not prevail."

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: Of the total of 23 news items that referred to controversial situations, in 15 of them Moldova 1 presented only one viewpoint on the events, although the opinion of other sources, i.e., of the opponents, should have been included. Thus, the response of Mayor Dorin Chirtoacă, Deputy Chairman of PL, to the declarations made on 7 July during a press conference by Councilor Oleg Onişcenco who said that Chirtoacă's participation in the electoral campaign was an abuse was missing. This station also failed to present the opinion of Marian Lupu or of his representative to Valeri Klimenko's statements that the Lupu project was an American project (7 July) and to the declarations of Vasile Tarlev of the Centrist Union of Moldova (UCM) that Lupu has blocked the process of unifying the centrist parties (9 July). The liberal party representatives were also deprived of the right to respond to statements made by Vasile Şova (PCRM) that, "The pre-election rhetoric of the liberal parties is a true gift for the ideologists of Transnistrian separatism and brings about chaos, instability and fear about tomorrow," (8 July) and to the statements of Oleg Reidman (PCRM) who alleged that the liberals lied in their statements about the situation of Moldova's agriculture (10 July) and in other cases.

Separation of facts from opinions: In most cases when referring to political candidates other than PCRM or PPCD, Moldova 1 reporters made ironic comments, distorted or even faked their statements and denigrated them. Thus on 6 July in the report on the press conference of AMN leader Serafim Urechean about admissions to higher education institutions, after he says, "The admission rules are not clear," reporter Vasile Munteanu says that. "Urechean acknowledged that he did not know the admission rules." In her report on the press conference of 7 July when AMN launched the Internet game "Let's kick the Communists out!" journalist Victoria Zaharia directly accused the party of instigating violence: "AMN members think this game is sensational. Is it because it instigates to violence? This is the second game since Serafică fără frică (Serafică [diminutive of Serafim] without fear) that has the same message: the instigation of violence against the Communists."

Radio Moldova

Involvement in the electoral campaign: From 6 to 12 July, 6 newscasts on Radio Moldova were monitored (the newscast on 6 July was not analyzed for technical reasons). During this period, Radio Moldova covered most of the activities of the electoral candidates and broadcast a total of 49 news items with a direct or an indirect electoral character. Of those, 11 referred to the electoral process and to the activities of CEC and 38 focused on the activities of the candidates and of the central public administration (CPA) either favoring or disfavoring certain candidates. Forty-three news items were included under the "Elections 2009" rubric.

Impartiality and objectivity: Monitoring the news broadcasts on this public station indicated a number of deficiencies in covering the campaign, including with regard to impartiality and objectivity. Thirteen of the 38 news items on the candidates were clearly biased as the journalist either used an angle of approach that was (un)favorable or did not separate facts from opinions or included a personal opinion about one candidate or another.

CPA and PCRM were mentioned in 20 news items broadcast on Radio Moldova, most of which presented the Communist Party in a positive (13) or a neutral light (7). In contrast, all the other electoral candidates were mentioned in 30 news items, mainly in a negative (14) or a neutral context (13).

The ruling party was favored first of all through the offered air space, especially in news on press conferences. From 7 to 12 July, Radio Moldova broadcast 5 news items on the press conferences of the ruling party (4) or its supporters (1). Those items were usually long and presented the topic discussed in detail. Thus, the news item about the press conference of Vasile Şova lasted 3 minutes (8 July) and the item about the conference of Oleg Reidman lasted 3 minutes and 50 seconds (10 July). In both cases air time was offered only to PCRM without offering the right to respond to the opposition parties that were accused of incompetence.

Another news item that was clearly in favor of PCRM was the one on the opinion survey conducted by a public association according to which PCRM would obtain 67% of the votes in the parliamentary elections. The source quoted said that *most of the respondents were young* [our italics] which indicates serious methodological deficiencies and renders the survey results

irrelevant. Nevertheless, the reporter presented the data as truthful without asking sociologists' opinions in this regard and included the opinion of the survey source that if more older people had participated in the survey, the Communists would have obtained a higher percentage (7 July).

In addition to the news about the party's activities included under the "Elections 2009" rubric, PCRM also benefited from airtime in news referring to the activities of the other electoral candidates. In most cases, allegations against PCRM were extracted from their press conferences and were used as starting points for offering the right to respond to a PCRM representative.

In contrast, the news on the press events of other parties, except for PPCD, was biased and included excerpts that either emphasized the personal qualities of the party leaders or distorted their messages and stressed small and unimportant things. An example is the news on the PLDM press conference during which an action plan for addressing the economic crisis was presented. The news item mainly referred not to the action plan but rather to the annoyed reaction of one of the speakers to the journalists' questions. The reporter said that "…to a journalist's question about whether PLDM assumed responsibility for the consequences of the economic crisis given that it is one of the parties that provoked the anticipated elections, and experts say that this is exactly what led to the worsening of the crisis, Ioniță tried to answer in a higher tone" (Panorama Zilei on 7 July).

Distortions of messages were registered such as the item in the newscast on 7 July in which Radio Moldova reported on the organization of a flash-mob by the youth organization of PDM. Although this took place under the topic "Stop hunting youngsters!" referring to the protests against the harassment and intimidation of young people after the events of 7 April, Radio Moldova announced that the report aimed at raising the awareness of the public about the status of young people in general (see Case Study Number 2). The news about a media monitoring report prepared by the Broadcasting Association APEL omitted mentioning that it was issued as part of the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections—Coalition 2009 and included only general information that did not say anything about the bias of TV stations although the report was explicit in this regard. This "sterilization" of information used by the reporters of this public radio station points out obvious self-censorship in other news items as well, especially those referring to opposition candidates.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of sources: As in previous weeks, Radio Moldova presented in a fair and balanced manner only information referring to PCRM. Most news items containing allegations against the Communist Party were balanced with responses from PCRM representatives. In some cases, the allegations were rejected one by one, so the sources representing PCRM were many and diverse. Of the 20 controversial news items broadcast during the reference period, 12 presented the positions of all parties mentioned, 10 of which contained the responses of PCRM members. Of the 10 news items that launched various allegations against the opposition, the latter's opinion was asked in only one case, and it was mentioned in another case that the opposition party could not be found. The rest of the news items (8) did not balance the information presented with the opinions of those mentioned in a negative light.

The bias of this radio station can also be illustrated through the news it broadcast about the launching of a monitoring report by the Coalition for Civic Control that presented in detail the results of monitoring the electoral process and contained allegations against certain opposition

candidates without presenting their opinions (9 July). The news about the press conferences of Vasile Şova and Oleg Reidman remained unbalanced; they accused the opposition of not being ready to solve the Transnistrian problem, of not having programs or experts, of polarizing society, of using rhetoric that allegedly served the interests of the ideologists of Transnistrian separatism and of plotting the end of Moldova (8 and 10 July).

The twelfth news item in the newscast on 7 July offered 4.5 minutes to the chairman of a public association to allege that Dorin Chirtoacă did not want to solve the problems in Chişinău Municipality, especially those related to waste and to unpleasant smells. In the end, the reporter said that, "Our attempts to find Chirtoacă by telephone failed. We are waiting for Chirtoacă's response to the allegations made against him."

Separation of facts from opinions: The personal attitude of Radio Moldova reporters was noticed in their value judgments and in their failure to separate facts from opinions. Thus, on 7 July, Radio Moldova informed its listeners that, "PLDM members tried to present their crisis action plan," but did not manage to do it and instead, "in the end, brought allegations" against the ruling party.

On 10 July while presenting the news on the conference of a PCRM representative, the reporter said, "Oleg Reidman, using concrete numbers that were accessible to all, set forth during the conference **the real state of things** [our boldface] in a number of economic and financial-banking problems faced by Moldova." In this case the reporter played the role of an expert who knows the "real state of things."

On 10 July in a news item about the press conference of PLDM, the reporter said that after one of the PLDM representatives "responded harshly" to journalists, the second speaker "tried to save his colleague." The reporter's opinion about the conduct of the sources quoted also appeared in the news on a PL press conference: the reporter expressed his opinion about the manner in which Mihai Ghimpu expressed his attitude to the signing of the Moldovan-Romanian agreement: Ghimpu, "…answered in the manner that is characteristic of him" (10 July).

Prime TV

***Involvement in the electoral campaign*:** The second TV station with national coverage, Prime TV, announced that it would not get involved in covering the electoral campaign, which was confirmed by the Broadcast Coordinating Council (BCC) on 3 July 2009. Of the total of 30 news items broadcast during this reporting period, this TV station produced 3 news items referring to CEC activities and another 9 items covering the achievements and future plans of the CPA. One of them included Acting President Vladimir Voronin, ex-Speaker of Parliament Marian Lupu, PD leader Dumitru Diacov and the current First Deputy Speaker Vladimir Ţurcanu. The news about government activities referred to exports from Moldova, Moldova's position at the top of countries with the most open economic relations, state guarantees granted to construction companies and restoring the image of the police among others.

Impartiality and objectivity: All electoral news broadcast by Prime TV favored the current government and its agencies. Although at first sight the items were based on statistics, they presented only partial reality because other sources were missing altogether from the news on this station. Presenting a single point of view made the news broadcast by Prime TV suspect with regard to impartiality, although facts were separated from opinion. Thus, during the reporting period, viewers found out that complete economic crisis statistics showed a decrease in prices (7 July), Moldova moved up 10 positions on the list of countries with the most open economic relations (8 July) and that most Moldovan exports were food products and beverages (11 July).

The above headings show through the subjects selected that Prime TV drew special attention to the image of the government and, implicitly, that of PCRM. A clear example of this is also the news item on 11 July with the following lead: "Police representatives who used violence against the participants in the protests of 7 April must be sanctioned in order to enhance the image of the police in society." The entire structure of this news item was built on statements made by Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roşca. Videos appeared with state rulers in the background that included several positive comments about the police.

The fact that one third of the newscasts on Prime TV focused on positive activities of the government shows that this TV station did not genuinely abstain from covering the electoral campaign as it had undertaken to do.

Fairness and balance of news/diversity of opinions: Most of the news was presented from a single source; most of the time this source was CPA. The lack of diversity of opinions and the use of general videos as a background to news read out from the studio as well as the duration of newscasts (about 5 minutes) deprived a large number of viewers of information that would allow them to vote on the elections day with full knowledge of the facts, especially since this station has national coverage.

NIT

Involvement in the electoral campaign: From 6 to 12 July, NIT broadcast 57 news items with an electoral impact including 29 under the "Elections 2009" rubric. Seven news items referred to the electoral process and CEC activities, and 3 referred to the activities of the Chişinău Municipal Council and of Mayor Dorin Chirtoacă. Most of the news that were not included under the "Elections 2009" rubric had an electoral character, i.e., "There are no salary and pension arrears in Moldova"; "Moldova has the best business environment in the Commonwealth of Independent States"; "The number of heart surgeries has increased 7 times in the past 10 years. The Executive makes efforts (…)" and "The pupils in the village of Bălăureşti, Nisporeni District will go to a new school as of 1 September. Prime Minister Greceanâi came to see how things were going (…)." Three news items referred to the professional activities of PPCD leader Iurie Roşca.

Impartiality and objectivity: In general, NIT conceived its newscasts in such way as to convince the viewers to vote for PCRM and to hate the opposition parties. For this purpose, NIT journalists did not hesitate to use procedures that are not common in journalism: distorting and faking messages, making the transfer of popularity, taking information out of the context, making false

associations and making comments and opinions that were not separated from facts. The news referring to the opposition was not "news" but was instead commentary on the events they organized. There were no news items that adequately and fully covered the statements and actions of the opposition parties. News items were either censored if they tarnished the image of PCRM or put the government in a negative light or ignored if they could not be used against the opposition.

The government and PCRM were mentioned directly or indirectly in 39 news items, only once in a neutral context and in all others in a positive context. All 29 news items under the "Elections 2009" rubric either favored PCRM or disfavored the opposition parties.

All news items that mentioned representatives of PCRM, PL, PLDM or AMN were examples of partisanship and of a lack of objectivity. "The north of the country remains in the same position as on 5 April. The residents of Moşana will again elect the Communists," NIT announced in its newscast on 7 July, reporting that the residents of that village had adopted a resolution declaring their support for PCRM. Similar reports were broadcast on 9, 10 and 11 July. The journalists did not mention the number of people attending the meetings and the positions of the villagers who did not attend the meetings.

"The party that can overcome the crisis is PCRM"; "PLDM wants to govern the country with four economists. They acknowledged that they had not managed to develop a crisis action plan with their own forces"; "PL does not know how many economists it has. The former Minister of the Economy A. Muravschi has declared that the liberals plagiarized the crisis action program": these were the titles of the third, fourth and fifth items in the NIT newscast on 7 July. In the last two news items, the reporter mocked the opposition parties.

Another example of the failure to respect professional standards as well as CEC regulations on covering the campaign was the broadcast during the newscast on 7 July of the so-called opinion survey conducted by the Civil Society Congress which is not an institution that is competent in this area. The "survey" was presented without the methodological details about the sample that would have proved its professional and scientific character, all of which reveals the bias of NIT.

The report on 7 July from the village of Moşana presented a resident of this village who said the following: "Human principles are alien to the liberals. Nothing stopped them in achieving their low goals; not even the big holiday of the Annunciation counted for these pseudo-believers." Reporting on the same day on Voronin's meetings with the voters in the south of the country, NIT presented an Orthodox priest who reproached the liberals with the fact that "the head of a Moldovan sect" was put down "among the first" on their lists. Another abnormal example was the report on 8 July about a social conflict in the Village of Brătuleni in Nisporeni District that was given a political touch. "The Nisporeni representatives of PL and AMN are accused of threatening a team of doctors with rape, beating and setting their house on fire. When asked to comment on the aggressive actions of their 'subordinates,' the leaders of the two parties answered that they did not bear any responsibility," the presenter announced. The NIT reporter did not interview either the women in the village or the medical assistants but relied on the statements of a third person alleging that two of the women in the village who allegedly threatened the assistants were members of those parties (although there was no proof of that) and thus tried to discredit those parties (see Case Study Number 3).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: Of the 41 controversial news items broadcast in which a second opinion was necessary, only 17 presented the opinions of the parties mentioned. The other news items presented only one opinion, usually that of the current government and PCRM.

While PCRM was given the opportunity to express its opinion and to comment on any statement made by the opposition parties, the same was not true for the opposition. An example of this was the press conference of Igor Dodon on 6 July in which the opposition was accused of not having a crisis action program, but it was not given the right to respond. Also, Minister of Reintegration Vasile Şova declared on 8 July that the opposition parties, "…have not proposed a project that could be examined from the point of view of an approach to settle the Transnistrian conflict," but the opposition was not asked to provide its opinion, especially PSD whose proposals were mentioned in a derogatory manner at Şova's press conference. "The districts that are headed by the opposition reached the end of the year with unspent money and with unpaid salaries…" Oleg Reidman stated in a press conference on 10 July, but those administrations were not given the right to respond. "Chişinău has been flooded. According to the Exceptional Situations Service, the river sewerage system that must be urgently cleaned is to blame. However, this subject is not of current interest because Chirtoacă is out campaigning," NIT announced on 9 July without presenting Chirtoacă's viewpoint on this subject. This news was also repeated on Sunday, 12 July.

Separation of facts from opinions: The news on NIT, especially under the "Elections 2009" rubric, abounded in reporters' comments. Thus, the news item on 7 July about the exercises of the police near the Village of Dănceni ended with, "The last time hundreds of policemen were called out into the streets was during the protests on 7 April which degenerated into the destruction of Parliament and the President's Office buildings. This is how the opposition showed its protest against the results of the parliamentary elections of 5 April. The Ministry of the Interior did not interfere then with force on the order of the country's president." Thus, the reporter insinuated that the destruction was the "work" of the opposition which "manifested in that way its protest against the results of the parliamentary elections of 5 April."

Mocking and faking subjects and commenting on the actions of the opposition in general or of its leaders in particular was a practice frequently encountered among NIT reporters. Thus, a news item on 6 July falsely declared that, "PL, PLDM and AMN leaders decided to merge into one political entity under the PL banner to be headed by Mihai Ghimpu," later specifying that, "An idea was launched later that their plan failed because of Serafim Urechean who insisted that he be the first on the list," to conclude that, "A possible change in electoral strategy comes in the context of failures registered by the liberals in the regions, analysts say." This news item did not quote any sources that might have made those statements; the reporter instead made a reference to "analysts."

Other examples include the following: "Susarenco calls on society not to trust in the next elections…"; "The candidate got stuck in his explanations"; "PL is also launching a challenge in society"; "Statements about election rigging were made during the previous elections as well. They aimed at preparing society for chaos" (7 July).

In addition, "[PLDM] has given up punching but threatens with lawsuits," journalist Sergiu Strungaru said when commenting on the press conference of PLDM leader Vladimir Filat on 8 July. Filat criticized how some media outlets covered the actions of the opposition and said that he would go to court. The reason why Filat was angry was not explained to viewers.

EU TV

Involvement in the electoral campaign: EU TV, a station with quasi-national coverage, broadcast 58 news items with a direct or an indirect electoral character, 20 of which were presented under the "Elections 2009" rubric and 7 others that covered the work of CEC.

The subjects presented most often in the newscasts at 21:00 included reports on the press conferences of the candidates and working visits or meetings with the participation of Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roşca. The latter was the protagonist in 7 news items broadcast by EU TV in which he appeared several times with long interviews. The fact that PPCD appeared often on TV was also acknowledged by the producer who mentioned during a presentation of the results of monitoring the appearance of politicians on TV that, "Roşca enjoys high popularity in newscasts" (10 July).

Impartiality and objectivity: EU TV continued to favor CPA during the third week of monitoring. Due to the news about visits and meetings with the participation of Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roşca as well as about other positive subjects about the government, the latter appeared 13 times in a positive context. Here are just several leads confirming this: "The recruitment campaign was successful" (7 July); "He [Roşca] was impressed with the technical endowment of the Frontier Guard Service but expressed his concern about the fact that the transportation of goods on the Transnistrian section is not controlled by Moldova" (8 July); "Roşca appreciated the promptness of the Public Procurement Agency in implementing the new technologies" (9 July); "Actions aimed at combating drug use give the expected results" (10 July).

PCRM was favored in five electoral reports. The bias of those items was also proved by the length of the subjects—most of them lasted over two minutes while the items about other politicians did not exceed a minute and a half—but also through the lack of responses to the allegations brought by PCRM leaders against their opponents in the elections. Thus, the allegations launched in a press conference by Igor Dodon on 6 July against the liberal parties that they were not capable of implementing a viable crisis action program remained without a response. The same was true of the statements of Vasile Şova, a Communist candidate, on 8 July. He said that Transnistrians accused the liberals of destabilizing the political situation in the country and that the unionist statements and the events of 7 April might affect attempts to settle the Transnistrian conflict that had been successful in the past administration. The careful treatment of PCRM was also noticed in other news items in which they appeared as victims of the opposition that had destroyed their electoral materials (9 and 11 July). The news items were prepared strictly based on the statements and videos provided by the police without presenting the viewpoints of the parties mentioned.

The electoral activities of the opposition liberal parties were presented in 21 reports. Of those, only 3 were impartial while the other 18 were biased due to their approach and text. Most of the coverage of the events of opposition parties was either biased or distorted their messages. Thus, in

news items on EU TV, the opposition, "denies, is dissatisfied, files a lawsuit, plagiarizes, loses and does not get along." An example of a distorted message is the news on the launching of the electoral campaign of PLDM that was presented as follows: "PLDM denies the information that PLDM, AMN and PL decided to merge under the PL banner" (6 July).

A harsh attack against the liberal parties involved in the campaign was also a quotation of political analyst Vladimir Socor that was broadcast on 9 July. The analyst stated that there was a substance deficit in Moldovan parties. The item lasted for 2 minutes and 15 seconds and abounded in remarks such as, "The self-styled liberal wing has little in common with liberalism. PL is an irredentist national party, PLDM is led by oligarchs who have enough money to recruit civil society and AMN is made up of former Soviet Nomenclaturists." None of the members of the said parties was asked to comment on the quotations selected by the EU TV editors from Socor's comments.

PPCD was presented three times in news items, all favoring this party. The total duration of the news items on PPCD was 7.20 minutes, two minutes of which were broad reports, each lasting three minutes. The manner in which they were structured and the videos used denoted the special attitude of this station toward this political entity. Here is just one example from an electoral report: "We remind you that PPCD is the oldest political entity in the country and it is in the second position on the ballot" (8 July).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: Most of the news presented information from a single source (34 of the 43 that presented a conflict or a debate). Even though journalists sometimes created an impression of a diversity of opinions, reports were limited to quotations of a general character.

The most controversial subject this week was the scandal in Nisporeni in which some sources alleged that several students of the National Medical College were verbally accosted by local PL and AMN representatives. EU TV covered this incident in two reports: one on 8 and one on 10 July. Both of them were based on the statements of "witnesses" and did not present the positions of the individuals involved in the verbal altercations. The reports created the impression of a diversity of sources, but they were far from the conflict mentioned and were rather speculative. The reports also used interviews conducted by the police.

The above case was not the only one. A news item was presented on 6 July in which PCRM accused Serafim Urechean of plagiarism because he, as the news said, had taken credit for a number of projects implemented by the government. The source of the information was secondary, i.e., the Omega News Agency. The journalists did not verify that information from primary sources; instead they focused on contextual information on the government's achievements showing Vladimir Voronin, Zinaida Greceanâi and other ministers in videos.

4. Conclusions

Based on these monitoring results, the conclusion is that from 6 to 12 July, the stations monitored continued to deviate severely from ethical and professional principles. As a result, these stations did not cover the electoral campaign in a fair and balanced manner.

- The public stations Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova continued to selectively apply the principles of fair, balanced and impartial coverage of the parliamentary elections. The principle of presenting a diversity of opinions was observed only in news that referred to PCRM and was ignored in most news related to the opposition parties. Some of the news broadcast under the "Elections 2009" rubric referring to the opposition parties was biased, focused on minor subjects and in some cases presented information in a distorted way with a view to discrediting those electoral candidates.

- Prime TV, a station with national coverage that decided to not get involved in covering the electoral campaign, broadcast many news items with an electoral character that promoted the image of PCRM. The other electoral candidates were not presented in this station's newscasts. Thus, Prime TV deprived the public of information about all electoral candidates and limited citizens' access to comprehensive information.

- NIT, a station with quasi-national coverage, continued to openly promote PCRM not only through the space offered for news about this party but also through the selection and presentation of news items. Most of the news articles broadcast by NIT in the reference period were biased, and the news referring to the opposition parties often denigrated them. The station used aggressive journalistic language and archive videos in an attempt to discredit the liberal parties.

- EU TV, also with quasi-national coverage, favored PPCD and PCRM both through coverage of electoral events and through news items accompanied by videos showing Vladimir Voronin and Iurie Roşca. The station was deficient regarding impartial and balanced sources and maintained its tendency to present one-sided information based on one or several sources that expressed the same point of view.

5. Actions taken to improve the situation

From 6 to 12 July, three flagrant violations of ethical and professional principles were analyzed in case studies (1 news item on Moldova 1, 1 news item on NIT and 1 news item on Radio Moldova) that were posted on the information portal Moldova azi (www.azi.md).

Monitoring report number 2 was sent to CEC and to BCC with a CD attached that contained a news item from NIT that flagrantly violated the Broadcast Code and the CEC regulations with a request to take the necessary measures to ensure impartiality, balance and the free formation of opinions.

On 13 July, BCC issued a release in which it, "…recommended that broadcasters ensure impartiality, balance and the free formation of opinions by presenting opposing viewpoints in their newscasts and in conflict-related news to observe the principle of information from multiple sources, according to Article 7 of the Broadcast Code."

6. Recommendations:

- The media monitored should use these monitoring reports as self-regulatory tools and should eliminate all weaknesses so that subsequently they will:
  - inform voters fairly, impartially and in a balanced way;
  - abandon editorial remarks or comments on the events of the political parties or of their representatives when presenting news;
  - eliminate discrimination in applying the principle of pluralism and diversity of opinions and in offering the right to respond;
  - take into account the political beliefs of various categories of the population thus ensuring balance and diversity of opinions as well as the freedom of expression;
  - cover events truthfully without distorting reality with irrelevant, inappropriate videos by observing the principle of providing information from multiple sources.

- The Observers' Board of the public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova should urgently review this monitoring report and should take measures to ensure a balanced presentation of electoral events on Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova that would be in the public interest.

- The BCC should take action and impose sanctions in accordance with the Broadcast Code on those broadcasters that violate the right of Moldovan people to full, objective and truthful information, of the right to the free expression of opinions and of the right to free communication of information through radio and television.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study Number 2 (http://www.azi.md/ro/story/4285)
Radio Moldova, "Panorama Zilei" on 7 July at 19.00
Reporter: Cristina Zavulan

In the informative program "Panorama Zilei" on 7 July under the "Elections 2009" rubric, Radio Moldova broadcast a report on the flash mob organized in Chişinău by the young wing of the Democratic Party of Moldova, but the message was presented in such way that it distorted reality.

Thus, Radio Moldova announced that the event was organized, "…to raise the awareness of public opinion about the status of youth in Moldova." The reporter limited herself to this very general information without specifying what the problems were that caused the youngsters to come into the street. Although participants declared to the press that they wanted to inform the public about the pressure and intimidation used against young people after the 7 April events, their message being "Stop hunting youngsters!" this information was not included in the report on Radio Moldova. The fragment that follows is edited in such way that the information becomes confusing and an uninformed listener does not understand what the speaker refers to.

Insert 1 (report on Radio Moldova).
Victor Zubcu: *This activity aimed at raising public awareness;* ***you see I have here a strip with an imprinted lunette;*** *we do not want the youngsters to be guilty of vandalism. We are talking about those youngsters who are active in Moldova and who took a peaceful approach during the protests of 7 April. We are another generation that has grown up and we want to grow in a democratic spirit. It is important that international institutions lobby so that Moldovan youth is itself again and the future government fulfills this imperative: youth in Moldova should take precedence!*

Thus, the message was distorted from the "intimidation of young people" to "youth should take precedence" with the Moldova 1 reporter presenting the information as an action promoting youth in general. The editors eliminated the piece referring to the meaning of the imprint on the strip, the "lunette" being directly related to the topic of "Let's stop hunting youngsters!" This slogan was also written on placards carried by participants in the event. The pieces about the intimidation of young people, the message "Stop hunting youngsters" and the one about the need for international investigations to establish the reasons for the protests on 7 April were excluded from the interview.

Zubcu's original statement was: "(…) you see I have here a strip with an imprinted lunette that represents what Moldovan youth is confronted with. Unfortunately, we continue to stand out because of the means of collecting information through the intimidation of student leaders and opposition party leaders. We are talking about those youngsters who are active in Moldova and who took a peaceful approach during the protests of 7 April (…). Our message is: Stop hunting youngsters! We, the young people should not be ones to be persecuted for the 7 April events; international investigations should resolve this situation; I say this because no one in Moldova should be able to use those events for personal interests (…)"

In conclusion, this report represents an example of a distorted message and the "sterilization" of information so that the news misinforms rather than informs..

Case Study Number 3 (http://www.azi.md/ro/comment/4319)
NIT, "Curier" on 8 July 2009 at 21:30
Presenter: Vera Terentiev Reporter: anonymous

On 8 July in the newscast "Curier" under the "Elections 2009" rubric, NIT broadcast a report about a conflict between "PL and AMN representatives" from the Village of Brătuleni in Nisporeni District and a "team of doctors."

Presenter: *The Nisporeni representatives of PL and AMN are accused of threatening a team of doctors with rape, beating and setting their house on fire. When asked to comment on the aggressive actions of their subordinates, the leaders of the two parties answered that they did not bear any responsibility.*

We notice the lightness with which the presenter announces a totally unusual and abnormal situation as being real: a team of doctors is threatened by members of the opposition parties "with rape, beating and setting their house on fire." The journalist does not doubt this and forgets about the presumption of innocence when requesting the leaders, "…to comment on the aggressive actions of their subordinates," and not the presumed aggressive actions of those party members.

From the report we find that the incident involved a group of medical assistants who aroused, not clearly how, the fury of women from opposition parties. The reason for such an incredible and unusual conflict in a Moldovan village that does not always have regular access to medical services remains unclear as the reporter is satisfied only with what he found out from local councilor Victor Tocarciuc. The videos showing a group of young women seem to confirm that the report is about a group of medical assistants, but none of them is identified or interviewed.

Reporter: *In the village of Brătuleni in Nisporeni District, AMN and PL members attacked a group of medical assistants from Chişinău who provided medical services under a pilot project. Local councilor Victor Tocarciuc stated for Antena C radio that a group of women threatened the team of doctors with beating and aggression if they did not leave the village.*

The account of councilor Victor Tocarciuc does not clarify the situation but adds a relevant detail: the role of PL and AMN members is not major in this conflict. It is not about "PL and AMN representatives" but about a group of women among whom there were two members of those parties.

Insert 1
Victor Tocarciuc, local councilor in the Village of Brătuleni, by telephone: *A group of women, among which Mrs. Caşu Liuba Petru from Chirtoacă, from Chirtoacă's party, and Mrs. Enache Tamara Ion from Our Moldova of Urecheanu… The women insulted those girls. First of all, that they would rape them at night, if they remained here, that they would beat them with stones and would set them on fire…*

The councilor does not mention how big the group of women was and what the role of the PL and AMN members was. It was the journalist's duty to clarify the reason why the women acted in the way stated, at least from the obligation to present the positions of both parties in a conflict.

Ignoring the reason and the persons involved in the conflict, the journalist asks for confirmation of that fact from the Deputy Minister of Health Boris Golovin, but he does not seem to know anything and only makes suppositions: "Probably there was…," "maybe…," so that in the end to take advantage of this opportunity and to polish a bit the government's image.

Reporter: *The attack on the young medical assistants was also confirmed by the Deputy Minister of Health Boris Golovin who said that it was an uncommon case.*

Insert 2

Boris Golovin, by telephone: *I think they should be happy that they are coming to the village, that they are working and helping old, helpless people… It was probably a preparation of citizens by sympathizers, maybe by the members of the opposition parties and to show their incapacity to organize anything like this…if they cannot do it they must destroy it when others who know and can, do it.*

Although the answer is evasive and based only on suppositions, the reporter here ends his "investigation" of this uncommon conflict and addresses PL and AMN leaders asking them to explain the conduct of their "subordinates." This is again a method of transferring negative impressions that is not allowed from a professional point of view: party members are not the "subordinates" of the party leaders and the latter are not responsible for the social conduct of the former.

Reporter: *The leaders of the two parties mentioned could not explain the conduct of their subordinates, stressing that they could not control the actions of those who are in the regions.*

Insert 3

Mihai Ghimpu, PL chairman: *I cannot know what each regional member does. I know that the members observe the charter and the program.*
Valeriu Cosarciuc, AMN: *We, those who are here in the center, cannot talk about what is happening, for instance, in the Nisporeni regional organization, but I am sure that all actions are taken under the charter which is the constitution of a political party.*

The reporter continues with the idea of denigrating these parties by relating a witticism made by Serafim Urecean at a press conference on 6 April this year about what happened in Brătuleni.
Reporter: *The attack in Brătuleni however shows that the AMN charter is not observed any longer in this electoral campaign. Uncommon methods are used. Serafim Urechean himself discovered on 6 April that Moldovans deserve a violent approach.*

Insert 4

Serafim Urechean, chairman of AMN: …*If you do something in a nice way, Moldovans do not understand, we must give them their gruel, if you are not doing things right, you are out. This is how it is done.*

The reporter did not bother to clarify whether the persons named by councilor Tocarciuc were indeed party members, whether they indeed were involved in the conflict and what their point of view on the conflict was. Although the journalist does not clarify either the reason for the conflict or the opinions of the participants thereon, he puts the entire blame on two women only because they are, as others said, members of the opposition parties. This is an unprofessional, personal attack that violates not only professional ethics but also the legislation in force.

It is obvious that the political membership of two of those women served as an excuse for NIT to make a political attack on PL and AMN, the report being conceived exclusively to manipulate public opinion, to demonize the opposition parties and to arouse hatred toward their members.

Case Study Number 1 (http://www.azi.md/ro/comment/4357)
Moldova 1, "MESAGER" on 8 July 2009 / 11 July 2009
Reporter: Aurelia Leorda-Paniş

"MESAGER" broadcast on 8 July under the "Elections 2009" rubric an article announced by presenter Angela Gavriliuc-Balan as follows: "The daily *Moldova Suverană* reveals the names of the two foreign citizens who, according to some data, were involved in the 7 April events."

Reporter Aurelia Leorda-Paniş quotes several fragments from the article "Serbian long-distance driver overnight became European expert and importer of revolutions*"* (*Moldova Suverană* on 8 July 2009 by Mihai Conțiu) which says that Serbian citizen Radivoje Grujic who was in Moldova as an expert employed by the Representative Office of the Council of Europe to observe and monitor the elections in reality was directly involved in organizing the protests on 7 April 2009 on the orders of foreign secret services. The author of the article says that, "…in view of overthrowing the constitutional order in Moldova, serious resources were used: experts who had been through the events in Georgia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Iraq etc," one of them being Radivoje Grujic who is alleged to have obtained his Moldovan visa through forgeries with the help of the Council of Europe. The article makes political speculation without bringing any proof in this regard, and Moldova 1 takes up these speculations including the following fragment: "In this regard, we know that he [R. Grujic] had frequent contacts with the leaders of the Chişinău opposition at the height of the electoral campaign. Later, the Serbian worked in the project "Free and Fair Elections" being responsible for monitoring the observation process. His cooperation with his conational Danko Cocic, another expert with the status of a mole, also present on the stairs of the President's Office building in the middle of the events of 7 April, arouses suspicions." Note that this quotation from *Moldova Suverană* was presented with background videos of the protests of 7 April showing among the protesters the leaders of the opposition Vlad Filat, Anatol Petrencu, Ion Neagu, Valentina Cuşnir, Călin Vieru and others. The same article was posted on the official website of the Communist Party of Moldova: http://www.pcrm.md/main/index_md.php?action=news&id=1532

Moldova 1*,* like *Moldova Suverană,* clearly insinuates, even though they do not have proof, that the Serbian citizens R. Grujic and D. Cocic were involved together with the leaders of the

opposition in organizing the violent protests in Chişinău. Neither the article from *Moldova Suverană* nor the item broadcast by Moldova 1 presented the position of the Council of Europe which was accused of facilitating the entry of the supposed "spies" into Moldova, nor were the leaders of the opposition offered the right to respond as they were alleged to have had "frequent contacts at the height of the electoral campaign" with the Serbians.

Broadcasting this material on Moldova 1 gave rise to a huge scandal. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis, issued a press release in which he showed his concern about the allegations made by the Moldovan television station that individuals employed by the Council of Europe had participated in the post-election disturbances in April (see the link to the official website of the Council of Europe https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1470389&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE). In his press release he said, "These very serious allegations have been made without any specific evidence being presented and without the Council of Europe or the people concerned being given an opportunity to respond to them. If Moldovan State Television had contacted the Council of Europe before making these allegations, they would have been told that it is seven weeks since I wrote to the Moldovan Government and asked them to explain why one of our experts had not been allowed to return to Moldova in spite of having a valid visa. If they had asked, Moldovan State Television would have also been told that I am still waiting for a reply to my letter. Clearly Moldovan State Television has much to learn about responsible journalism.".

In "MESAGER" on 11 July 2009 Moldova 1 returns to this subject and informs viewers about the reaction of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to the material previously broadcast. This time, the information is broadcast outside the "Elections 2009" rubric, and the press release is quoted selectively, skipping the pieces referring to the quality of journalism practiced by Moldova 1 (for instance, the sentence "Clearly Moldovan State Television has much to learn about responsible journalism"). In an attempt to justify their lack of professionalism, the same reporter states that the allegations about the involvement of Serbian citizens employed by the Council of Europe in the events of 7 April were taken from the newspaper *Moldova Suverană* (video: that newspaper article), this being a journalistic "practice." In the same item, Moldova 1 shows that it is disturbed by the fact that Terry Davis said "state television" instead of "public television" and makes it clear that the opinion of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe is not relevant for this TV station. Reporter Aurelia Leorda-Paniş: "We note that Moldova 1 is not a state but a public television station,…and the broadcasted materials are not meant to be liked by someone.

Conclusions: Both items are characterized by serious professional and ethical deficiencies as they are both biased and partisan. The item broadcast on 8 July lacks the opinions of the parties accused, i.e., of the Council of Europe and of the opposition leaders. In order to augment the seriousness of the allegations, Moldova 1 repeats videos from 7 April showing the leaders of the opposition with a view to convincing the viewers that they organized the violent protests with help from foreign secret services. The item broadcast on 11 July was just as unprofessional. Instead of admitting their mistake and presenting the opinion of the Council of Europe about the speculations of *Moldova Suverană*, Moldova 1 launched another false statement, namely that taking up subjects from newspapers is a journalistic "practice." A responsible media outlet does not simply take up what other media outlets publish (further amplifying the "sensation" with videos) but

makes reference to the subject approached and offers other points of view on the same issue, including the opinion of the accused party (parties). Moldova 1 did not do this but instead censored the piece from the press release of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe referring to responsible journalism.