

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

Report no. 4
9 – 15 November 2014¹



The monitoring occurs under a project financed by National Endowment for Democracy (SUA), the US Embassy to the Republic of Moldova and East-European Foundation (from the financial resources provided by the Swedish Government via the Swedish International Cooperation and Development Agency (Sida) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark /DANIDA).

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

¹ The integral report will be placed by the 25th 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, Nezavisimaia 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

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.

²

În ordine alfabetică

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 9-15 November 2014

TV:

- During the week 9-15 November 2014, the 12 monitored television channels disseminated 452 electoral news in the main news program of the day, a number which is more or less similar to the previous period. Most of the news items were spread by *Moldova 1* (57), *TV7* (52) and *Publika TV* (50), and the least, just as the last week – *GRT* (24);
- 9 television channels ensured a relative balance of the politicians in their electoral news. At the same time, *Publika TV* and *Canal 3* proved an immeasurable ardor in relation to covering one politician – V. Plahotniuc, mainly in positive situations. *Jurnal TV* showed misbalance in reporting about two politicians – V. Plahotniuc and M. Lupu, predominantly in negative context;
- The monitored TV channels, less *GRT*, allowed for a clear misbalance in the number of electoral competitors' appearances in their news: on *Moldova 1* the lack of equilibrium was generated by the frequency of appearances of Liberal Reformativ Party; on *Prime TV* – by Democratic Party; on *Publika TV* – by Democratic Party and Party of Communists; on *Canal 2* – by Democratic Party; on *Canal 3* – by Democratic Party and Party of Communists; on *ProTV* – by Democratic Party; on *TV 7* – by Liberal Democratic Party; on *Jurnal TV* – by Democratic Party; on *N4* – by Liberal Democratic Party; on *Accent TV* – by Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party and „Patria” Political Party; on *Canal Regional* – by Party of Socialists;
- *Prime TV*, *Publika TV*, *Canal 2* and *Canal 3* continued to favor a single electoral competitor due to an increased number of appearances in a positive light – Democratic Party;
- Given the increased number of positive appearances, *N4* and *TV7* showed preference for Liberal Democratic Party, and *Accent TV* – the electoral competitor Party of Socialists;
- *Jurnal TV* disfavored the electoral competitor Democratic Party by the increased number of their occurrences, and *Accent TV* set two electoral competitors in a negative context – Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party.
- **General conclusion: even if during the week 9-15 November 2014, certain television channels (which previously showed massive preference for certain electoral competitors and/or disfavored others) have tempered their ardor, still there is no clear tendency for an adequate coverage of Parliamentary elections;**
- In the 32 electoral shows broadcasted altogether at the monitored television channels, 25 cases were registered when the presenters of the shows had a biased attitude towards personalized and institutionalized protagonists, 3 cases – favoring and 22 cases – disfavoring attitude towards protagonists;
- The majority of electoral competitors were publicized at the show *Politica* from *TV7* (15), and the least – at *Fabrika* from *Publika TV* and *Особое мнение* from *Canal 3* (each - 3);
- Party of Communists was the electoral competitor with the highest visibility, being mentioned during electoral shows from 8 TV channels;
- Seven electoral competitors placed paid advertising on 11 out of the 12 monitored TV channels;
- The electoral competitors Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Party of Socialists, Liberal Party, Liberal Reformativ Party and People's Party from R. Moldova have placed paid electoral advertising at the same television channels as in the previous reporting period;
- One electoral competitor („Patria” Political Party) enhanced its visibility, by placing electoral video clips at 5 TV channels, as compared to a single TV channel in the previous period;
- The highest visibility by means of electoral video clips was achieved by Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party, and the lowest – by People's Party;

- 7 out of the 12 monitored TV channels broadcast electoral debate shows;
- Generally speaking, the moderators of debate shows displayed an appropriate conduct towards the electoral competitors. Nevertheless, several deviations in this sense were registered at the TV channels *Moldova 1* and *Jurnal TV*. During a debate show, the moderator from *Jurnal TV* showed a disfavoring attitude towards all the guests in the studio.

Radio:

- The five radio stations subject to monitoring covered the electoral campaign in a different manner: some broadcasters allocated space during news programs, in electoral education audio clips, as well as during debates and electoral advertising, whereas others refrained only to broadcasting of electoral education audio clips and electoral advertising;
- The most numerous and diversified news items were issued by the public radio broadcaster *Radio Moldova* (50), while the least number – by radio station *Noroc* (26). *Radio Moldova*, *Russkoie radio* and *Radio Noroc* highlighted themselves by the great number of electoral education audio clips, and through an increased number of advertising clips of the electoral competitors;
- The election campaign was mirrored by the radio stations mainly in simple news items, and the proportion of conflict-type news being reduced (approx.6%). A great number of controversial news items were balanced (57%), and the authors' opinion was unbiased in the majority of cases;
- Most radio stations referred mainly to state officials and politicians in the relevant news, one exception being *Vocea Basarabiei* and *Radio Moldova*, which ensured a greater diversity of sources;
- In terms of gender ratio of the quoted sources, one may conclude a massive misbalance to the detriment of female sources (14% versus 86% male sources);
- Bearing in mind the frequency and context of electoral competitors' coverage by the radio broadcasters, it may be asserted that *Radio Moldova*, *Radio Noroc* and *Russkoie radio* do not display tendencies to favor or disfavor clearly either of the electoral competitors;
- The radio station *Plai* showed preference for Democratic Party by mentioning it very often in news, whereas *Vocea Basarabiei* continued to favor Liberal Democratic Party by means of frequent direct interventions, references made in a positive background of the representatives of this competitor, as well as of the members of the Government, representatives of Liberal Democratic Party.
- *Radio Moldova* and *Vocea Basarabiei* ensured the access of a greater number of electoral competitors both in news programs and debate shows, while *Russkoie radio*, *Radio Noroc* and *Radio Plai* gave the floor to a limited number of competitors.

Online:

- The monitored online portals continued to cover the election campaign in an active manner, paying consideration to various issues with direct or indirect electoral hint. Overall, the 10 portals subject to monitoring published 508 relevant materials, most of the electoral news items being registered by *Realitatea.md* (69), *Noi.md*, *Omg.md* (62 each) and *Jurnal.md* (60);
- 105 of the electoral news items published by the portals approached a conflict situation, but the great majority of them were presented in a misbalanced way, using a single source (79 materials or 75% of the conflict-type ones). The worst situation at this chapter is registered at *Omg.md*, where all the 16 conflict-type issues were presented from a single source. Similarly, the portals *Politik.md* (5 cases) and *Moldova.org* (4 cases) mirrored conflict situations from a single point of view;
- Approx. 24% of the materials about the election campaign and competitors were biased, and the position of author towards the protagonists of the materials was obvious. Most of the biased news items were published by the portals *Omg.md* (the number of biased news items

- (33) exceeded the number of unbiased ones – 28), approximately each third news item published by *Politik.md* (15 out of 48) was biased, almost half of news items published by *Noi.md* (30 out of 62) were the same, whereas *Jurnal.md* displayed one biased article for each 1.5 unbiased text (36 to 23);
- As regards the sources of information, the online portals subject to monitoring most frequently resorted to politicians and state officials, and the ratio of experts and ordinary citizens was much lower;
 - In terms of gender proportion, the news was strongly misbalanced, as the great majority of quoted sources are men (90% !);
 - Most portals have predominantly presented the issues about Parliamentary parties from the governing coalition and Parliamentary opposition, whereas extra-Parliamentary parties and independent candidates were less reported about. *Noi.md* is the portal which presented the greatest number of electoral stakeholders (20), while *Moldova.org* – the lowest number (5);
 - In terms of the frequency and context of direct appearances and mentioning of protagonists, one can notice the favoring of Democratic Party on *Moldova.org*, given the greater number of occurrences and positive references about this party's representatives, as well as representatives of the Government and Parliament, representatives of Democratic Party (14 occurrences and positive references);
 - In the materials published by the portal *Deschide.md*, one can remark a slight disfavoring of Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party (10 and 13 references or approx. 60% of negative references), on *Moldova 24.info* – obvious disfavoring of Liberal Democratic Party (11 or 84% references in negative context);
 - Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party had most of the appearances on the portal *Noi.md*, being described in a negative or neutral context. Party of Communists was presented rather neutrally, while Party of Socialists – mainly in a neutral and positive context;
 - Through its content, *Jurnal.md* disfavors the electoral competitor Democratic Party, which registered 51 references during the reporting period, including 47 times - in a negative context. The electoral competitor "Patria" Political Party was publicized only negatively (5 times);
 - *Omg.md* massively shows a negative attitude towards Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party, more seldom Liberal Party, criticizing and reporting about them in a negative context. On the contrary, "Patria" Political Party is the electoral competitor which appeared only in a positive or neutral context, just like the Party of Communists, but on a two-times less surface;
 - The electoral competitors Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party are rather disfavored by *Politik.md* (Democratic Party – 19 occurrences, including 12 in a negative context, Liberal Democratic Party – 9 occurrences, including 5 in a negative context). On the other hand, preference is shown to People's Party which appeared 10 times (2 times – in a positive context and 8 times – in neutral situations), having been provided with much greater surface for direct interventions as compared to other competitors;
 - Other portals subject to monitoring do not display clear tendencies to favor or disfavor either of the electoral competitors.

Newspapers:

- During the reference week, the 8 newspapers subject to monitoring published 107 articles
- either directly or indirectly related to the election campaign, with an overall surface exceeding 55 thousand square centimeters. Most of the relevant materials appeared in *Nezavisimaia Moldova* (19), followed by *Timpul* and *KP v Moldove* (each - 17), the least articles - in *Vesti Gaguzii* (5);

- Only 3 newspapers (*Nezavisimaia Moldova*, *Moldova Suverană* and *Jurnal de Chișinău*) published articles about a conflict situation in electoral context (on the whole, 10 such materials). Only 3 articles on controversial topics complied with the principle of balanced coverage of all parties involved in the conflict, the other materials being misbalanced;
- The number of electoral education materials, which was very small in the previous monitoring periods, continued to fall (only 3 such texts, including 2 – in *KP v Moldove*);
- Only 46.2% of articles on electoral issues were unbiased, the rest of materials presented certain events or situations from the author's perspective, and his/her opinion was easily understandable to the readers. Thus, 18 out of 19 articles on the topic of elections were biased, being published in *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, 10 out of 13 articles in *Jurnal de Chișinău*, 11 out of 17 texts in *Timpul*, 8 out of 14 – in *Moldova Suverană*;
- The newspapers resorted to sources of information of various categories: politicians, experts, citizens, state officials. The principle of gender equality continues to be neglected by the monitored newspapers: only 17.6% of sources (19 from 108) stood for women, whereas *Moldova Suverană* and *Panorama* quoted no female source in their articles about the election campaign;
- Judging from the number of occurrences and presence of electoral competitors' names in articles, the surface allocated to them and context of reporting, one may conclude that during the week 9-15 November 2014, *Moldova Suverană* presented the electoral competitors from Democratic Party, Party of Communists and Liberal Democratic Party in a neutral manner, without obviously favoring either of them. At the same time, Party of Communists and "Patria" Political Party were covered more negatively than neutrally;
- *Jurnal de Chișinău* clearly disfavored Democratic Party, which appeared several times only in a negative context, Liberal Party was mirrored neutrally, and several other electoral competitors (Liberal Democratic Party, Party of Communists, Christian Democratic Popular Party) were mentioned 1-2 times, in a rather negative context;
- *KP v Moldove* slightly favored Democratic Party and "Patria" Political Party;
- Based on the number of occurrences, Democratic Party, Party of Socialists, Liberal Democratic Party and Party of Communists were the most publicized electoral competitors by *Timpul*. Democratic Party was presented in neutral and positive circumstances in this newspaper, Party of Socialists – negatively, Party of Communists – negatively, as well as neutrally, Liberal Democratic Party – mainly in a neutral manner;
- During the reporting period, *Panorama* disfavored the following electoral competitors: Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party and Liberal Party by their negative coverage;
- *Vesti Gagauzii* showed preference to Party of Socialists in one article;
- *Nezavisimaia Moldova* continues to favor massively the Party of Communists which is the single electoral competitor praised and presented in a positive light (from a total of 18 occurrences, 17 were in a positive light, on a surface ten times bigger than other political stakeholders). The Democratic Party appeared only in a negative context (24 times), similar to Liberal Democratic Party (from 19 articles, 18 were in a negative context), Party of Socialists and "Patria" Political Party (11 and, accordingly, 6 times, all in a positive manner);
- *Ziarul Național* shows preference for Liberal Democratic Party, as this electoral competitor was mirrored only positively or neutrally. Likewise, the Democratic Party was presented in a positive context, as well as negative or neutral one. Party of Socialists, Party of Communists and "Patria" Political Party featured mainly in a negative background.