

Monitoring mass-media during the election campaign for 2014 Parliamentary elections *(general conclusions)*

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1 – 8 November 2014¹



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The opinions herein belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect the point of view of the financers.

¹ The integral report will be posted by 17 November 2014 on the following websites: www.alegeliber.md, www.api.md, www.media-azi.md, www.apel.md

I. General information

1.1 Objective of the project: monitoring and informing the public opinion on the editorial conduct of mass-media institutions during the election campaign for Parliamentary elections in Republic of Moldova.

1.2 Monitoring period: 1 October 2014 – 30 November 2014.

1.3 Criteria for selecting mass-media institutions subject to monitoring:

Mass-media institutions were selected basing on the following objective criteria: a) form of ownership; b) geography; c) language of broadcasting. Thus, public and private mass-media institutions, with national, quasi-national and regional coverage, in Romanian and Russian languages, shall be subject to monitoring.

1.4 Monitored mass-media²:

TV

Accent TV, Canal 2, Canal 3, Canal Regional, GRT, Jurnal TV, Moldova 1, N4, Prime TV, ProTV Chişinău, TV7, Publika TV

Radio

Radio Moldova, Radio Noroc, Radio Plai, Russkoie Radio, Vocea Basarabiei

Print press

Jurnal de Chişinău, Komsomolskaia pravda v Moldove, Moldova Suverană, Nezaavisimaia Moldova, Panorama, Timpul, Vesti Gagauzii, Ziarul Naţional

Online portals

Deschide.md, Jurnal.md, Moldova24.info, Moldova.org, Newsmaker.md, Noi.md, Omg.md, Politik.md, Realitatea.md, Unimedia.info

1.5 Object of monitoring

TV

- A. Electoral news items from the main informative edition of the day;
- B. Electoral shows (one from each TV channel);
- C. Paid electoral advertising;
- D. Electoral debates.

Radio

All news programs, debate shows and advertising during prime-time. The monitoring interval: from 6.00 a.m. till 1.00 p.m. and from 5.00 p.m. till 8.00 p.m., on a daily basis.

Print press

The entire publishing content of monitored periodicals, including advertising.

Online portals

²

In alphabetical order

The entire editorial content of websites, including advertising. As for video materials posted on the website, these will only be mentioned, without monitoring their content.

1.6. Team

The project is implemented within the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, by the Association of Electronic Press (TV monitoring), Association of Independent Press (print and online media monitoring), and Independent Journalism Centre (radio and online media monitoring).

1.7 Methodological framework

The content analysis of media institutions was performed basing on several indicators allowing for the quantification and qualification of electoral news/ shows, frequency of protagonists of various categories, journalists' compliance with professional norms.

Categories of protagonists:

- Public officials;
- Politicians;
- Experts;
- Ordinary citizens;
- Others.

Categories of institutions:

- Presidency;
- Parliament;
- Government;
- Local public administration;
- Political parties.

Quantitative analysis:

- Frequency of occurrence of political stakeholders: a) direct interventions; b) mentioning/appearance;
- Duration of occurrence of political stakeholders: a) direct interventions; b) mentioning/appearance;
- Number of electoral news/shows;
- Number of conflict-type electoral news items;
- Number of protagonists in electoral news/shows;
- Parity of genders among protagonists.

Qualitative analysis:

- Context of presenting political stakeholders in news: a) positive; b) negative; c) neutral.
- Journalist's attitude towards the political stakeholders in the show: a) favoring b) disfavoring, b) impartial;
- Number of sources in conflict-type news items: a) a single source; b) two or more sources;
- Compliance with the principle of impartiality in news: a) biasness; b) unbiasedness.

General conclusions 1-8 November 2014

TV:

- Television channels subject to monitoring increased the number of their electoral news as compared to the previous period;
- With regard to three monitored segments – the number of conflict-type electoral news items (one third); the number of conflict-type news produced basing on a single source (each third news item) and the attitude of reporters (in 16% of cases – biased attitude), the situation remains similar to the previous period;
- Generally speaking, the TV channels *ProTv Chişinău*, *Tv7*, *N4* and *GRT* ensured a relative equilibrium of the occurrence of state officials, politicians and electoral competitors in electoral news;
- *Publika Tv*, *Jurnal Tv*, *Accent Tv* and *Canal Regional* seemed to be relatively balanced in terms of occurrences of state officials and politicians in news, but allowed for a clear misbalance as regards the presence of electoral competitors;
- *Moldova 1* ensured a relative balance of politicians' and electoral competitors' presence in news, but tolerated a misbalance in case of state officials;
- *Canal 2* and *Canal 3* were well-balanced as regards the presence of politicians in news items, but showed a clear imbalance in the case of state officials and electoral competitors;
- *Prime Tv* failed to achieve a balance in the presence of state officials and politicians, and especially electoral competitors, in news, by showing visible preference for Democratic Party;
- *Prime Tv*, *Publika Tv*, *Canal 2* and *Canal 3* mirrored the electoral competitor Democratic Party in a positive light in most of the cases;
- *N4* displayed Liberal Democratic Party in a positive context in the majority of cases, whereas *Tv7* – in one third of cases;
- *Jurnal Tv* and *Accent Tv* most frequently placed Democratic Party in negative light from all the electoral competitors;
- **General conclusion: a group of monitored television channels continue to reflect the Parliamentary elections in a distorted manner during the main news program of the day;**
- Moderators of electoral shows proved a biased attitude towards personalized protagonists either directly or indirectly in 20 cases, signaling 2 situations of favoring and 18 cases of disfavoring attitude towards the protagonists;
- 11 out of 12 monitored TV channels broadcast paid electoral advertising. The number of electoral competitors who posted electoral advertising on the 11 TV channels varies between 1 and 7;
- The highest visibility via electoral clips was achieved by Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party;
- During the reference period, no deviations were registered from the rules for posting advertising against payment on TV;
- Three of the 12 monitored TV channels broadcast electoral debate shows. Broadly, the moderators of debates had an appropriate conduct in relation to the electoral competitors. Nevertheless, some deviations were registered by *Moldova 1* and *Jurnal Tv* in this respect.

Radio:

- The majority of monitored radio stations have actively engaged in covering the election campaign both through news, electoral education materials and debate shows. The most numerous and diverse news items were produced by the public broadcaster *Radio Moldova*, and private radio stations *Vocea Basarabiei* and *Ruskoie radio*;

- The least number of news items was registered at the national-coverage radio station *Radio Noroc* – 12 per total;
- *Radio Moldova*, *Ruskoie radio* and *Radio Noroc* highlighted themselves due to the great number of electoral education materials, as well as a big number of advertising clips, paid from the competitors' electoral fund;
- Most news items were simple, the proportion of conflict-type news being 4.5% of the total number. A good deal of controversial news was balanced (63%), and the authors' position was impartial in most of the cases. In their news, the majority of radio stations quoted mainly state officials and politicians, except for *Vocea Basarabiei* which ensured a higher diversity of sources. At the same time, in terms of gender parity of quoted sources, one may conclude a strong imbalance to the detriment of female sources (10%);
- In terms of the frequency and context of electoral competitors' occurrences, we could say that no clear favoring or disfavoring of any electoral competitor can be detected at *Radio Moldova*, *Radio Noroc* and *Ruskoie radio*;
- The radio station *Plai* showed preference for Democratic Party through the big number of mentionings in news, and *Vocea Basarabiei* – Liberal Democratic Party, through the great number of direct interventions and references to representatives of Liberal Democratic Party, Government, and other members of the same party, in a positive context.

Online:

- The majority of online mass-media subject to monitoring have actively engaged in covering the election campaign, focusing on various directly or indirectly electoral issues. Throughout the reporting period, 528 texts were published on the election campaign and electoral competitors, on a surface exceeding one million signs. Among the portals with most of the materials relevant for monitoring one may count: *Noi.md* (85) *Realitatea.md* (79), *Jurnal.md* (68), *Omg.md* (63). *Newsmaker.md* and *Moldova.org* inserted a reduced number of relevant materials (14 and, accordingly 26);
- To a great extent, the conflict-type materials were misbalanced (76.7%), and more than one fourth of materials were biased (26.5%), the author's opinion towards the protagonists being obvious;
- Practically, online portals do not deal with the electoral education of citizens;
- Most frequently, the monitored online portals resorted to politicians (174) and state officials (136) as information sources, and the weight of experts and ordinary citizens was much more reduced (78 and, accordingly 18). The news was strongly misbalanced in terms of gender parity, the absolute majority of sources being male (92.7%!). *Omg.md* and *Deschide.md* did not use any female sources in electoral news;
- As regards the frequency and context of direct interventions and references of protagonists, one may notice the disfavoring of Liberal Democratic Party and a lighter disfavoring of Party of Socialists in materials of *Deschide.md* portal, whereas in the case of *Moldova 24.info* – a subtle disfavoring of Liberal Democratic Party;
- *Noi.md* introduced the electoral competitors in various contexts, but the Party of Communists is the political formation which benefits from preferential editorial treatment, enjoying a surface for direct interventions being several times bigger than for other competitors;
- *Jurnal.md* massively disfavors the Democratic Party which was presented, this week, 35 times in a negative context and 4 times in a neutral context. Other parties appeared as well in a negative light - Party of Communists, Liberal Democratic Party, „Patria” Political Party, and sometimes Party of Socialists. The single competitor presented in a positive background is the Liberal Reformatory Party;
- *Omg.md* disfavored the Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party in a considerable manner, since they were in most cases introduced in a negative context (Democratic Party –

30 times, Liberal Democratic Party – 24 times) and, very rarely, in a neutral context. On the other hand, the electoral competitor „Patria” Political Party was mirrored only positively and was provided the biggest space for direct interventions, at least 9 times bigger than for other electoral competitors. Party of Communists appears in the news of *Omg.md* both positively and negatively, whereas the Electoral Bloc – Customs Union and Social Democratic Party – in a rather positive way;

- During the concerned week, *Newsmaker.md* displayed the electoral competitor Party of Socialists in a positive context, in relation to this Party’s leader’s visit to Moscow, whereas two electoral competitors - „Patria” Political Party and Electoral Bloc – Customs Union, appeared only in a negative light;
- *Politik.md* showed preference for the electoral competitor People’s Party, which appeared only in a positive context and was provided one of the largest spaces for direct interventions. The Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Liberal Reformatory Party, Party of Communists and Party of Socialists were mirrored more in a neutral and negative background.

Newspapers:

- During the reference week, the 8 monitored newspapers published 100 articles which covered the election campaign directly or indirectly, the total surface associated to this topic exceeding 49 thousand sq. cm.. The majority of relevant materials appeared in *Nezavisimaia Moldova* (28), the least – in *Vesti Gaguzii* (5), *KP v Moldove* (6) and *Timpul* (8);
- Articles which involved conflict situations in electoral context were few in number – only 10, half of these being published by *Nezavisimaia Moldova*. A balance of parties’ coverage in conflict-type articles was ensured by *Ziarul Național*, *Jurnal de Chișinău* and *Panorama*, whereas in *Nezavisimaia Moldova* – only two of the five articles were balanced, all the others introducing a single perspective over the situation /conflict;
- Only half of the published texts provided an impartial informational overview, the other half of the articles were biased and highlighted the author’s opinion, in some cases the editorial texts being at the limit of electoral agitation. The most dissatisfying proportion between the number of biased and unbiased articles was registered in the newspapers *Nezavisimaia Moldova* (1:3.7) and *Moldova Suverană* (1:2.5);
- Newspapers, just like online portals, practically do not conduct any electoral education of the citizens;
- In the majority of cases, the newspapers’ sources of information were: experts (26) and politicians (25), followed by officials (19) and citizens (10). The principle of gender balance was neglected by the monitored newspapers, male sources accounting for 87.8%. *Moldova Suverană* and *Vesti Gagauzii* failed to employ any female source in their articles about the election campaign; all the other newspapers had 1-3 female sources overall;
- *Moldova Suverană* showed preference for the Liberal Democratic Party, which occurred frequently in a positive and neutral context. Also in a negative, and sometimes neutral context, the newspaper mirrored the Party of Socialists and Party of Communists;
- *Nezavisimaia Moldova* massively favors the Party of Communists which is the single electoral competitor being praised and presented in a positive light. Other five electoral competitors: Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party, Party of Socialists, Liberal Reformatory Party and „Patria” Political Party are the targets of this publication’s severe criticism;
- *Timpul* showed preference for the Democratic Party which appeared in the newspaper several times and in a positive context, other electoral competitors („Patria” Political Party, Electoral Bloc – Customs Union, more rarely Party of Communists and Party of Socialists) were presented very briefly, in a few lines, but in a rather context;

- *Panorama* favored „Patria” Political Party, which it mirrors only positively, and disfavored, most frequently, the Liberal Democratic Party, Liberal Reformativ Party and Democratic Party;
- *Ziarul Național* favors the Liberal Democratic Party, as this electoral competitor is shown only in a bright light. The Party of Socialists, on the contrary, is disfavored through its presentation exclusively in a negative context;
- *Jurnal de Chișinău*, *Komsomolskaia pravda v Moldove* and *Vesti Gagauzii* presented all electoral competitors, writing about them in a mainly neutral context, without showing any preference.