



Media Monitoring (Online Press) In the Election Period and Campaign For Parliamentary Elections Anticipated on 11 July 2021

Report no. 3
21 – 30 June 2021

(Summarized version. [Full report in Romanian](#) can be accessed
on Association of Independent Press (API) website www.api.md)



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The monitoring takes place within a project implemented by the Association of Independent Press (API) and funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (USA). The opinions expressed herein belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect the point of view of the donor.

I. GENERAL DATA

1.1 Objective of the project: monitor and inform the public about the editorial behaviour of (online) media during the election period and campaign for the parliamentary elections anticipated on 11 June 2021 in the Republic of Moldova.

1.2 Monitoring period: 1 June 2021 – 11 July 2021.

1.3 Criteria for selecting the media outlets to be monitored:

The portals were selected based on the following criteria: a) relevance; b) fame/audience; c) broadcasting language; d) geography. We are thus monitoring national portals and one regional portal, in Romanian and Russian, known and indicated as sources of information by respondents in credible opinion polls, with some present in top positions of online audience measurement surveys.

1.4 Portals monitored (in alphabetical order):

Actualitati.md¹ (Russian), Agora.md² (Romanian), Gagauzinfo.md³ (Russian), Kp.md⁴ (Russian), Newsmaker.md⁵ (Russian language version), Noi.md⁶ (Romanian language version), Realitatea.md⁷ (Romanian), Sputnik.md⁸ (Romanian), Timpul.md⁹ (Romanian), Unimedia.info¹⁰ (Romanian).

1.5 Subject-matter of monitoring

Entire editorial content, without the publicity marked accordingly.

1.6. The team

The project is implemented by the Association of Independent Press (API) within the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections.

1.7 Methodological framework

The monitoring is based on the methodology developed by Oxford Media Research Centre for the monitoring projects of the international organization Article 19: Global Campaign for Free Expression, as adapted and completed. The same methodology was used by API for monitoring media outlets in previous election periods and campaigns.

¹ Founded by **Iuri Vitneanski**, PSRM member, currently vice praetor of Botanica district of Chişinău

² Founded by Interakt Media SRL (administrator – **Irina Ghelbur**)

³ Founded by Iusivmedia SRL (administrator – **Iulia Cîlcic**)

⁴ Electronic page of the newspaper *Komsomolskaia Pravda v Moldove*, published by “Komsomoliskaya Pravda-Basarabia” SRL (administrator – **Serghei Ciuricov**), company’s founder – Exclusiv Media SRL, owned by the MP from PSRM **Corneliu Furculiţă**

⁵ Founded by NEWSMAKER SRL, founder – **Vladimir Soloviov** (administrator – **Olga Cenuşa**)

⁶ Founded by MLD Media SRL, a company with six shareholders, including companies of the businessman **Vasile Chirtoca**, PSRM councilor in Chişinău Municipal Council (administrator – **Constantin Burghiu**)

⁷ Founded by HB MEDIA SRL, founder – MMDT SRL (administrator – **Dumitru Țira**)

⁸ Branch of Sputnik International Press and Radio Agency, founded by the Russian state company *Rossia Segodnya* (Sputnik Moldova director – **Marina Perekreanova**)

⁹ Founded by the Periodical Publication *TIMPUL de dimineaţă* (administrator – **Silviu Tănase**)

¹⁰ Founded by Miraza SRL (founder and administrator – **Olesea Banari**)

The methodology provides for measuring and reviewing all media reports and publicity unmarked as such, directly or indirectly concerning political and electoral topics/subjects, published by the 10 information portals. The monitoring is based on *quantity* indicators (including type, format, duration and topic of information, protagonists, sources and type of sources quoted, frequency of appearance of election candidates) and on *quality* indicators (favorable, unfavorable or neutral context for the presentation of each election candidate; content analysis of each story: a news item presenting an election candidate in a positive or negative context does not necessarily show bias or partisanship of the media outlet that broadcasts the news; a news item may favor or disfavor one of the candidates and, yet, be unbiased and professionally correct).

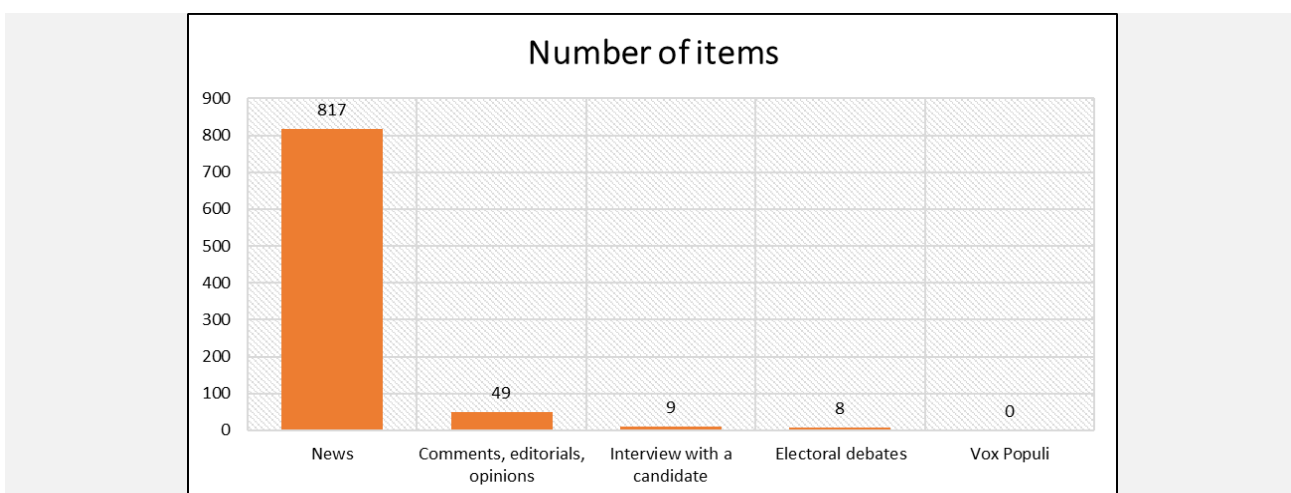
1.8. Parties and acronyms used in the report

1. “We Build Europe At Home” Party (Partidul Acasă Construim Europa) – PACE
2. Joint Actions – Civic Congress Party (Partidul Acțiunii Comune–Congresul Civic) – PACCC
3. “Renato Usatîi” Electoral Bloc – BERU
4. “Șor” Political Party – PPȘ
5. Action and Solidarity Political Party (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate) – PAS
6. Communists and Socialists Electoral Bloc – BECS
7. “Hope” Professionals Movement (Mișcarea Profesioniștilor “Speranța – Надежда”) – MPSN
8. Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat din Moldova) – PDM
9. Dignity and Truth Platform Political Party (Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr) - PPDA
10. National Unity Party (Partidul Unității Naționale) – PUN
11. Democracy At Home Political Party (Partidul Politic “Democrația Acasă”) – PDA
12. “WE” Political Party (Partidul Politic “NOI”) - NOI
13. Development and Consolidation of Moldova Party (“Partidul Dezvoltării și Consolidării Moldovei”) – PDCM
14. ALLIANCE FOR UNION WITH ROMANIA Political Party (ALIANȚA PENTRU UNIREA ROMÂNILOR) – AUR
15. Green Ecologist Party (Partidul Verde Ecologist) – PVE
16. Law and Justice Party (Partidul Legii și Dreptății) - PLD
17. People’s Power Political Party (Partidul Politic “Puterea Oamenilor”) – PPO
18. Moldova’s Regions Party (Partidul Regiunilor din Moldova) – PRM
19. Moldova’s Patriots Party (Partidul “Patrioții Moldovei”) – PPM
20. PARTY OF CHANGE Political Party (PARTIDUL SCHIMBĂRII) - PS
21. New Historic Option Party (Noua Opțiune istorică) – PPNOI
22. Working People’s Party (Partidul Oamenilor Muncii) – POM
23. Independent Candidate Valico Veaceslav - VV
24. Socialists Party of Moldova (Partidul Socialiștilor din Republica Moldova) – PSRM
25. Communists Party of Moldova (Partidul Comuniștilor din Republica Moldova) – PCRM
26. Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Liberal Democrat din Moldova) – PLDM

II. DATA ANALYSIS

2.1 General trends

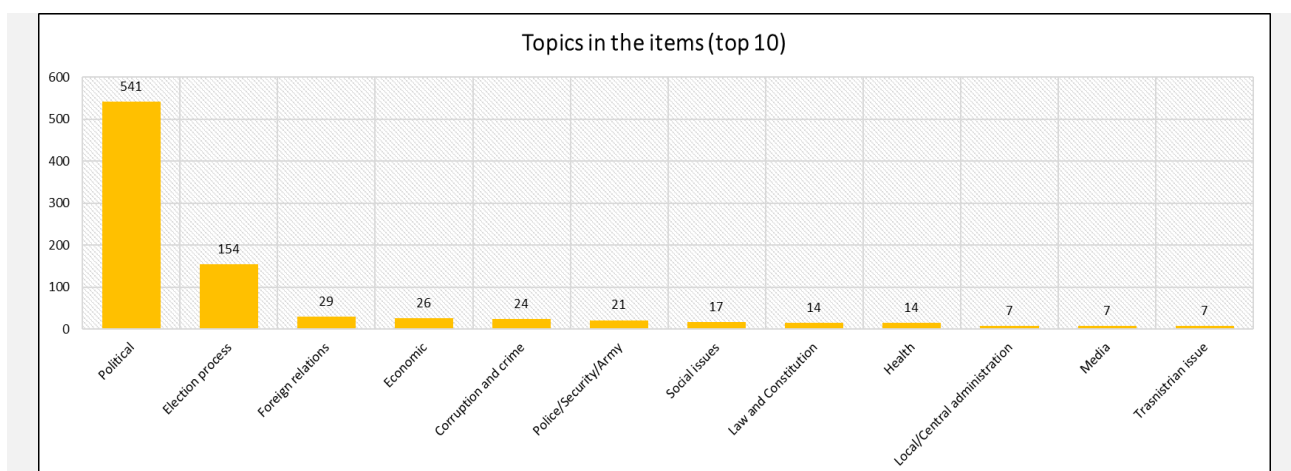
Between 21 and 30 June 2021, the 10 online media outlets monitored in cumulation published 883 items that directly or indirectly addressed the campaign for the parliamentary elections anticipated on 11 July 2021. Again, most items were news – 817, which accounted for almost 93% of the total. Other 49 items (or about 5%) were published in the form of comments, editorials or other opinions; 9 (or about 1%) were interviews; and 8 (or about 1%) were electoral debates.



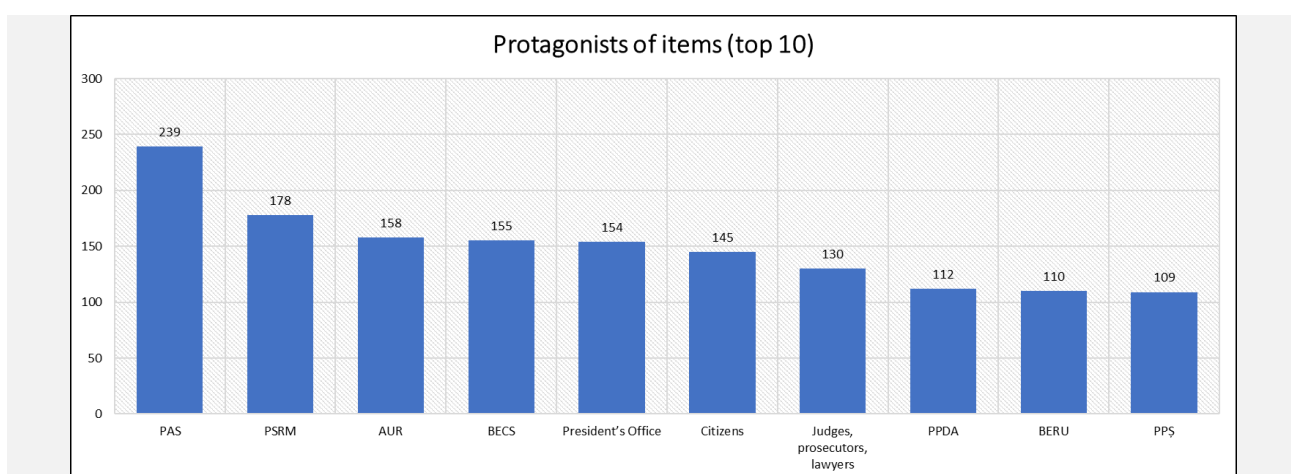
Most media products with a direct or indirect electoral character were published by **Realitatea.md** (132) and the fewest – by **Gagauzinfo.md** (10). The other online media outlets published items relevant to monitoring as follows: **Noi.md** – 127; **Timpul.md** – 125; **Actualitati.md** – 118; **Agora.md** – 96; **Unimedia.info** – 85; **Kp.md** – 74; **Newsmaker.md** – 66; and **Sputnik.md** – 50. At the same time, **Realitatea.md** published the most news stories with an electoral character (130); **Timpul.md** – the most comments (32); **Agora.md** – the most interviews (6), and all the electoral debates were published by **Newsmaker.md**.

Text was the format most often chosen for the items with a direct or indirect electoral character (877 cases) but 154 of them were accompanied by videos. The total volume of the items monitored, quantified in characters (text) and seconds (video) thus represented 1911434 characters and 210941 seconds, or over 58 hours for videos.

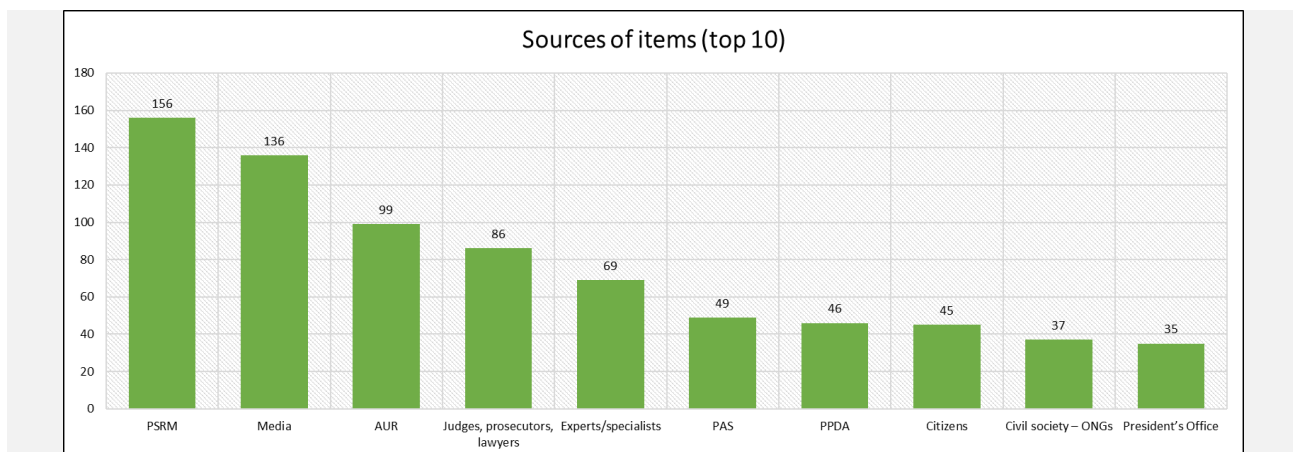
The political area in electoral contexts further was the most frequently used one, the electoral process as a whole being approached over three times less often by the 10 online publications. Even less frequently could be found the items on foreign relations, economy, corruption/crime, police/security/army, social issues, legislation, health, the work of local and central public administration, the media, or the Transnistrian issue in an electoral context.



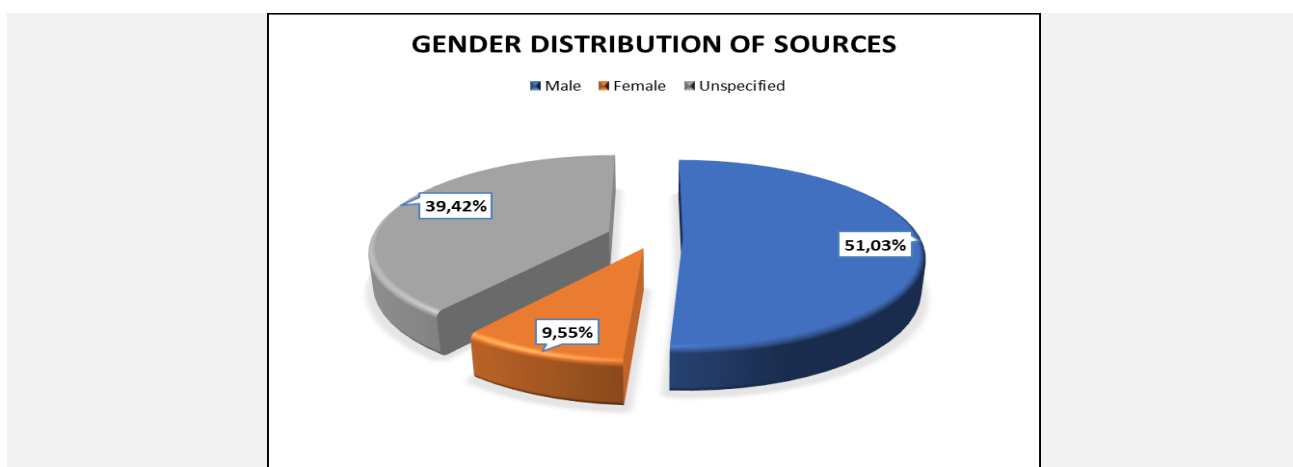
During the reference period, all 23 electoral candidates were targeted in the stories of the 10 online publications, which mentioned a total of 42 categories of protagonists. Most often in this capacity further appeared PAS representatives (239 times), followed by PSRM (178 times); AUR (158 times); BECS (155 times); and Presidency (154). The first ten categories also included the citizens (145 times), legal system representatives (130 times), PPDA representatives (112 appearances), BERU (110), and PPS, targeted 109 times in the items published cumulatively by the 10 online publications monitored.



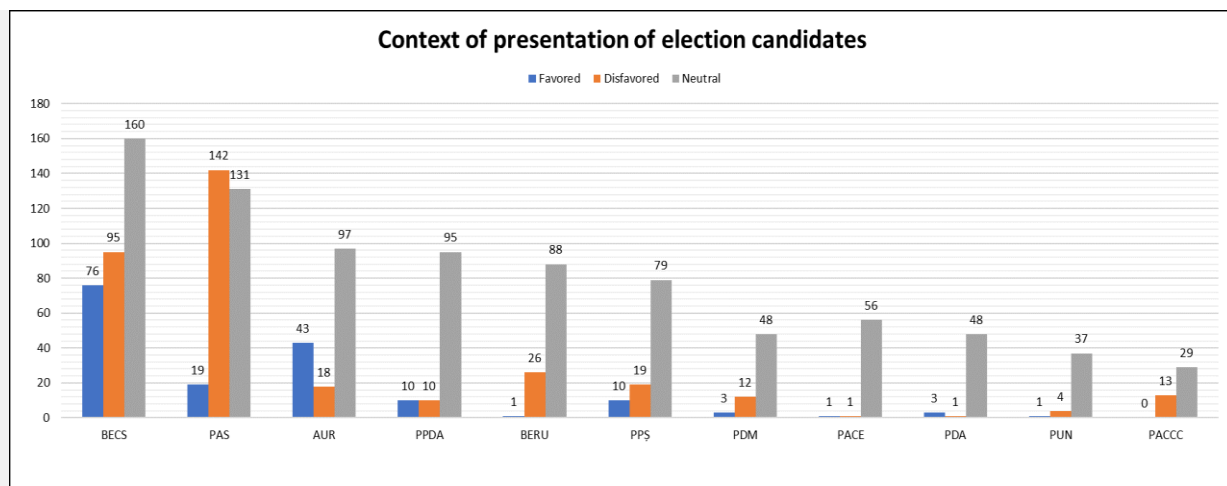
At the same time, the top 39 different categories of sources was led by PSRM, whose representatives were quoted 156 times, followed by other media sources, quoted 136 times, or by AUR representatives, used 99 times. As sources in the reporting period also appeared the representatives of the legal system (86 times), the experts (69 times), the representatives of PAS (49 times), PPDA (46 times) and the citizens, quoted 45 times, civil society (37 times) and the Presidency (35 times). Overall, all candidates were quoted in the items of the 10 online publications but in different proportions.



At the same time, the 1068 sources quoted cumulatively between 21 and 30 June 2021 were disproportionate from a gender perspective, in favor of men. Specifically, more than half of the total number of sources was men (545 or 51.03%), with women quoted 102 times, or 9.55%. In other 421 cases, or 39.42%, the type of sources was not specified. Men thus were quoted over five times more often than women.



Between 21 and 30 June 2021, 4 candidates out of 23 were covered by the 10 publications exclusively in a neutral manner (PPO, PVE, PPM, and MPSN). The other competitors were placed in both neutral and positive or negative contexts. PAS further was the most frequently disadvantaged candidates being the only one in which the placement in a negative context exceeded the one in a neutral context, the competitor having been disadvantaged 142 times, favored 19 times, and 131 times mentioned in neutral contexts. At the same time, BECS and AUR were further the most frequently favored in the media reports of the 10 publications compared to the other competitors. Hence, BECS appeared 76 times in positive contexts (and 95 times in negative contexts), and AUR – 43 times in favorable contexts and 18 times – in unfavorable contexts. The other competitors were favored/disfavored as follows: PPDA – 10/10 times; BERU – 1/26 times; PPŞ – 10/19 times; PDM – 3/12 times; PACE – 1/1 times; PDA – 3/1 times; PUN – 1/4 times; PACCC – 13 times disfavored; PDCM – 2/1 times; PLD – 1/2 times; NOI – 3 times disfavored; PS and PRM – each disfavored 6 times; PPNOI, POM and CIVV – each disfavored one time.



2.2 General conclusions:

- Between 21 and 30 June 2021, the 10 online publications monitored covered the electoral events mainly through their news.
- **Realitatea.md** published the largest number of items relevant to the electoral context, while **Gagauzinfo.md** – the lowest number.
- Most of the items were published in a text format, while there were also video items, to a lesser extent.
- Most relevant items referred to the political area but the number of items dedicated to the electoral process as a whole has also increased, being covered over 3 times less than the political area.
- All the candidates registered in the election campaign were targeted in the reports of the 10 publications but in different proportions.
- PAS appeared most often as the protagonist.
- All candidates appeared as sources in the stories published by the 10 online media outlets.
- The PSRM representatives were most often quoted.
- The stories published by all 10 media outlets monitored were disproportionately gendered in favor of men who were quoted over five times more often than women.
- **Gagauzinfo.md** did not quote any women in the few items published during the reporting period.
- BECS and AUR candidates were most often placed in positive contexts that favored them.
- PAS and BECS were most often placed in negative contexts that disadvantaged them.
- Six out of 10 media publications monitored presented information on the election campaign in a manner that lacked balance, more or less, directly or indirectly promoting the agendas of some candidates.
- Two out of 10 publications (**Actualitati.md** and **Kp.md**) openly, directly and substantially promoted BECS, with the same intensity disfavoring PAS and the President of Moldova Maia Sandu. The two publications had similar editorial behaviors during the reporting period, intensely promoting BECS and PSRM representatives. At the same time, both publications placed PAS as well as President Maia Sandu, in unfavorable contexts in the stories published. For allegations, insinuations, etc., the reactions of those targeted were missing.

- Other 2 publications (**Noi.md** and **Sputnik.md**), although more discreetly, placed BECS more often in favorable contexts and PAS in unfavorable contexts.
- One publication (**Timpul.md**) promoted the electoral agenda of AUR, disfavoring and discrediting other competitors, especially PAS and BECS. This portal further had a biased editorial policy, presenting electoral events and candidates selectively and with an attitude devoid of journalistic fairness. **Timpul.md** is the only publication that did not cover any candidate in an exclusively neutral manner.
- Two publications (**Agora.md** and **Newsmaker.md**) had balanced editorial policies in relation to all candidates, without favoring or disfavoring anyone. **Agora.md** had the fairest attitude in relation to the electoral events and candidates. **Newsmaker.md**, in turn, was the only publication that quoted all candidates registered in the campaign for the early parliamentary elections in its items.
- **Gagauzinfo.md** paid insignificant attention to the election campaign, publishing an extremely small number of stories on this subject.
- Two publications (**Realitatea.md** and **Unimedia.info**) covered the election campaign by providing space for a large number of election candidates but repeatedly allowed favoring and disfavoring, unilateral comments, statements without reactions etc.

2.3 Recommendations for the online publications monitored

Actualitati.md and Kp.md:

- We reiterate that for a fair and pluralistic informing of the public it is recommended that the publications take into account the ethical rules of the profession of journalist, presenting the facts in an unfair manner, including all the parties concerned and their opinions on the related facts. The journalist must make a clear distinction between facts and opinions and express their opinion honestly and ethically, without deliberately distorting facts or data, as stipulated in the Moldovan Journalist's Code of Ethics.
- To fulfill its mission of fair informing and to contribute to the cohesion of the society, publications must refrain from unilateral, subjective and biased dissemination of messages that may form an incomplete picture of reality for the public and demonstrate multiple views.

Sputnik.md and Noi.md:

- In order to respond as much and as well as possible to the media's mission of informing the public in a pluralistic and bona fide manner, it would be advisable for journalists to insist more on a fair attitude towards electoral events and candidates, without favoring or disfavoring certain candidates.

Gagauzinfo.md:

- Considering its status of a regional publication, much needed to inform adequately the public in the south of the country, it would be advisable for the portal to pay more attention to electoral topics and present more details on the election campaign, candidates, relevant events, etc., so that the population can make opinions about all the candidates registered in the electoral competition.

Unimedia.info:

- For an adequate informing of the public, it is advisable to be more accurate in presenting the facts and opinions on electoral subjects as well as more balance in covering the election candidates.

Realitatea.md:

- It is recommended to select carefully the video images that accompany the news as some of them contain elements of favoring/disfavoring certain electoral contestants.
- No less important is the need to differentiate media content clearly from advertising.

Timpul.md:

- The newsroom is further urged to follow the ethical rules of journalism and ensure a balanced and pluralistic informing of the public with reference to election items. Refraining from aggressive promotion of a candidate and presenting all relevant electoral events in good faith would contribute to diverse informing of the public. To recall that, according to the Journalist's Code of Ethics, "*The journalist's professional activity shall be incompatible with the dissemination of messages prohibited by law (hate speech, homophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination, etc.), as well as political propaganda, religion and electoral agitation.*"
- The newsroom should clearly separate facts from opinions and ensure multiple opinions, including asking the opinions/positions of the persons accused or concerned in negative contexts.

2.4 Context of presentation of electoral candidates (graphics)

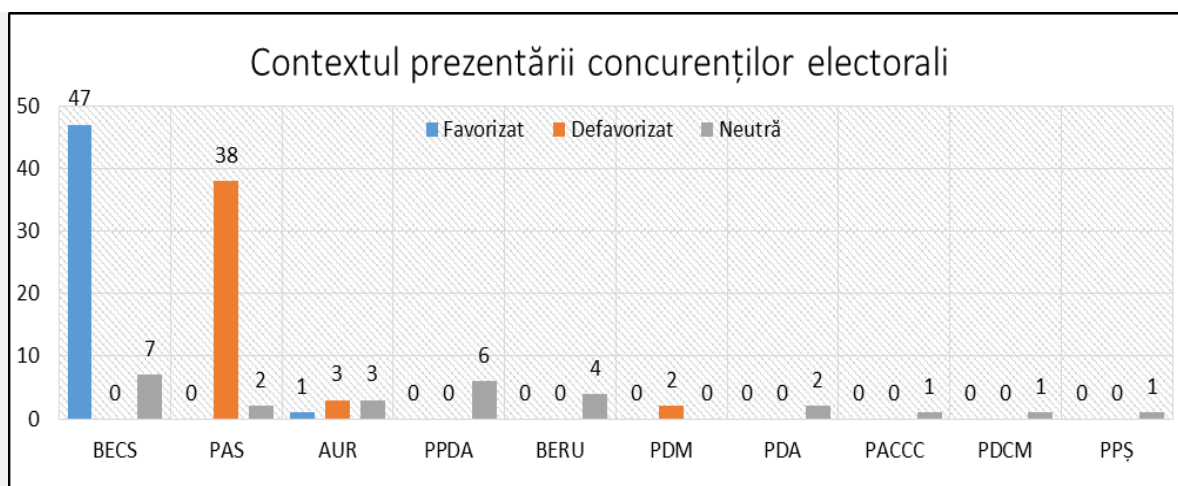
Favorizat = **Favored**;

Defavorizat = **Disfavored**;

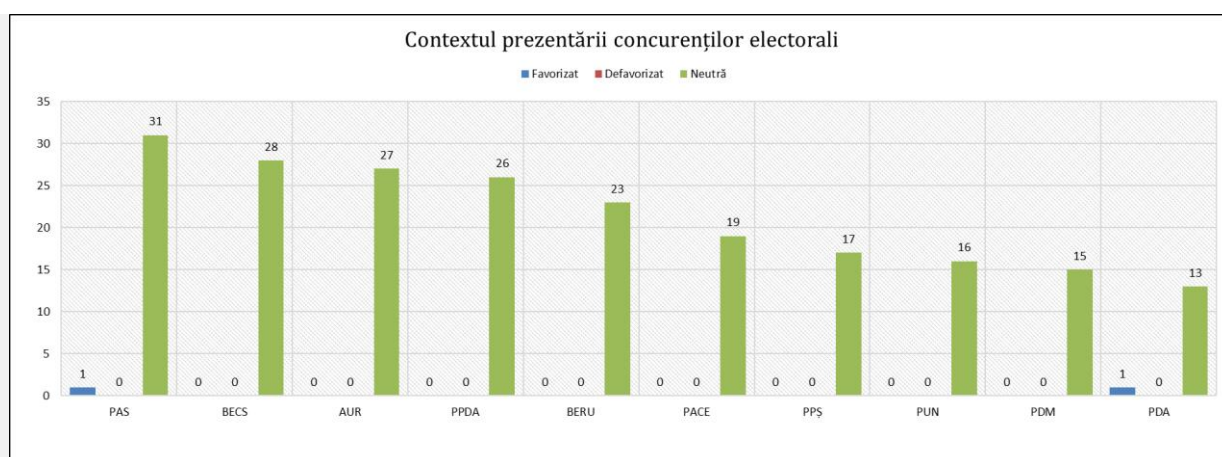
Neutră = **Neutral**



Actualitati.md



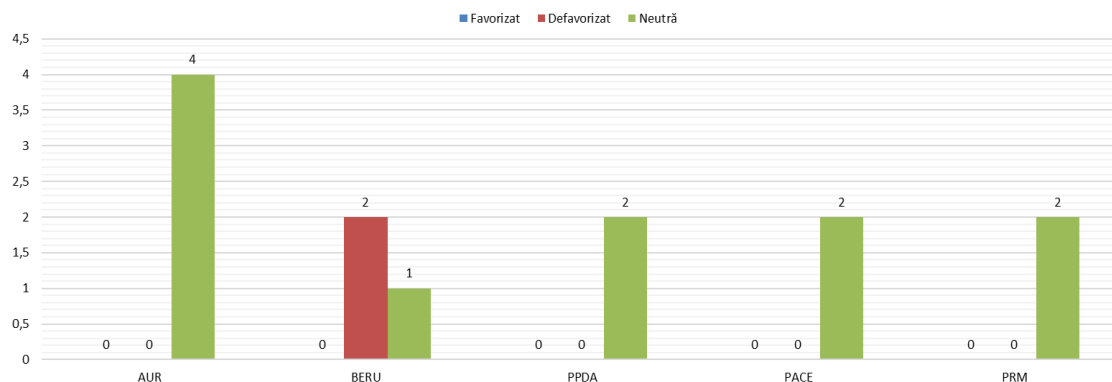
Agora.md



Gagauzinfo.MD

Gagauzinfo.md

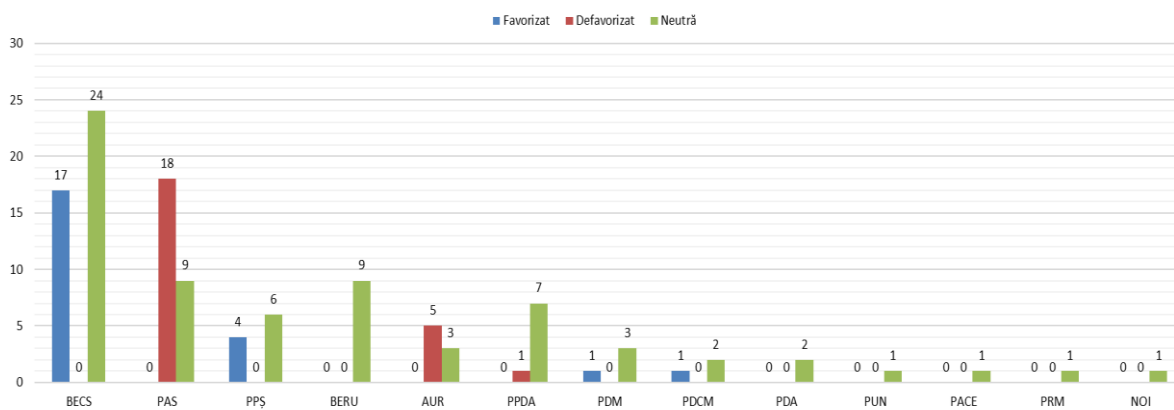
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali


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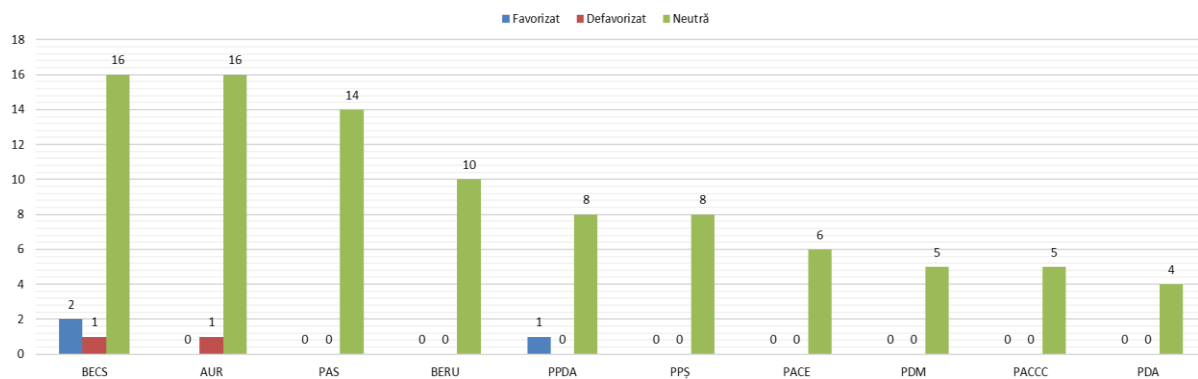
Kp.md

Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

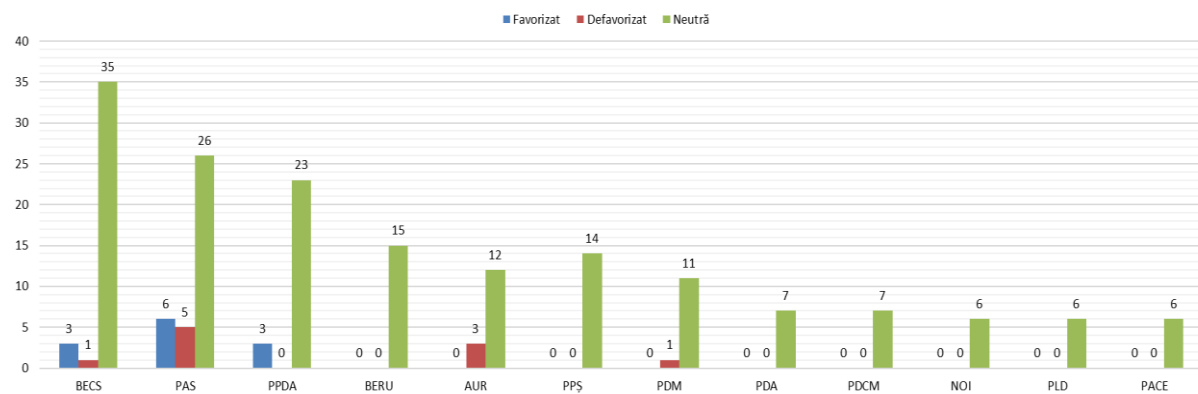


NewsMaker
Newsmaker.md

Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali


Noi.md

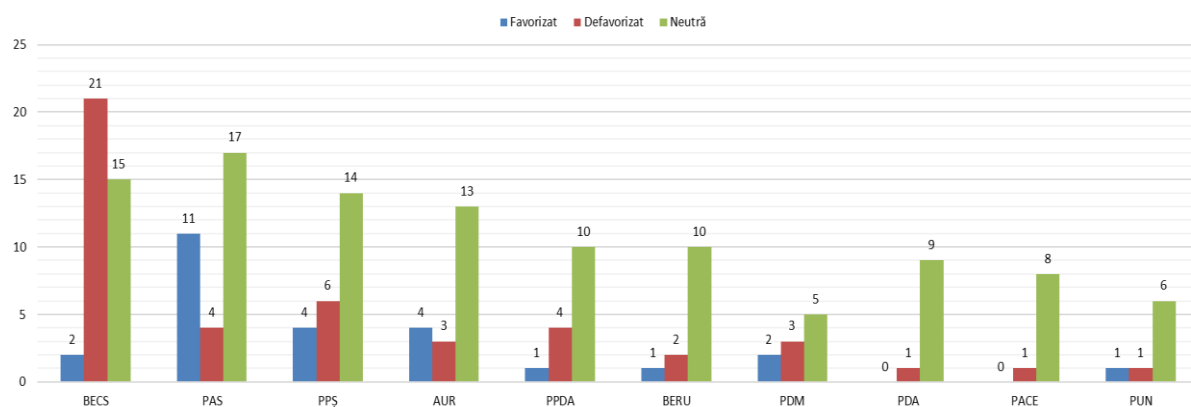
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali





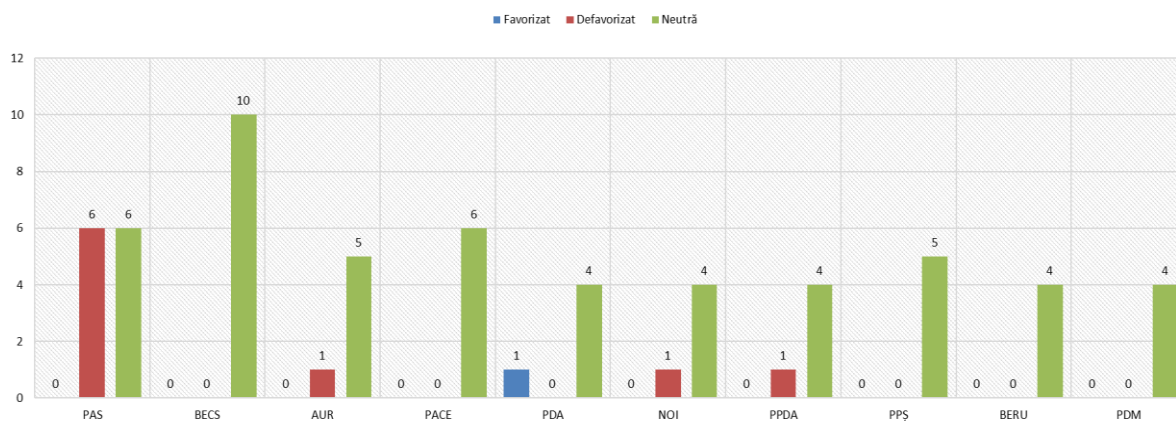
Realitatea.md

Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

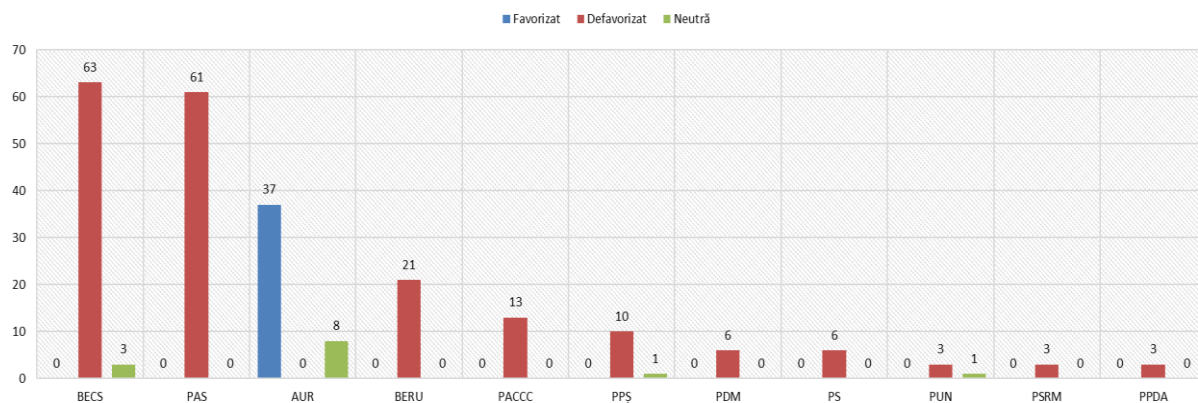


Sputnik.md

Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

