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

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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, 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, 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 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 exaggeration 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 13 to 19 July 2009, Moldova 1 broadcast a total of 63 news items with a direct or indirect electoral character. Forty-nine of them were included under the "Elections 2009" rubric. This station covered the activities of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) and the press conferences of the candidates, of their supporters, and of non-government organizations. Moldova 1 also announced the

¹ Simona Ștefănescu, *Riscurile comunicării mediatice în timpul conflictelor*

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

government's decision to reduce drug prices, the growth in exports and the increase in citizens' trust in state bodies. The Communist Party of Moldova (PCRM) had the largest number of appearances in newscasts (28); this party was mentioned in news items about its electoral events as well as in those about its opponents.

Impartiality and objectivity: Most of the news items that referred to the candidates were partial (30 out of 36). The bias of reporters toward one candidate or another was noticed both in the selection of the angle of approach and by "sterilizing" information so that it did not affect the image of the ruling party. All news items directly or indirectly related to PCRM were presented in such a way that it appeared in a positive light as, "the only party able to protect the interests of national minorities, to resolve the economic crisis, to take care of the population's health." In contrast, when the other candidates were mentioned in the news, especially the liberal ones, they were often associated with, "incompetence, lies, stolen ideas."

PCRM was favored directly or indirectly in 26 news items that referred either to its electoral activities or to the successes registered by the government in various areas. One method used by Moldova 1 to attract the attention of its audience to certain news items consisted of presenting the information in writing on the screen with the text read out in a serious and sometimes warning tone by a reporter off-screen (for instance the news item about the five principles proposed to the opposition by Vladimir Voronin (15 July), about the reaction of the Ministry of Finance to the allegations of the opposition that it had blocked the payment of salaries (17 July) and the press releases of the Broadcast Coordinating Council [BCC] and Teleradio-Moldova (13, 16, 17 July).

Moldova 1 repeated some news about the events of PCRM candidates. For instance, the five principles for joint action with the opposition proposed by PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin was repeated on the following day with a laudatory comment made by a political analyst and a restatement of the principles. PCRM was also favored in the order in which items were presented as the absolute majority of its events were presented last under the "Elections 2009" rubric and usually countered statements made by opposition leaders and launched fresh allegations against them.

In addition to the news on electoral events, Moldova 1 favored PCRM by covering in detail the press conferences of parties not running for election but that had made public their sympathies and urged the electorate to vote for PCRM. For instance, during this reporting period the leader of the Ravnopravie Social-Political Movement and that of the Patria-Rodina Socialist Party held two press conferences during which they made propaganda in favor of PCRM urging the electorate to vote for the Communists because there was no other political party capable of establishing order in the country and of solving the problems of the national minorities, the economy and others (15 and 17 July).

In contrast, the news on the conferences of candidates from the European Action Movement (MAE) and the National Liberal Party (PNL) in which the leaders of those parties announced their withdrawal from the campaign and urged the voters to vote for the liberal parties was distorted by omitting the messages of the leaders. As a result of misplaced emphasis, the audience was informed that MAE had withdrawn because it wanted to prove

its leader was not vainglorious (see Case Study Number 1) and that PNL had participated in the campaign only in order to participate in the debates (14 July and 16 July). This biased approach is a clear indication of the partisanship of this public station in favor of the ruling party.

Unlike candidates from PCRM and the People's Christian Democratic Party (PPCD), the others, especially the liberal ones, were usually presented in a negative or neutral context. The Liberal Party (PL), the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM) and Our Moldova Alliance (AMN) appeared in a total of 26 news items, 16 in an unfavorable context and 10 in a neutral context. All the other candidates taken together appeared in 9 news items. Most of the time, the allegations they made against PCRM in their press events were reported and were countered word for word by that party's leader or by government officials. When opposition speakers did not defame the image of PCRM and focused instead on their own electoral programs, usually general or confusing information was selected and the reporters frequently repeated the information from inserts. PL was the party that appeared most often in a negative context; it was also disfavored in news about problems at the Chişinău Mayor's Office. Thus on 16 July, Moldova 1 broadcast a news item about a meeting attended by Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roşca who said that the government had fulfilled all its obligations to the people who had won cases at the European Court of Human Rights and that only the mayor's office was behind in keeping its commitments. Roşca suggested that a solution would be that the General Prosecutor's Office instituted criminal cases against officials at the mayor's office. The news about the press conference of PLDM during which its healthcare policy was launched focused on the statements of the Minister of Health that PLDM had allegedly plagiarized their document word for word without providing any information about the policy itself (16 July). In the news item about the press conference of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) in which Marian Lupu made public their priority directions for foreign policy, the reporter did not focus on those priorities but tried to prove that Lupu had lied in some of his earlier statements (17 July).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: Moldova 1 confirmed its partisanship also in the manner in which its journalists treated the parties in controversial news. All news items in which allegations were launched against PCRM candidates were balanced by the response of that party, but when PCRM candidates made allegations against opposition candidates, the journalists of this station generally neglected to ask the opinions of the accused. Thus, this public TV station selectively observed the principle of fairness and pluralism of opinion, a tendency that became especially conspicuous in the final weeks of the campaign.

Of the 29 news items that approached controversial subjects, only 13 presented the positions of all parties mentioned; the absolute majority of them included the responses of PCRM (12). In the other cases, Moldova 1 violated CEC regulations and did not offer balanced information to its audience. Examples of news items that did not observe the right to respond are the following: (i) the press conferences of Grigore Petrenco who said the liberal opposition was not concerned with the problems of youth (13 and 14 July); (ii) the conference of the Ravnopravie leader who alleged that PL promoted an anti-state policy that might lead to a civil war (15 July); (iii) the allegations of Iurie Roşca against the mayor's office (16 July); (iv) the news item in which the Minister of Health alleged that PLDM had

plagiarized its healthcare policy (16 July) and (v) the news on the conference of a PCRM member at CEC who accused the liberal parties of forging the electoral lists (16 July).

In several cases Moldova 1 journalists announced that the representatives of various parties “have not commented yet,” without saying whether they had tried to contact the people mentioned or if they were waiting for official declarations.

In conclusion, Moldova 1 frequently violated CEC regulations and implicitly Article 7 of the Broadcast Code that stipulates that the information must be truthful, that it should not be distorted and that controversial news should be based on more than once source.



Radio Moldova

Involvement in the electoral campaign: In the 7 daily newscasts monitored, Radio Moldova broadcast 97 items with a direct or indirect electoral character, 40 of which were about the results of the work of the central public administration and 57 of which were included under the “Elections 2009” rubric. The large share of election items of the total number of news items and reports (97 out of 115) broadcast by Radio Moldova indicates the substantial involvement of this station in the campaign.

Thirteen of the reports broadcast under the “Elections 2009” rubric focused on the activities of CEC and of district electoral councils and on reports issued by some non-government institutions about the course of the electoral campaign (League for the Protection of Human Rights, Human Rights Institute). Forty-four news items focused on the activities of the candidates (press conferences, stands taken and a congress).

Impartiality and objectivity: All news items with an indirect electoral character (40) favored the central public administration in their presentation and their placement in newscasts. Due to the messages conveyed by the journalists of this public radio station and to the details provided by reporters, the government always appeared in a positive light. Most of the time they referred to the future rather than to the present, e.g., “In the following 6 to 8 years, the districts of Călărași, Nisporeni and Strășeni will be able to benefit from over one billion lei, the government has decided; the Ministry of Agriculture will tighten the requirements for dairy products imported into Moldova; By the end of 2010, customs checkpoints (...) will be equipped with devices for detecting radioactive materials.”

In other cases, the opinions of reporters were not separated from facts, although journalistic objectivity requires a clear distinction between them, both through the angle of approach and through the details provided. Here are just a few personal opinions expressed by reporters that were not separated from facts or were not supported by concrete data.

- “Diesel oil will be a significant aid to agricultural producers during the harvest and will make its completion possible in the established timeframe” (17 July).

- “I think that preparing pre-university and preschool educational institutions (...) for 1 September remains a priority issue (...) Let us remind listeners that a few years ago you did not have drinking water in villages, you were not connected to the natural gas pipe and roads had deteriorated, but today the situation has changed a lot for the better” (18 July).
- “Both mothers and girls who have taken up this profession are satisfied(...)The young people from Straseni who recently completed the training course for young entrepreneurs as well as the girls who have already become seamstresses and can be employed proved to be very eager to learn. Moreover, during the summer many other young people—boys and girls—are taking other training courses that will orient them toward the professions they want in life” (19 July).

During the reporting period, Radio Moldova had six programs about PCRM activities. All items were included at the end of the “Elections 2009” rubric and enjoyed a clear and well-structured presentation. Thus, the reports on PCRM press conferences were announced with leads that conveyed to the listener the key message of the ruling party. For instance, “The members of the youth organization of PCRM say that PCRM is the only party that truly promotes youth” (13 July); “PCRM held a press conference in response to the allegations against it by the opposition parties” (14 July); “PCRM will opt for a consensus in the future Parliament and proposes five principles of consolidation of political forces after the elections” (15 July); “PCRM accuses the liberal opposition parties of using illegal electoral methods” (16 July); “PCRM rejects all allegations brought against it by the liberal opposition parties” (17 July).

Unlike those about PCRM, the news items about the events of opposition parties were presented in an unprofessional manner. Thus, 21 of the 26 events organized by those parties were presented as follows: “PLDM held a press conference today,” or “PL also held a press conference today,” or “PDM held a press conference during which it tackled several aspects of the electoral campaign.” Such announcements did not offer any information to listeners, and repeating it several times created the impression that those parties were continuously organizing press conferences.

Another method of “sterilizing” the opposition parties’ messages was the use of secondary quotes from their party platforms. Thus, in the report on 15 July about the PLDM conference during which the leader of this party read out a letter addressed to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the reporter distorted the message and omitted the main subject of the letter (see Case Study Number 2). The confusing manner in which this item was presented made it hard for the ordinary listener to understand that the letter was condemning Communism in the 21st century. The lack of correct and concrete emphasis on Vlad Filat’s text denotes not only that the journalist lacked experience but that this public radio station intended to avoid certain sensitive subjects that put PCRM in a negative light.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: None of those 40 news items or reports about the work of the central public administration observed the principle of diversity of opinions although at least half of them referred to controversial subjects in which it was necessary to present the parties equally or to present multiple opinions so that the public could take its own stand with regard to those events; for example, “The cabinet of

ministers decided to cancel the 15 percent increase in the price of drugs sold in rural drug stores” and “The reforms conducted in healthcare in recent years and their adjustment to European standards have led to positive results in this area.”

Pluralism of opinions was also not observed in news items covering the ruling party in the campaign for the elections anticipated on 29 July. Of the six news items broadcast about PCRM, only two included the responses of the opposition parties to the Communists’ attacks. The other four presented the position of this party without giving the right to respond to the opposition (see Case Study Number 3), and the journalists limited themselves to this statement: “The leaders of the three liberal parties could not be found today to comment on the allegations made against them. We will try to find out their positions during the press conferences that they will hold.” According to this monitoring data, that did not happen. It is also worth mentioning that the news items about PCRM events were the longest in duration (from 3.15 minutes to 5.15 minutes) without including space for the responses of the liberal opposition. In contrast, note that Radio Moldova reporters almost always found a member of PCRM or of the government to counter attacks from the opposition parties. Thus, in 20 of the 26 items about the news conferences of PL, PLDM, AMN, PDM, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and PPCD, PCRM or the central public administration got the right to respond, sometimes even in favor of those who had initiated the discussions.



Prime TV

Involvement in the electoral campaign: The newscasts broadcast by Prime TV were very short lasting about 5 minutes. Although Prime TV chose officially not to get involved in the campaign, in reality this station broadcast one or two items with an electoral impact in every newscast. On six days this week (on 16 July monitoring was not possible for technical reasons), 11 such news items were registered, two referring to the activities of CEC and the rest usually referring to the activities of the government. None of the PCRM candidates appeared in the shots.

Impartiality and objectivity: The selection of news for the daily five-minute broadcasts slightly favored the ruling party by including one or two items that were based in one way or another on PCRM messages. For example, on 17 July the reporter said, “The executive will supplement the funds for the victims of the 2008 calamities”; “Rural residents will be able to buy cheaper drugs in the state pharmaceutical networks. This reduction of prices is due to a government decision...”; “After Russia offered 500 million, the government is negotiating with China a grant for several hundred thousand dollars.” On 14 July, the following was announced: “Farmers owning over 50 hectares of crops can collect the 10 liters of diesel per hectare promised by the government. A total of 9500 tons of diesel oil, provided by the Russian Federation as humanitarian aid, will be distributed.”

The other candidates appeared in the news broadcast by Prime TV only by accident when the item was about the work of municipal administrations. For instance, on 17 July, Prime TV referred to the storm and rain that hit Chişinău. The approach to this subject was impartial and objective. The situation in other towns was also presented.

Fairness and balance of news/diversity of opinions: Most of the electoral news was presented only from the point of view of government officials and not from that of independent experts. The news item about the Commonwealth of Independent States observers who came to monitor the electoral campaign quoted the head of the group who said; “Officially, none of the parties has filed complaints about forged electoral lists...” The opposition parties’ opinions were not sought, so the audience was offered only the opinion of a foreigner. In the newscast on 13 July, referring to official sources Prime TV announced that, “half of the InvestPrivatBank depositors could withdraw their money,” without presenting the situation from the depositor’s point of view as well.

Taking into account the potential of this station with national coverage, its refusal to get involved in the electoral campaign can be interpreted as evading its mission to inform the public which is a way of indirectly favoring the government.



NIT

Involvement in the electoral campaign: From 13 to 19 July on the news program “Curier” at 21:30, NIT broadcast 46 items with a direct or indirect electoral character including 22 under the “Elections 2009” rubric though some of the reports that were not included under “Elections 2009” had an obvious electoral character. Thus on 14 July, this station broadcast a three-minute report about a meeting of PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin in the Ialoveni District that was announced as follows: “He did in 8 years what other parties did not manage to do in 10. This is in short what the residents of 4 villages in the district of Ialoveni say about the Communist Party. People met with the PCRM leader, asked him questions and decided for whom to vote on 29 July.” Both this item and the following ones were not included under the specialized rubric: “Some political parties, especially PL and AMN, continue to use dirty election propaganda methods violating the Electoral Code, ethical standards and public order. This statement was made by a PCRM representative at CEC” (14 July); “A new fight is starting among the right-wing opposition for the square in the center of the capital” and “The right-wing forces are unanimously rejecting the proposal of the Communists to reach a political consensus in the next Parliament” (16 July). News items praising the efforts of the Moldovan government and that presented Chişinău local authorities in a negative context were not included under “Elections 2009” thus favoring PCRM and disfavoring PL. For instance on 15 July the reporter said, “The mass exodus of Moldovans from the country started in the 1990s with the beginning of privatization” and followed up with the statement that in 2005, after the economic and social situation had improved, the number of those leaving the country was not so high anymore. On 16 July NIT announced that the kindergarten in the village of Măşcăuţi had been renovated with government funds and that 17 July was, “A special day for the residents of Bulboaca Village” because of the renovation of their medical center and Vladimir Voronin’s

attendance at the opening ceremony. It was only briefly mentioned that funding was provided by the World Bank and it was not mentioned at all that the village residents had also contributed their funds. The reporter let it be understood that the renovation was an achievement of the government which has done many good things during its eight years in power. In contrast, on 17 July the reporter said, "The disaster of one week ago is back again. People are indignant that those who should solve problems are participating in TV debates" as a lead into the news item in which Mayor Chirtoacă was blamed for not solving the capital's problems.

Impartiality and objectivity: The newscasts of NIT were not designed to offer viewers the maximum amount of information about the candidates' programs to help them make informed choices but were instead crafted to promote PCRM and to denigrate its opponents, especially the liberal parties and more recently Marian Lupu, the leader of PDM. Whenever events organized by the opposition were reported, NIT aimed to distort the messages of those candidates by making obviously biased comments, by taking the information out of context, by offering value judgments as news, by making false interpretations and associations and by adding ironic comments. In addition, reports on the activities of opposition parties often included information and data about PCRM's electoral program or its position/opinion on various problems faced by society. Furthermore, in items about PCRM events that harshly criticized the liberal parties, the opposition was not offered the right to respond. Thus, NIT journalists and news editors continued to resort to methods that are alien to responsible journalism and proved their editorial commitment to the current ruling party.

A sample of biased journalism was the report broadcast on 13 July about the meetings of PLDM candidate Vitalie Nagacevschi with the electorate. The introduction of that item was clearly biased: "A PLDM candidate stated at a meeting with the electorate that Moldovan citizens who do not speak the state language are not patriots of this country. This statement was made shortly after the scandal raised by another PLDM member who said that only young people who speak Romanian should benefit from full rights in the state." At that meeting with voters, what Mr. Nagacevschi actually said in answer to a question about the statements made by some individuals who declared themselves patriots was, "How can he claim to be a patriot if he does not speak the state language?" The reporter, however, misinterpreted Nagacevschi's statement and said that he, "...did not argue the point, but in order to say something said that Moldovan citizens who do not speak the state language are not patriots." NIT then returned to statements made by PLDM candidate Iurie Leancă about the party's strategy for integrating ethnic minorities into society which again were interpreted in a biased way and let it be understood that PLDM aimed at marginalizing those who did not speak Romanian as they were inferior citizens. At the end of the item, the reporter said that ethnic segregation policies were behind the 1992 war on the Nistru River. Throughout this report, Nagacevschi's statement was repeated three times in order to stress the severity of his allegations.

In other cases too, NIT resorted to repeating certain videos or statements for purposes of manipulation. Thus, the videos of the street protests of 6 and 7 April, especially those showing the leaders of the opposition parties, were repeated whenever they contributed to creating a negative impression of those candidates. Contrary to recommendations for the

presentation of archive materials, NIT repeated videos from the protests without indicating the exact day of filming.

The same newscast broadcast a report about the complaint filed with CEC by PDM that requested that a PCRM electoral spot be forbidden as it showed Marian Lupu, a former member of PCRM, who is the current leader of PDM. Although CEC forbade broadcasting that spot, NIT included it in full in the body of the news item. Also, NIT covered the statement made by a PCRM representative at CEC that PCRM had appealed the CEC decision in court: “This spot will not be taken out of the program schedule of media. If PDM members are ashamed of their leader who is a former member of PCRM, that is an image problem for PDM and not for PCRM.” In addition to the fact that broadcasting this report and the spot violated a CEC decision, NIT also violated the right to respond of PDM members as they were not quoted in the report.

Outside the “Elections 2009” rubric, on 16 July “Curier” broadcast a news item that lasted 4 minutes and 45 seconds about the supposed intention of PDM and its leader Marian Lupu to organize a “Great National Assembly” on 26 July. Although it was clear from the report that PDM intended to organize only its party’s congress on this date, nonetheless the news was presented in such a way as to convince the viewer that Lupu wished to convoke a great assembly in the center of Chişinău “...to continue what we started on 6 April...” Moreover, according to NIT, Lupu was allegedly competing with the leaders of the liberal parties for the Great National Assembly Square. This news item was based on a rumor taken from the Internet and from blogs. The item aimed at discrediting Marian Lupu, the party led by him and the other non-Communist parties which were presented as organizers of the protests that resulted in the destruction of state buildings (see Case Study Number 4).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: Of the 40 news items that tackled controversial subjects, 22 presented information from a single source or from two sources but in which the opinion of the second party was distorted. An example was the report on 16 July quoting the Civil Control—Elections 2009 Coalition report that blamed the PL, MAE and PLDM candidates of “gross violations,” and of “broadcasting election ads without mentioning that they were ‘paid for from the electoral fund’ and without including them under the rubric ‘Elections 2009,’ considerable vandalizing of the electoral registers and failure to observe ethics in holding electoral debates.” Those electoral candidates were not offered the right to respond.

On 17 July NIT made a “shocking disclosure” namely: “In a video recording posted on the Internet, a young man asserts that he and his pals were trained to organize the protests of 6 and 7 April in the center of the capital. The author explains how the scenario of the protests was prepared and how the leaders of the liberal parties, under whose aegis the demonstrations were organized, left them on the street in the hands of the police” [our underlining]. This “disclosure” was based on a recording by an anonymous person who stood with his back to the camera and who made insinuations about presumed foreigners and locals who had allegedly trained him in Vadul-lui-Vodă how to organize the protests. The names of those presumed trainers were Steve, Mark, Alex, Rasha, Liliana, Mihai and Vlad; they closely resembled the names of the opposition leaders or of known individuals from international organizations who were also accused of supporting the opposition. It was

clear from the tone of the declarations that the young man was reading a text and was not talking about his own experiences. This item was accompanied by a somber musical background and videos of protests showing Filat, Chirtoacă and Vieru. “The training is continuing... The Croatians and Serbians want a repetition of the events of 7 April... those from Ukraine, from Pora, were also invited...so it might be extremely hot on 30 July in the center of Chișinău,” the anonymous source warned. Although NIT acknowledged that what the young man said could not be checked (“the statements cannot be checked”), it nevertheless announced that it would shortly broadcast the full version of that video recording.

Separation of facts from opinions: In their reports on PCRM, NIT reporters did not limit themselves with regard to laudatory statements: PCRM “has proved through concrete deeds that it deserves to remain at the helm of the state” (13 July); “did in 8 years what other parties did not manage to do in 10 years,” “the party of creators” (14 July) and “holds out its hand to its political opponents” (15 July). This TV station imparted to its viewers the idea that only PCRM could efficiently govern the country—“there is no other political power beside PCRM that can ensure the country’s development” (17 July)—and if this party did not rule, a civil war would begin in Moldova— “the ambitions to overthrow the strongest party in the country, according to estimations, creates enormous risks that Moldova will be shaken by violence...” (16 July).

In contrast, when reporting about the liberal parties and PDM, their candidates were described not only by the sources quoted but also by the NIT reporters with the following statements: “The liberals do not need power, they need disasters”; “The radical right-wing parties attempt to deny their guilt in a satanic way”; “The radical right-wing parties are behind the ‘pogroms’ of 7 April”; “Opposition parties are far from accepting the restoration of political and social peace in Moldova”; “...the fruit of the sick imagination of the liberals”; “Mihai Ghimpu has hallucinations” and “Chirtoacă’s administration has again failed to put up a good show.”



EU TV

Involvement in the electoral campaign: From 13 to 19 July, EU TV broadcast 58 news items with a direct or indirect electoral impact, including 27 under the rubric “Elections 2009.” Six of them covered the activities of CEC, seven referred to the local Chișinău public administration and the other six covered the activities of Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roșca. The rubric “Elections 2009” usually contained reports from the press conferences of the electoral candidates, and generally, EU TV tried to cover most of the events they organized.

Impartiality and objectivity: During this reporting period, EU TV favored PPCD in an obvious way; this was the only party presented in a positive light. Sympathy for PPCD leader Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roșca was obvious in the newscasts on 16 and 17 July when two items in each were dedicated to him. The news items on 17 July lasted nearly five

minutes. They were about the visits of Iurie Roșca to the Chișinău General Police Inspectorate and to the Border Guard Service. An example of bias in favor of Mr. Roșca was the news item on 14 July about the hearing at the Supreme Court of Justice of the case of the attempt to murder him. In that broadcast, EU TV announced, “The Supreme Court of Justice postponed hearing the case about the attempt to murder Iurie Roșca. The reason for the postponement was the absence of the investigating judge,” not mentioning the information offered by other media outlets, i.e., “the Supreme Court of Justice decided that General Prosecutor Valeriu Gurbulea and Deputy Minister of the Interior Valentin Zubic had illegally stated that the leader of Our Moldova Alliance Serafim Urechean and Ion Pleșca, a member of this party, were allegedly involved in an attempt to murder Iurie Roșca. The Court thus upheld the decision of the inferior court and rejected the prosecutor’s motion in this case.”

In contrast, the local public administration of Chișinău was covered in a more balanced way. On 13 July although the title was “Impotence of municipal power comes again to light,” the content of the report about the abundant rains was impartial and objective with information from various sources. In general, of the eight news items referring to the local public administration, six were neutral and balanced and two were unfavorable to the current mayor (on 14 July, one of the protesters from the Electric Transportation Administration who demanded the dismissal of the current director stated: “The sons of Morgoci work at the mayor’s office, his relatives work at the mayor’s office ...” but the reporter did not ask the opinion of a representative of the mayor’s office in this regard. Regarding the essence of the conflict, the news was impartial.)

Of the 11 news items with a direct or indirect electoral impact that referred to the current government outside the rubric “Elections 2009”, 5 were favorable to the government, 3 were unfavorable and 3 were neutral. Under the “Elections 2009” rubric PCRM was presented in a positive light 8 times, in a negative light 9 times and in neutral light 10 times. Favoring PCRM was also evident in the report about the press conference of party leader Vladimir Voronin which got the most time and was broadcast first. EU TV showed its bias against AMN in a lead that said, “Our Moldova Alliance rejects the political consensus after the elections proposed yesterday by the chairman of the Communist Party. The Deputy Chairman of AMN, Veaceslav Untilă, said today that 52 votes in the future Parliament would be enough for the three opposition parties AMN, PL and PLDM to be able to rule the country at least for one year” (16 July). In fact, AMN did not reject the “political consensus” but rather rejected the way in which the PCRM leader sees it. Another example of lack of balance was the statement, “Referring to those five principles of political consensus launched by Voronin, Lupu said that PDM rejected this initiative saying that it had serious reasons to do it” (17 July). In reality, the PDM leader did not reject the initiative which he in fact welcomed, but did reject the way in which it was made. EU TV did not present these details. Of the 25 news items that referred to the opposition parties under the “Elections 2009” rubric, 10 were presented in a negative light, 4 in a positive light, and 12 in a neutral light.

An example of careful treatment of the government was the news of 18 July about the statement made by Radoslaw Sikorski, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, who allegedly said, “New parliamentary elections will take place in Moldova on 29 July. We

hope they will be fair.” In reality, Sikorski said, “repeat parliamentary elections” will take place in Moldova on a 29 July, “because there were many problems in the previous ones. We very much hope that the repeat elections will be fair...” It is easy to notice that Sikorski’s statement was censored because it was favorable to the opposition.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: Of the 34 controversial news items, most of them (20) presented the position of only one party in the conflict. While the statements of the opposition were balanced by including the point of view of PCRM representatives, this principle was usually not applied with regard to statements made by the ruling party and by PPCD leaders. For instance, in a news item about the review of his first month in office, Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roșca said that the Chișinău Mayor’s Office had not executed European Court of Human Rights decisions on providing housing to certain individuals, but the opinion of the mayor’s office on this issue was not sought. Also, the allegations against the opposition parties made by the leaders of the Communist youth on 13 July (“liberal parties included the youth at the end of their lists... In the previous Parliament youth was represented only by PCRM”) or by Vladimir Voronin who qualified the opposition parties as “radical” on 15 July, were not balanced by presenting the opinion of the second source. A press release of the Ministry of the Interior on 19 July says that during an electoral meeting in the village of Băcioi a PL representative, “instigated the people to disobedience,” and that PL Deputy Chairman Dorin Chirtoacă, “supported the illicit arrogant and provoking behavior of Vitalie Șalari,” but these statements were neither questioned nor verified by the reporters.

4. Conclusions

Based on these monitoring results, the conclusion is that from 13 to 19 July, the stations monitored continued to deviate dramatically from ethical and professional principles. As a result, these stations did not cover the 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 discredited the opposition parties by taking out of context some of the messages launched by their representatives. In contrast, the news items about PCRM were well organized, with well-structures texts and details that put this party in a favorable light.
- The private station Prime TV indirectly favored PCRM through news with an electoral character that promoted the image of the current government. The other electoral candidates were not presented in this station’s newscasts. Through its decision not to get involved in covering the campaign, Prime TV has deprived the public of information about all the candidates and has limited citizens’ access to comprehensive information.
- The news broadcast by NIT, a station with quasi-national coverage, was presented in such a way as to promote PCRM and to denigrate its opponents. Most of the news

articles broadcast by NIT in the reference period were biased, and the news referring to the opposition parties was often derogatory. The station used aggressive language, did not separate facts from opinions, commented on statements made by the sources quoted, admitted value judgments and used many archive videos in an attempt to discredit certain candidates.

- EU TV, also with quasi-national coverage, covered the events related directly or indirectly to the campaign and the candidates relatively impartially. However, the large number of news items favoring certain electoral candidates proves a tendency toward partisanship by this station in favor of the government, PCRM and PPCD. Although it continued to be deficient in balancing sources, EU TV was more balanced than the other stations monitored.

5. Actions taken to improve the situation

From 13 to 19 July, four flagrant violations of ethical and professional principles were analyzed in case studies (1 news item on Moldova 1, 2 news items on Radio Moldova and 1 news item on NIT) that were posted on the information portal Moldova azi (www.azi.md).

On 15 July, the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) sent CEC and BCC the third monitoring report accompanied by a letter drawing attention to the fact that the stations monitored had repeatedly violated the Regulation on Coverage of the Electoral Campaign in the Anticipated Parliamentary Elections of 29 July 2009 by Moldovan Media. IJC requested CEC and BCC to review those cases and to take the necessary measures to ensure impartiality, balance and the free formation of opinions by presenting opposing viewpoints.

On 13 July, BCC issued a press release reiterating the need for broadcasters to observe the provisions and legal framework established in a number of documents developed by CEC and BCC in view of informing the electorate in a fair and objective way about the programs of the candidates so that voters can freely and fairly express their constitutional rights. The press release was general and referred to all radio and TV stations involved in covering the electoral campaign.

On 16 July BCC issued another press release saying that in the past period, BCC had received signals from many consumers who said the programs of some broadcasters included electoral programs that did not comply with their program schedules and the internal regulations approved by BCC. BCC called on broadcasters to organize electoral debates, to ensure the provision of air time under equal conditions for all candidates and that the moderators would be impartial, to ensure that the debates addressed electoral topics and to interfere when the guests violated the provisions established in national standards. Again, the press release was addressed to all TV and radio stations covering the campaign without making reference to specific cases of violations of the legislation in force.

6. Recommendations:

- The media monitored should use these monitoring reports as self-regulatory tools and should eliminate all weaknesses. Specifically they should do the following.

Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova

- inform voters fairly, impartially and in a balanced way;
- eliminate discrimination in applying the principle of pluralism and diversity of opinions and in offering the right to respond;
- cover events truthfully without distorting reality by censoring information and “sterilizing” the messages of candidates.

NIT

- abandon the practice of making editorial remarks or comments on the events of 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 a diversity of opinions as well as the freedom of expression;
- cover events truthfully without distorting reality with irrelevant videos and comments.

Prime TV

- structure newscasts in such way as not to favor one electoral candidate to the detriment of another one.

EU TV

- observe the principle of impartiality in relation to all candidates;
- eliminate all weaknesses related to unbalanced coverage of the parties involved in conflicts.

- The Observers’ Board of the public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova should urgently review these monitoring reports and should take measures to ensure a balanced presentation of electoral events on Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova that is in the public interest.
- 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 their right to a free expression of opinions and of their right to free communication of information through radio and television.

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.

Case Study Number 1
Moldova 1, “Mesager” on 13 July at 21:21
Reporter: Vasile Munteanu

On 13 July, Moldova 1 broadcast a news item about a press conference of the chairman of the European Action Movement (MAE), Anatol Petrencu, in which he announced that he was withdrawing from the campaign but that he would still participate in the electoral debates to promote the idea of removing the Communists from power. The report broadcast by Moldova 1 screened the information and distorted the message to convey to viewers that MAE was withdrawing to show that Mr. Petrencu was not vainglorious, a characteristic of right-wing party leaders who do not want to run on a common list.

The lead into the news item was neutral and generally informative about the MAE decision. Presenter: *MAE will not participate in the parliamentary elections on 29 July. This announcement was made today at a press conference by this party's leader Anatol Petrencu. The party will withdraw from the campaign starting on 22 July.*

The reporter's text then shifts the emphasis from the true and main reason why MAE was withdrawing from the campaign to a false and unimportant one: “This gesture comes to prove that the MAE leader is not vainglorious.”

Reporter: *Anatol Petrencu announced today that his party would not participate in the elections of 29 July at the same time mentioning that he was not giving up the campaign and would be present at the electoral debates on the public TV station. According to Petrencu, this gesture comes once again to prove that a political party can renounce vainglory.*

Insert 1

Anatol Petrencu: *We cannot stand aside even though we do not have any electoral interest. We want to prove through our example that for a noble cause, it is possible in Moldova, too, that a political entity renounces vainglory, which is a big sin of our politicians.*

Taken out of context, this statement does not pour light on the reason, i.e., the “noble cause,” to which Petrencu refers. Furthermore, the news article includes Petrencu's opinion about the refusal of the opposition parties to participate in the elections on a common list.

Insert 2

Anatol Petrencu: *MAE was the first party to urge all right-wing political forces to come together in this electoral campaign. We continued these efforts until the end, both officially through public calls and unofficially through long discussions. Unfortunately, this desire for our society has not materialized.*

Although the original statement of Anatol Petrencu clearly indicates the reason that MAE withdrew from the campaign, Moldova 1 censored the message of the MAE leader and included only sterile information in the newscast so as not to put the ruling party in a negative light. For comparison, we present below the quotations broadcast on 13 July by other media outlets.

Anatol Petrencu: *MAE made public today its intention to withdraw from the campaign to support the fight against the biggest enemy of democracy: Communism. MAE's registration in the electoral campaign never meant to divide the anti-Communist votes but on the contrary, to support political efforts to remove PCRM from power* (Pro TV, 13 July).

Anatol Petrencu: *MAE made public today its intention to withdraw from the campaign to support the fight against the biggest enemy of democracy: Communism. MAE will not only recommend that its members and supporters vote for the right-wing parties that are strongly consolidated in Moldova's political life but will also make an active and strong campaign to mobilize the right-wing electorate to vote against and to condemn Communism*" (EU TV, 13 July).

"I made this decision in order not to divide the votes, not to take away from the votes of opposition parties," Petrencu said specifying that MAE did not want anything in return, "neither a place on their lists nor other political advantages." Anatol Petrencu also said that MAE would try to convince the undecided electorate to make a correct choice, would promote a very clear anti-Communist message and would urge its supporters to choose one of the opposition parties." (Info-Prim Neo, 13 July).

Case Study Number 2

Radio Moldova, "Panorama Zilei" on 15 July at 19:00

Reporter: Rodica Railean

On 15 July in the newscast "Panorama Zilei" under the "Elections 2009" rubric, Radio Moldova broadcast a report about the press conference organized by PLDM. The author of the report distorted the message of Vlad Filat, the leader of this political party, and omitted the main subject of the letter sent by the PLDM chairman to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Rodica Railean: *The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party read out a letter written by the members of his party and addressed to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. In the first part of the letter, PLDM refers to the support provided by European agencies to Moldova.*

Vlad Filat: *The Council of Europe and you personally have intervened every time when serious tensions were registered in our country, and the role of mediator that you successfully played was good enough to decisively contribute to solving those problems. Thanks to the support you provided, Moldova has made some progress toward democratic development.*

Every press article should start with the key message. In this case, however, there is a delay of approximately one minute until the subject of the letter is addressed. Usually the media avoids including elements in news items that are more characteristic of a diplomatic message and less of a journalistic text.

Rodica Railean: *After that, PLDM informed the Council of Europe about how they believe events developed in Chişinău after the parliamentary elections.*

Vlad Filat: *I would like to thank you in this way for your prompt intervention and the continuous message that your institution has promoted with regard to the situation. (omitted text: **described above. Thanks to this effort, the young people were released. Even though they are not in penitentiaries anymore, even though they are not tortured any more, these young people deserve legal and moral retribution, especially since their harassment continues and the psychological pressure on them is huge...I must note, however, that the response of the Moldovan authorities has not always been appropriate.**) Given the fact that Moldova has been monitored by the Council of Europe since 1995 and that there have been serious malfunctions in the activities of democratic institutions and obvious deficiencies with regard to ensuring fundamental human rights, the Republic of Moldova, or better said those who have been leading this country for eight years, is facing a sharp lack of political will in the process of assimilating the values promoted by the Council of Europe. Moldova is not yet aligned to the Resolution of the Council of Europe on condemning totalitarian Communist regimes, even though Parliament approached this problem numerous times. (Omitted text: **Today we have come to ascertain that this issue is more current than ever.**)*

In this case, the subject is distorted. Some text was omitted at the end of the first sentence [in boldface] with the help of audio editing, so it is not clear any longer to which situation the speaker refers. This was done in a decisive way at 1.10 minutes into the report. Furthermore, the author omitted the entire section where Vlad Filat referred to the situation about which he was talking and included another paragraph from the letter after taking out the first and last sentences.

Hacking the text and selecting paragraphs secondary to the message conveyed by the PLDM leader denotes that the journalist wanted to sterilize the information in order to misinform the listeners about the real subject of the open letter addressed to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. The audience of Radio Moldova did not find out to what Vlad Filat referred and what his message to Terry Davis was.

Rodica Railean: *At the end of the letter, PLDM makes an appeal to the Secretary of the Council of Europe.*

Vlad Filat: (...) *I urge you (...) to use your influence and levers that you have to initiate a review of the Council's Resolution on the Condemnation of Totalitarian Communist Regimes (omitted text: **so that it also refers to the crimes of Communism in the 21st century. Only in this way it will be possible to rehabilitate the innocent victims of the Moldovan Communist regime as well as to prevent a possible repetition in the future of these violent demonstrations that have nothing in common with democracy, the rule of law and human rights!**)*

In this excerpt too, the author cuts Filat's text so that he again does not refer to the condemnation of the crimes of Communism in the 21st century.

The report is balanced by the response of a PCRM leader even though the name of this party does appear in the broadcast. Victor Stepaniuc asserts that PCRM rejected totalitarian doctrines back in 1995 and that the resolution of the European bodies on condemning the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes does not refer to modern left-wing parties that are called Socialist or Communist.

The way in which the material was structured, the generalizations and repeated hacking of the letter addressed to Terry Davis by the chairman of PLDM denotes that the journalist deliberately avoided informing the listeners fairly about this event. The confusing manner in which the message was presented makes it hard to understand for an ordinary listener. The lack of correct and concrete emphasis on the text of the letter denotes not only the journalist's lack of experience but also the intention of this public radio station to avoid certain sensitive subjects that put PCRM in a negative light.

Annexes:

Full text of the open letter addressed by the PLDM leader to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Terry Davis:

http://pldm.md/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1558:scriosare-deschisa-secretar-general-consiliu-europei-terry-davis&catid=1:catservpresa&Itemid=62

News broadcast by Radio Free Europe:

<http://www.europalibera.org/content/news/1777436.html>

Case Study Number 3

Radio Moldova, “Panorama Zilei” on 14 July at 19:00

Reporter: Rodica Railean

On 14 July under the “Elections 2009” rubric, “Panorama Zilei” included a news article about a PCRM press conference. The item lasted 3 minutes and 50 seconds during which representatives of this political party made several allegations against candidates who were not given the right to respond. It became clear that the reporter had not even tried to get in touch with the parties mentioned in the report because no information was mentioned about her efforts to find them.

Note that during the same program, four other reports on the press conferences of PL, PSD, PLDM and AMN were broadcast. All allegations brought by the representatives of these parties against PCRM were balanced with the responses of PCRM candidates or of the relevant central public administration officials. Two of these reports were produced by the same correspondent, Rodica Railean.

The above-mentioned situation denotes that Radio Moldova selectively observes journalistic standards according to the party it is reporting on. This partisanship by a public radio station seriously violates the principles of impartiality and fairness toward political candidates. It distorts competition in the campaign and deprives the electorate of objective information which prejudices the quality of the voting on election day. This report by

Rodica Railean proves that responsibility to the audience is far from being a professional standard for some Radio Moldova journalists.

Case Study Number 4

NIT, “Curier” on 16 July 2009 at 21:30

Presenters: Victoria Filip and Octavian Volcu

Reporters: Victoria Filip and Alexei Semionov

On 16 July outside the “Elections 2009” rubric, NIT broadcast on “Curier” a news item that lasted 4 minutes and 45 seconds about the presumed intention of PDM and its leader Marian Lupu to organize a “Great National Assembly” on 26 July. Even though it was clear from the report that PDM intended to organize only a party congress on that day, the news was presented in such a way as to convince the viewer that Lupu wanted to convoke a great assembly in the center of Chișinău. Moreover, according to NIT, Lupu was allegedly competing with the leaders of the liberal parties for the Great National Assembly Square.

Victoria Filip and Octavian Volcu: *“The fight for the square in the center of the capital again starts among the right-wing opposition. The party led by Vlad Filat reserved the center of Chișinău for 19 July and the one led by Marian Lupu would like to gather the opposition there on 26 July. Many messages and appeals posted on the Internet about Marian Lupu indicate that competition seems to be very serious among the leaders of the opposition who think that being the first one in the square means being the leader of a future anti-Communist front”* [our underlining].

Relying on anonymous messages announced as blogs and other Internet sources without identifying the sites to which reference is made, Victoria Filip says that, *“Lupu decided to lead the meeting after seeing that Urechean, Ghimpu, Chirtoacă and Filat did not have the power to lead the crowds through to the end on 7 April. Bloggers announced that Lupu will replace the liberal leaders to continue what we started on 6 April...”*

These statements attributed to “bloggers” impart the idea that a continuation of the violence of 7 April is being organized and that the organizer will be Marian Lupu who will go “through to the end.” These insinuations were made with a video background of the previous protests, including a shot where the protesters carry a placard with a skull and human bones drawn on it. During the report, shots from the protests were repeated four times and included Vlad Filat and Mihai Godea (PLDM) but it is mentioned in only two cases that they were from the archive without mentioning the exact date when they were taken.

The report includes statements made by Mihai Godea (PLDM), Veaceslav Untilă (AMN), Mihai Ghimpu (PL), Oleg Serebrian and Oazu Nantoi (PDM), each declaring that they did not know anything about a potential meeting to be organized by Marian Lupu or that this subject does not generally interest them. Nonetheless, the reporter persists in offering a false idea which she tries to present as an accomplished fact. At the end, she presents the declaration of Vitalia Pavlicenco (introduced as a “right-wing radical leader”) made for

OMEGA welcoming the organization of such a meeting and repeating videos of the protests.

Conclusions: The report is an example of irresponsible and partial journalism. It does not include a source that confirms the information taken, according to the reporter, from the Internet alleging that Mr. Lupu intended to organize a national meeting, and the reporter does not indicate on exactly which sites it was published. Although the persons interviewed either deny this information or cannot confirm it, the manner in which NIT presents the news item gives the viewer the idea that the non-Communist parties want “to take” the protests “to the end” and to overthrow the constitutional regime by force. NIT emphasizes this with videos filmed on different days without specifying the date when they were made, and the reporter includes her own value judgments in the text of the news item.

The fact that NIT allotted 4 minutes and 45 seconds to an item based on a rumor and speculates about possible developments after the elections on 29 July proves that the item aims to discredit Marian Lupu, the party he leads as well as the other non-Communist parties that are presented as organizers of the protests that resulted in the destruction of government buildings.