



coalitia 2009



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

Report No. 5
20-28 July 2009

1. General data

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

1.2 Monitoring period: 22 June – 29 July 2009

1.3 Criteria for selection of media outlets to be monitored:

Audience-impact (national, quasi-national)

Justification: It is well-known that there is a direct connection between the size of the audience and the impact of media on public opinion: the more people who are exposed to a message, the stronger its impact on certain segments of society.

Ownership (public or private)

Justification: Public media are managed with public funds and are obliged to provide complete, accurate, impartial, 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.

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

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

3. Monitoring data



Moldova 1

Involvement in the electoral campaign: From 20 to 28 July 2009, the newscast “Mesager” on the public TV station Moldova 1 continued to broadly cover the activities of the candidates who were directly involved in the electoral campaign as well as those of people who were not participating in the elections, but continued to support certain candidates. Approximately two-thirds of the total number of 85 items with a direct or indirect electoral character (60) were included under the “Elections 2009” rubric. The items focused on the press conferences of the political parties involved in the campaign, reports from the Central Election Commission (CEC) and reports on the campaign process prepared by agencies that monitored it.

During this period, Moldova 1 broadcast 25 news items with an indirect electoral character. They focused on government activities (e.g., payment of social fees, discussions about the Russian and Chinese loans, compensation for the victims of political repercussion, inauguration of a cereal terminal in Giurgiulești) and also on such actions as asphaltting a road section, commissioning a water pipe and renovating a culture house. It is worth noting the five reports produced by Moldova 1 about the re-opening of family doctors’ centers in various towns. All reports repeatedly mentioned that the funds had been allocated by the government and only one report said that, “the government distributed medical equipment with the aid of the European Union.”

Impartiality and objectivity: During the reporting period, Moldova 1 was relatively more impartial and objective than in previous weeks (fewer cases of “sterilized” information and distorted messages were registered) except for the last day of the campaign—27 July—when this public TV station showed open political partisanship.

During the first 7 days of monitoring in the reference period, “Mesager” broadcast 27 news items favoring the Communist Party of Moldova (PCRM) and the central public authorities and 4 neutral news items. During the week, Moldova 1 maintained its tendency to offer the last word to PCRM under the “Elections 2009” rubric. After news items about the press conferences of various candidates, the ruling party usually ended the discussion with its position. This privileged positioning of PCRM indicates that Moldova 1 favored this party not only through the structure and messages of the news items.

Favoritism toward PCRM was noticed, for instance, in the news article about the results of the Public Opinion Barometer which were presented as follows: “The

Communist Party will obtain most of the votes for Parliament in the 18th legislature.” The item did not make reference to any numbers but only offered estimates that PCRM would obtain “most of the votes of the number of people who are sure they will participate in the elections,” or “this percentage can be higher.” The item also did not give any names of other political entities that were mentioned in the Barometer with the exception of Our Moldova Alliance (AMN) which the author of the report said might not get into Parliament because it would not pass the electoral threshold of five percent. Other news items that favored the ruling party had national minority representatives, Afghan war veterans, the Patria-Rodina Socialist Party and the Căușeni-based Young Patriots Alliance as protagonists.

On “Mesager” on 27 July, the last day of the campaign, Moldova 1 broadcast two news items that openly favored PCRM. They were about the press conference of a PCRM candidate named Mark Tkaciuk. For nearly three minutes (2.56), the head of the 2009 Elections Center of the Central Committee of PCRM made a number of attacks and allegations against candidates from other parties who were not given an opportunity to respond. The same thing happened in the message addressed by PCRM Chairman Vladimir Voronin who criticized the opposition parties and urged the electorate to vote for PCRM. Note that this public TV station ended its coverage of the elections anticipated on 29 July with this message only.

Other parties received more modest coverage in Moldova 1 newscasts, and its reporters showed more impartiality and critical spirit when reporting about their activities. During this reporting period, the Liberal Party (PL), the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), AMN, the Democratic Party (PD), the Socialist Democratic Party (PSD) and the Green Alliance were the protagonists in 21 neutral items and in 10 negative ones.

Nonetheless, on the last day of the campaign in addition to four neutral news items about PD, PLDM, PL, AMN, PSD and the Green Alliance, Moldova 1 also broadcast five items that discredited them. The news referred to allegations of lying and treachery made by Tkaciuk, an alleged relation with the underground world of a PLDM candidate, the alleged involvement of an AMN candidate in counterfeiting money, allegations of manipulation during the campaign by a PL leader and the allegations made by Voronin that the opposition leaders were “hostages of their own lies.” All the details revealed in these items as well as their approach indicated that the journalistic objectivity of Moldova 1 left much to be desired and that this public TV station did not always distinguish between opinions and facts.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: From 20 to 28 July 2009, Moldova 1 continued to selectively observe the principle of using a diversity of sources which was characteristic of this TV station throughout the campaign. All controversial news items in which candidates made allegations against the

Communist Party included responses from PCRM members or from the government, depending on the subjects of the disputes. Eleven out of 17 such reports had a diversity of sources which cannot be said about the items in which PCRM candidates accused the other electoral candidates of various campaign violations. Six such news items presented a single position, and the responses of the parties or persons mentioned were absent. For instance, in the news item about the allegations launched by PCRM candidate Grigore Petrenco against some media outlets about how unprofessionally they covered the campaign and organized debates, their point of view was missing (20 July). The Patria-Rodina Socialist Party urged the electorate to vote for PCRM and alleged that the opposition parties instigated ethnic conflicts; the response of the opposition was not included (24 July). Another subject that lacked a balance of sources was the one about the press conference of PCRM candidate Mark Tkaciuk (27 July). He made a number of allegations against his political opponents and mentioned the names of politicians whom he accused of lying and treachery, but none of the politicians mentioned was given the opportunity to respond.



Radio Moldova

Involvement in the electoral campaign: From 20 to 28 July, Radio Moldova broadcast 98 news items on its newscast on 19:00 that had a direct or an indirect electoral impact, 64 of which were included under the "Elections 2009" rubric and 34 of which referred to the activities of the central public administration. The subjects of 17 reports broadcast under "Elections 2009" were the activities of CEC and of district electoral councils and reports of non-government organizations on the campaign process (League for the Protection of Human Rights, Human Rights Institute). The remaining 47 news items focused on the activities of the candidates.

Impartiality and objectivity: Radio Moldova broadcast a total of 41 election news items that usually were positioned at the beginning of its newscasts and favored the government and PCRM. For example, this radio station announced that, "The government demanded that the local authorities pay all social fees," and "The Ministry of Finance allocated 44 million lei for agricultural subsidies and another 35 million lei are to be paid this week" (20 July); "The price of milk bought from owners will increase" (21 July); "Canning factories will process 40,000 more tons of fruits and vegetables than last year" (23 July); "A new water pipe was commissioned in the village of Bușila. The mayor stressed the importance of the support provided by the country's leadership in building the water pipe" (24 July) and "The diesel oil from the aid provided by Gazprom to our country has been distributed for five days in Orhei" (25 July). On 27 July, the last day of the campaign, Radio Moldova presented a number of news items in favor of PCRM:

“The kindergarten in the village of Florițoaia Veche was re-opened after renovation”; “Under the ‘Education for All’ project of the Ministry of Education, the kindergarten in the village of Cotiujeni in Briceni District was re-opened after being renovated in European style”; “Thirty-five kindergartens have already been renovated and 11 more will be by the end of the year”; “The village of Plopi-Știubei in the district of Căușeni was connected to the gas pipe” and “Twenty-six villages in the Cimișlia District are connected to the gas pipe.”

The news items whose sources were PCRM members or supporters were usually included at the end of the “Elections 2009” rubric. On 27 July, the last day when campaigning was allowed, the “Elections 2009” rubric again ended with news about PCRM. On 26 July, Radio Moldova ignored the opposition parties and presented only reports about the events of the People’s Christian Democratic Party (PPCD) and PCRM.

Of the 39 news items that referred to the opposition, 22 were neutral, 10 were negative and 7 were positive. The messages of the opposition parties were censored whenever they disfavored the ruling party. For instance, the news about the press conference of PSD on 20 July skipped the references made to the fraudulent privatizations done by the ruling party. The statements made by the anticommunist leader of the European Action Movement (MAE) after its withdrawal from the campaign (22 July) were also censored. The reporter referred to the lack of “perspective” for liberalism in Moldova distorting Anatol Petrencu’s message which in reality referred to the high number of liberal parties given that the liberalism “does not have ground” in Moldova. Vlad Filat’s message to civil servants and law-enforcement bodies on 24 July was also “sterilized,” especially the idea that, “The Communist Party that has been ruling for eight years has undermined democratic institutions by reducing their functions to servicing the interests of the Communist regime; it placed civil servants and law-enforcement bodies in the humiliating position of working from fear.” Another example of censorship was the PLDM conference that presented the conclusion of “The Truth” campaign. The reporter did not mention the events of 7 April to which the PLDM member referred and reduced the purpose of the campaign to the following quote: “We believe that Moldova can be saved and that it does not matter how mioritic³ we are: we not have erected a monument dedicated to sheep. And by the way, the phrase ‘laie-bucălaie’⁴ cannot be translated to any other language. Nonetheless, we believe that because we have sculptures of lions, of horses and of a wolf, Moldova still has the power it needs to wake up...” (25 July).

³ The standard phrase ‘mioritic space’ refers to the specific Romanian spiritual universe (according to some Romanian writers) whose matrix is represented by Romanian geographic space full of pasture land: translator’s note.

⁴ Pun used to refer to black sheep: translator’s note.

The opposition was also discriminated against with regard to the space allocated to their messages. Thus, on 24 July, PLDM leader Vlad Filat was offered 97 seconds while PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin got 266 seconds to express his position on one issue or another. In another example, the Demnitate Women's Movement that declared that it would support the liberal parties in the elections, especially AMN, was given 60 seconds while the Young Patriots' Alliance that announced its support for PCRM was given 153 seconds (24 July).

In addition to PCRM, PPCD was also favored in the space it was allotted. For instance, the item about the PPCD press conference of 20 July lasted 246 seconds compared with 160 seconds for PD and 174 seconds for PSD. On 25 July, the members of PPCD enjoyed 135 seconds while those of PLDM got 83 seconds.

Fairness and balance of news/diversity of opinions: During the reporting period, Radio Moldova coverage of the electoral campaign improved with regard to diversity of opinions. Thus, 24 of the 33 controversial news items presented the positions of all parties mentioned. Every time PCRM was mentioned by the other electoral candidates in a negative context, Radio Moldova presented the PCRM opinion (14 news items), but when PCRM representatives attacked the opposition, the latter was not given the right to respond. Of the nine items that had representatives of PCRM or of other parties supporting PCRM in the electoral campaign as sources, the right to respond was offered to the opposition only in two of them and the space allotted to each party was disproportionate in both cases. For instance, after the declaration made by a representative of the Patria-Rodina Socialist Party that, "the liberal parties tend towards chaos and destruction," the reporter offered the right to respond to AMN representative Victor Osipov. While the socialist's representative spoke for 140 seconds, Osipov's response lasted only 19 seconds.

The news items that were not balanced included the one about the press conference of PCRM that said that station Albasat TV in Nisporeni allegedly created problems for this party during debates but the station's opinion was not asked (20 July). The opinion of the opposition was not asked after the statements made by General Prosecutor Valeriu Gurbulea about the events of 7 April. Mark Tkaciuk, the head of the electoral staff of PCRM, alleged that certain parties had distributed fake fliers, but their opinions were not presented (27 July). In addition, in the news about the fact that PL leader Mihai Ghimpu allegedly deposited more funds into the party's budget than his income in the past two years did not quote any sources ("the press has written") and did not ask for Mihai Ghimpu's opinion either (23 July).

Fourteen of those 31 items that referred to the activities of the central public administration required information from a second source or the opinions of independent experts so that the public could form its own ideas about what was reported in the news. These included the one about the assertions that the local

public authorities had delayed paying salaries or had reduced them and that the government requested the termination of such practices (20 July) and the one about the distribution of diesel oil to farmers (25 July).



Prime TV

Involvement in the electoral campaign: The newscasts of Prime TV were very short and presented several events in a concise way, but those events were not always the most recent ones. Although officially Prime TV chose not to get involved in the electoral campaign, in reality this station broadcast one or two items with an electoral character in almost every newscast. From 20 to 28 July, 10 such news items were registered including 3 that referred directly to the activities of CEC. The others presented certain achievements of the government in positive light thus indirectly favoring PCRM. “Evenimentul” on 21 July included videos featuring PCRM candidate Z. Greceanîi.

Impartiality and objectivity: The tendency of Prime TV to slightly favor the ruling party registered on this station in the previous monitoring periods was also maintained in the final days before the election, again through broadcasts about electoral activities undertaken by the government. Thus on 21 July, Prime TV announced that, “The government will help towns affected by the downpours in July.” Another news item said that the government had negotiated a loan of 1.5 million euros with Sweden and mentioned that, “This is the third loan obtained by the government since the beginning of July.” On the following day, Prime TV broadcast a news item about another loan, this time offered by China. The viewers found out from the same newscast that, “The Ministry of Finance has transferred nearly 14 million lei to local authorities as compensation for the victims of political repercussion.” Even though those news items did not mention PCRM, they indirectly favored it because it is PCRM that rules the government. The other electoral candidates were absent from the newscasts of Prime TV.

Fairness and balance of news/diversity of opinions: The very short news items on Prime TV did not include opinions other than the official ones. Even though the opinions of independent experts were necessary in some cases (for instance, with regard to the many loans negotiated by the government or implicitly of foreign debt), such opinions were missing. Thus, the viewers were not fully informed about various matters and knew reality from only a single point of view – that of the government.

The refusal of Prime TV which has national coverage to get involved in the campaign can be interpreted as evading its mission to inform the public. In the current conditions in Moldova, such an evasion indirectly favors the government.



NIT

Involvement in the electoral campaign: NIT was significantly involved in covering the electoral campaign in its newscasts. From 20 to 28 July, this station broadcast a total of 76 news items with an electoral impact, 13 of which were under the "Elections 2009" rubric. The space allocated to items with a direct or an indirect electoral character gradually increased during the campaign and culminated in the final week when NIT broadcast many items lasting 4 or 5 minutes that promoted the image of only one party and denigrated those of the others.

The vast majority of the news items broadcast by NIT during the reference period referred either to the activities of the government and the trips of the head of the state, prime minister and ministers to various towns in the country, or to the press events and meetings of PCRM with the electorate. This station announced that the Ministry of Health had re-opened several renovated healthcare centers, that the Ministry of Finance had ordered the payment of 44 million lei as subsidies in agriculture, that the Ministry of Agriculture offered subsidies and diesel oil free of charge to farmers, that the law-enforcement bodies fought corruption in the education sector and thwarted plans to destabilize the currency market, that the state would buy houses for young teachers in villages and that the head of state had negotiated loans and the people appreciated it.

Impartiality and objectivity: During the last week of the campaign, NIT distinguished itself by its bias in promoting the electoral messages of PCRM and denigrating those of the liberal parties. In covering the campaign, NIT reporters and editors frequently resorted to methods that are alien to professional journalism such as distorted messages, false associations and facts not separated from opinions. Furthermore, some items were insulting and instigated hatred against certain candidates. During this reporting period, NIT maintained its tendency to keep silent about certain events while stressing others by repeating them several times and by selecting from the agenda only the information that put the government in a positive light and the opposition in a negative one.

The vast majority of news items referring to the electoral candidates was biased and significantly favored the ruling party that was presented as "the only party capable of ruling the country," and its leader Vladimir Voronin as, "a good administrator, a wise man, a brave patriot and an animal lover." The PCRM and

the central public authorities were mentioned in 41 items: 37 times in a positive context and 4 times in a neutral one. Most the time the positive items about PCRM and the top leadership were long and presented only one point of view. Thus on 20 July under "Elections 2009," NIT broadcast an item about the Resolution of the Republic's Assembly of Veterans that lasted 5 minutes and 30 seconds in which people were urged to vote for PCRM. After several speeches, including one by Vladimir Voronin who praised PCRM and denounced the opposition, the opinions of four participants in the event followed who repeated the election slogans of PCRM. The leaders of the opposition were not quoted although they were accused of wishing to come to power in order to have access to public funds and to avoid punishment for provoking disorder on 7 April.

Another item nearly 4 minutes long informed viewers about the initiative of the head of the state to revitalize the town of Căinari and the happy reactions of the residents, although it was only a proposal: "The town of Căinari could become a strong economic zone with new work places and a developed infrastructure that would attract investors. This change could happen if the town is given the status of district, an initiative discussed last month by the head of the state. This is happy news for the residents who say that they are very hopeful about the current ruling party" (24 July). In the same item, the reporter appeared in the role of expert and announced that, "Around 60 percent of the town's residents voted for PCRM on 5 April, and this figure is expected to reach 80 percent on 29 July because people believe in those who want to offer them an easier life."

The news item about inaugurating a water pipe in the village of Bușila in Ungheni District (25 July), again at the initiative of the head of the state, stated that, "People have felt during eight years the constant care of the president for them," and in the item about the creation of a local coalition between PCRM and PPCD (22 July), NIT reported that after two years of democratic government, Hâncești District, "...had turned from a town prosperous into fallow land," therefore it was necessary to consolidate forces. The item about the opening of two emergency medical services in Nisporeni District said that the residents had got rid of additional problems and deeply thanked the country's leadership for its care.

PCRM was also promoted through images of the hammer and the sickle as these PCRM symbols appeared in the foreground in many news items such as the report about the results of the Public Opinion Barometer on 20 July (the hammer and the sickle and the slogan "Let us defend our Motherland!" appeared on the screen for 15 seconds), the item about the press conference of the Union of Afghan War Veterans (23 July) and the press conferences of PCRM representatives (20 and 27 July).

The vast majority of the news items referring to the liberal parties did not cover their activities in a truthful, balanced and impartial manner. The information was

either censored (when it could damage the image of PCRM), or it was ignored (if it could not be used against the opposition parties). In total, all the other electoral candidates except for PPCD were mentioned 25 times: 22 times in a negative context and 3 times in neutral context. The journalists often did not report but rather commented on the events described, and in many cases, they did not inform the public about what had happened but told people what to think about certain events.

NIT repeatedly violated page 16 of the regulations on covering the electoral campaign by the media approved by CEC as it broadcast a number of news items in which state dignitaries appeared who were also involved in the campaign (for instance, the news items about the awarding of medals by President Voronin (20 July); the request of Prime Minister Greceanii that all pensions and salaries be paid (20 July); the participation of Prime Minister Greceanii in the re-opening of a renovated healthcare center (23 July); the participation of President Voronin in the opening of the cereal terminal in Giurgiulesti (24 and 26 July); the re-opening of the renovated main office of Banca de Economii (24 July); the erection in the village of Ciorescu of a monument to the soldiers who died in the war (26 July) and the participation of Deputy Minister of Economy Iurie Muntean, a PCRM candidate, in the commissioning of a gas pipe which referred to the minister's merits in the implementation of that project and made election propaganda (27 July).

Most of the news items that referred to candidates other than those from PCRM and PPCD were derogatory. The most frequently mentioned parties were PL and AMN, each appearing in negative contexts 12 times. On 21 July, NIT announced that, "Serafim Urechean does not see himself as the country's president anymore. Serafim Urechean, AMN leader, has today made an historical declaration. He acknowledged today before the media that he had never asked to be head of state. (...) Probably puzzled by this result [of the Public Opinion Barometer], Serafim Urechean gave up his desire to become president. This is a strange outcome because Serafim Urechean had aspired to rule during previous elections." This news was repeated on 27 July. Another subject that was covered several times during the reporting period referred to the possible involvement of an AMN candidate in illegal activities.

Five of the 12 items that put PL in a negative light contained the same information, i.e., the verbal attack against Dorin Chirtoacă by a citizen: "The people's voice follows the representatives of the Liberal Party. Those who are braver are not waiting for a meeting with the electorate and decide to say what they think about the liberals on the street," the presenter said and an insert followed that labeled the leaders of the opposition as criminals, associated Chirtoacă with Hitler and culminated with a woman saying: "Do you want someone to kick your ass, Mr. Chirtoacă?!" Thus, this station promoted violence and instigated hatred against a candidate (see Case Study No. 1).

Another news item that was derogatory about an opposition leader referred to an accident with fatal consequences that happened during the preparation for an election meeting of PL. The narration style which was adequate for commentaries but not for news, and the information sources used by the reporter both indicated his bias toward the subjects of the news. The reporter presented the information in its entirety almost without making reference to a single source. Although the news was about an accident with lethal consequences, the NIT reporter did not try to obtain details from the police or the hospital but limited himself to quoting one of the witnesses who did not wish to be filmed and threatened that he would break the journalist's neck if he included the video in the report (see Case Study Number 2).

PLDM was denigrated in several news items that claimed that this party was connected to the underworld. Based on a video taken from the Internet, NIT stated that PLDM had asked for support in the elections from individuals with criminal pasts. It was not clear in the video who was talking, but the reporter asserted that they were former prisoners "whose bodies were covered with tattoos." Due to the bad quality of the video and sound, it was rather difficult to distinguish what those people were discussing (24 July). The news about the PLDM event in the Great National Assembly Square that was postponed due to the heavy rains was in fact a commentary in which a political analyst contrasted luxurious jeeps and expensive suits with the ordinary people who were out in the rain (20 July).

In many cases, NIT reporters did not separate facts from opinions and in fact included their own opinions about certain subjects in the news. In this reporting period, NIT broadcast two news items in which the reporter announced the percentage of the voters in certain towns who would vote for PCRM on 29 July without making reference to a source. The reporters also said that the residents of Edineț, "...remembered with horror the time when the country was ruled by democrats," (27 July) and that the residents of Căinari, "...would not allow themselves to be intimidated, that the memory of 7 April still gave them shivers," (24 July) and that 27 July would remain an historical date for a village in Căușeni District as a gas pipe was commissioned on that day in that village (27 July).

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: Monitoring showed that NIT did not take into account the principle of seeking a diversity of opinions and that through the news selected, it did not offer the viewers enough perspectives to allow them form their own opinions about the candidates. Most of the election news was inspired from a single source or from several sources that expressed the same point of view. Only 11 of the 31 controversial items broadcast from 20 to 28 July offered the floor to all the parties involved in the conflict. Any allegations against PCRM were usually balanced with the responses of the members of this party while PCRM allegations against other candidates were generally made

without a response. For example, on 27 July, NIT quoted PCRM candidate Mark Tkaciuk who said the opposition had lost the moral right to victory in the elections and launched various allegations against its leaders including "...that they were embittered totalitarian sects," and that, "The political racket, in favor of which thousands of young people demonstrated, spit on them and used them only as cannon fodder." The opposition was not given the right to respond.

Other examples of unbalanced news items include the following: the press conference of PCRM in which Grigore Petrenco accused several media outlets and a PLDM member of bias (20 July); the PCRM item in which Igor Dodon attacked the opposition by asserting that it would again fail to vote for the president and would unleash new elections that would generate new expenses (24 July); the news item alleging that the Chişinău local public administration did not do anything to alleviate the floods (22 July); the news about the candidates suspected of being involved in counterfeiting (22 July) and the attack of the Union of Afghan War Veterans on the opposition parties (23 July) .

All these items violated the provisions of CEC regulations according to which the broadcasters were obliged to cover the campaign in a balanced and impartial manner, and the electoral news had to ensure, "...impartiality, balance and the free formation of opinions by presenting opposing viewpoints.

Language and videos: Throughout the campaign, NIT has extensively used videos filmed on 7 April during the violent protests that are usually accompanying news items referring to opposition candidates in a negative context. An example is the news item about the postponement of a rally planned by PLDM due to pouring rain that was accompanied by videos showing the destruction of the Parliament and President's Office buildings (20 July). This station sometimes edited videos in order to amplify the effect of the message. Thus, the news item about the joint press conference of PL, PLDM and AMN stressed Urechean's statements that he did not aspire to become the country's president. The news item challenged those statements and included videos repeated on other days in which Urechean said, "I want, I want, I want and I will become president," followed by a shot in which Vladimir Filat smiled ironically. It is clear that this station edited and repeated certain shots in order to create the impression that there was dissension among opposition leaders (21 July).



EU TV

Involvement in the electoral campaign: From 20 to 28 July, EU TV broadcast 54 news items with a direct or an indirect electoral character including 24 items under the “Elections 2009” rubric. In “Monitor” on Tuesday 28 July, the station broadcast eight reports about the electoral process and the activities of the government including two items that indirectly favored PCRM (a report on a government meeting about granting loans to young people to start businesses saying that the loan amount had increased with a video background showing Deputy Prime Minister Victor Stepaniuc who is also a PCRM candidate, and a news item about the compensation paid by the government to victims of political repression) as well as a report that indirectly favored PPCD (the visit of Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roșca to the State Agency for Material Reserves). Note that from 20 to 28 July, EU TV broadcast a total of six news items lasting two or three minutes each about the activities of Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Roșca who is also the PPCD leader; his frequent appearances on this station indirectly favored his party.

Impartiality and objectivity: In the reference period, EU TV continued to favor PPCD and to present PCRM in a neutral or positive light while the candidates representing the liberal parties were disadvantaged in many news items especially due to the fact that they were not given the right to respond in controversial ones. EU TV showed its sympathy for PPCD and its candidates not only by almost daily coverage of the busy schedule of Deputy Prime Minister Roșca (on 20 July a visit to a military unit, on 21 July visits to the Bălți Military Infantry Squad and to the Cricova-based penitentiary, on 22 July a visit to the Scut Patrol Regiment and on 23 July a meeting on migration issues chaired by Roșca) but also by presenting in detail the statements made by PPCD candidates, each time announcing them in the newscast summary as being the most important events of the day (20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27 July). On 27 July outside the “Elections 2009” rubric, EU TV broadcast a news item about the statements made by analyst V. Socor who allegedly said that he hoped PPCD would be represented in the Moldovan Parliament and at the same time asserting that, “the liberal parties played a dirty game.” On 27 July under the “Elections 2009” rubric, this station presented a report about the renovation of the cultural house in the village of Feștești in Ștefan-Vodă District which had taken place only “thanks to PPCD.”

EU TV also presented several positive reports about the activities of the government and about statements with an obvious electoral character of Prime Minister Z. Greceanîi, a PCRM candidate (on 20 July Greceanîi requested that salary arrears be verified; on 22 July at a press conference held on the PCRM

premises with the party's symbols in the background, she announced that half of the Investprivatbank depositors had received their money, that the price of gas would fall and that the National Agency for Energy Resources would revise tariffs with a view to lowering them; on 23 July she signed a memorandum about a one billion dollar loan granted by a Chinese company; on 24 July she opened the cereal terminal in Giurgiulești and the videos also showed PCRM candidates Voronin and Dodon and on 26 July Voronin welcomed China's intention to grant a one billion dollars loan to Moldova).

As for the other candidates, especially those from the liberal parties, they were presented in a more negative context. On 22 July, this station broadcast a report on the press conference of General Prosecutor V. Gurbulea who again stated that, "The mass disorders of 7 April were organized, and this is for sure." When the journalist reported on the prosecutor's statements about, "the members of a radical group who came to Moldova from abroad," videos from 7 April were played again showing opposition leaders Dorin Chirtoacă and Vlad Filat. The report also mentioned that members of PL and PLDM were among those against whom criminal cases were instituted after 7 April but failed to name those persons. EU TV did not request a response from the opposition leaders to the allegations made by Mr. Gurbulea thus severely violating ethical and professional standards.

The activities of Chișinău's public administration associated with Mayor and PL candidate Dorin Chirtoacă were the focus of several EU TV reports. On 21 July, this station broadcast a news item about the meeting of the Chișinău Municipal Council chaired by Alexandru Corduneanu (PPCD). After holding controversial discussions about the situation in the healthcare department, the PL faction left the meeting, but EU TV announced that, "The PL faction flew into a rage." On 26 July, this TV station stated that, "The misspelling of street names in Chișinău is a problem that does not bother the city's administration." Even though EU TV presented just one case of a name written incorrectly on a street sign (Maria Cibotari instead of Maria Cebotari), the reporter talked about mistakes in the plural and at the end reminded viewers that there were over 300 streets in Chișinău implying that there were more mistakes and that the mayor's office was not correcting them.

PL was also disfavored through a biased selection of subjects presented and in the time allotted to them. On 20 July, Mayor Chirtoacă appeared in two news items: one lasting 33 seconds about a press conference in which PL accused the government of ruining the country and one lasting 2 minutes 40 seconds about the verbal attack on Chirtoacă by a citizen which was announced as "D. Chirtoacă booed on the street."

On 22 July, EU TV broadcast a biased report about the conflict in Hâncești District Council that presented PD in an unfavorable light. Under the headline "Heads fall in the Hâncești District Council!" this station reported about the extraordinary

meeting of Hâncești District Council as follows, “Today the Council voted to suspend the chairman of the Hâncești District Council and the deputy chairmen responsible for agriculture and economy. The reason for this sanction is their abuse of power to favor certain parties and their misappropriation of funds.” The reporter did not offer details about the allegations of misappropriating funds and presented the opinion of only one councilor who alleged that District Chairman A. Chetraru had offered office space to the local PD branch of which he was a member. EU TV did not offer the right to respond to those mentioned. The district chairman was contacted by phone, but he said that he was in a meeting and could not speak and the reporter did not call again. The two deputy chairmen were not interviewed either nor were any PD representatives. Note that on the day following this event, Mr. Chetraru organized a press conference and stated that the meeting of the district council was illegal, but EU TV did not present this event in the news. At the end of the report on Hâncești, the reporter announced that a councilor from PPCD had been elected temporary district chairman.

Fairness and balance of sources/diversity of opinions: Of the nine controversial news items broadcast during the reporting period, the positions of both parties involved were presented only in three cases. While the statements of the opposition parties were balanced with the viewpoints of PCRM representatives, this principle was not usually applied to statements made by the ruling party. For instance, on 21 July when “Promo-Lex Association accused PCRM representatives of intimidating their observers who were implementing their election monitoring project, EU TV presented the response of S. Sârbu, the PCRM representative at CEC. On 23 July, in the news item about PL’s request to the General Prosecutor’s Office to deny its statements that their members had been involved in organizing the protests on 7 April, EU TV also broadcast the response of General Prosecutor V. Gurbulea. However, in the news broadcast on 23 and 24 July in which the Patria-Rodina Socialist Party and the Union of Afghan War Veterans urged the citizens to vote for PCRM and made harsh allegations against the liberal parties, the latter’s response was absent.

4. Conclusions

Based on these results, the conclusion is that from 20 to 28 July 2009, the stations monitored continued to deviate from ethical and professional principles which affected their fair and balanced coverage of the parliamentary campaign.

- The public stations Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova maintained their tendency to selectively observe the principles of fair, balanced and impartial coverage of the parliamentary elections. After CEC drew their attention to their violations, a slight improvement with regard to impartiality, objectivity and diversity of opinions was registered on these stations in the final week of the campaign.

- Prime TV, a station with national coverage, broadcast many news items with an indirect electoral character that promoted the image of the current government and implicitly, of PCRM. The other electoral candidates were not presented in this station's newscasts.
- NIT, a station with quasi-national coverage openly promoted PCRM. The vast majority of the news articles about this party were positive while those referring to the opposition were derogatory. This station used aggressive journalistic language and promoted hatred.
- EU TV, also with quasi-national coverage, covered the events related directly or indirectly to the campaign and the candidates relatively impartially. The large number of news items favoring PPCD indicates its partisanship in favor of this party.

5. Actions taken to improve the situation

During the electoral campaign, the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) issued five monitoring reports that were made public at press conferences, were distributed by e-mail and were posted on the IJC website and on the news portal Moldova azi (www.azi.md). Flagrant violations of ethical and professional principles were analyzed in case studies that were posted on the information portal Moldova azi. All reports were sent to CEC and to the Broadcast Coordinating Council (BCC) with a request to undertake all necessary measures to ensure impartiality, balance and the free formation of opinions.

On 13 July, BCC issued a press release in which it stated that it, "...recommended that broadcasters ensure impartiality, balance and the free formation of opinions in newscasts by presenting main opposing viewpoints, and for subjects tackling conflicts, that they observe the principle of providing information from multiple sources, according to Article 7 of the Broadcast Code." On 16 July BCC issued another press release saying that in the past reporting period, BCC had received comments from many consumers who said the programs of some broadcasters included election items that did not comply with their program schedules or with the internal regulations approved by BCC. In both cases, the press releases were addressed to all TV and radio stations covering the campaign without making reference to specific cases of violations of the legislation in force.

On 23 July, BCC drew the attention of 6 stations – Moldova 1, NIT, Pro TV, EU TV, TV 7 and N4 – to their failure to provide a diversity of opinions in their newscasts.

6. Recommendations

- The media outlets monitored should use these monitoring reports as self-regulatory tools and should eliminate all weaknesses. Specifically, in future elections 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 the 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;
- refrain from making comments that instigate hatred and violence.

Prime TV

- get involved in covering the electoral campaign to ensure the access of the public to multiple sources of information.

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 take measures to ensure a balanced presentation in the public interest of electoral events on Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova.
 - 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 the freedom to communicate 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 No.1
NIT, “Curier” on 21, 22, 23 July
Presenter: Octavian Volcu
Reporter: anonymous

On 20 July, NIT broadcast a news item claiming that the Liberal Party had violated the Electoral Code. The item focused on the allegations made by the police that PL had exceeded the timeframe established for meeting with the electorate in the village of Băcioi in Ialoveni District and that it had continued after 22:00. The item includes multiple sources and ends with a piece that presents a verbal attack by a citizen on Chirtoacă in the presence of the media and of Chirtoacă himself. It is not clear from the item who that person was and where that incident happened.

Insert: You resemble Hitler a lot, you must put moustaches on your face and you will be Hitler's double. The same for Filat. And this one, Mr. Urechean, I have known him for many years, because I was under his wing for many years, I was chairperson of the trade union committee in a company and I was a lawyer-economist there and I know what a bandit Mr. Urechean is and all of you are bandits who want to come to power. But you will not have the luck to succeed, do you understand that? You must have 61 votes to be able to elect the president, but you will not have anything. The best you will get will be about 11 votes. The Communists will win because their party is strong. But you tell only lies and blame and scare pensioners saying that you will take away their identity cards.

On 21 July, NIT repeated this insert and presented it as a separate news item.

Presenter: The people's voice follows the representatives of the Liberal Party. Those who are braver are not waiting for a meeting with the electorate and decide to say on the street what they think about the liberals. The most accessed news item on our website this week has been the one in which the PL Deputy Chairman is booed by a woman.

This is followed by a complete repetition of a woman's speech that culminates with the sentence, *Do you want someone to kick your ass, Mr. Chirtoacă?!*

On 23 July, NIT included the same insert at the end of the newscast under the “No Comment” rubric.

The fact that NIT included the entire violent statement of that person in the first news item then isolated it and repeated it several times indicates severe deficiencies with regard to ethics and professionalism, especially as they relate to promoting hatred. Labels like bandits and liars and the association of politicians with Hitler, amplified by repetition, fall under Article 13 of the Broadcaster's Code of Conduct adopted by BCC in 2007 which obliges broadcasters not to instigate violence against people or groups of people in their news items. The repetition of this passage that does not comply even with the most elementary requirements for a

news article indicates the bias of NIT and its intention to engender its audience's disgust and hatred toward the individuals mentioned in them.

Case Study Number 2

NIT, "Curier" on 22 July at 21:30

Presenter: Octavian Volcu

Reporter: anonymous

In the newscast on 22 July, NIT broadcast an item that seriously deviated from journalistic requirements for writing news. Although the item was based on an accident that resulted in a death, it does not offer details that would answer the basic journalistic questions (who? what? when? where? why? how?) but rather narrates a synopsis of recent events in an ironic tone, especially in the first part of the report.

After the presenter in the studio announces, Bad luck never leaves the liberals. A man was electrocuted and died while he was participating in the preparations for an election meeting of the Liberal Party. The last days of campaign bring only sad news and misfortune to the liberal parties. None of the three parties avoided disasters, the anonymous author continues, The liberal-democrats were the first ones to get a blow. The pouring rain on Sunday postponed the mass event planned by Vlad Filat. The waters cleared the Great National Assembly Square in several minutes and the protest in which Vlad Filat promised to provide evidence about the so-called rigging of the elections on 5 April failed to take place. Immediately after this on Monday, Serafim Urechean received the terrible news from the Opinion Barometer that Our Moldova Alliance had fallen below the 3% level in public opinion polls. On Tuesday, Serafim Urechean declared openly before the media that he did not aspire to the office of President of Moldova. Today, bad luck returned with a tragic case that put a shadow on the Liberal Party. Dorin Chirtoacă was to participate tonight in a meeting that was canceled due to a death. A man who participated in the organization of the meeting was electrocuted and died. The attempts to save his life were not successful.

Judging by the structure of the news item that starts with details about the rain/Filat and Opinion Barometer/Urechean and only after that gives details about an accident that resulted in a death, we conclude that the journalistic fact (the persons who died) was given a secondary role in this item. The news does not aim to inform the public about the accident as such but instead is used more as a detail to expand news items that aim to show that the liberals are plagued with bad luck.

The narrative style which is adequate for commentaries and not for news and the information sources used by the reporter indicate his bias toward the subjects of the news. The reporter presents the information almost entirely without making reference to a source. Although the news is about an accident with lethal consequences, the NIT reporter does not try to obtain details from the police or the hospital but limits himself to quoting one of the witnesses who does not wish to be

filmed and threatens that he will break the journalist's neck if he is included in the video in the report. In addition, the reporter announces that he tried to obtain information from the chairman of PL on the Municipal Council and from Dorin Chirtoacă, neither of whom was there when the accident happened, and notes that the first refused to give details and the latter could not be found. The fact that such an item was included in the newscast on NIT proves once again the partisanship of this station against certain electoral candidates.