



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

Final Report
1 June 2021 – 11 July 2021

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



National Endowment *for* Democracy
Supporting freedom around the world

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 Perekrestova**)

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).

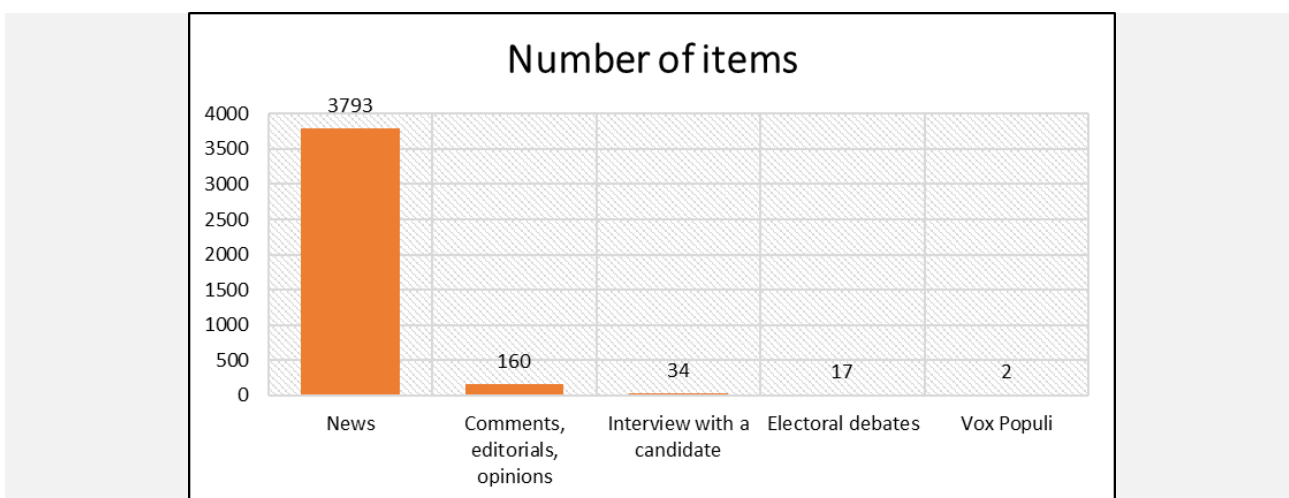
1.8. Parties and acronyms used in the report

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 (for the period from 1 June 2021 to 10 July 2021)

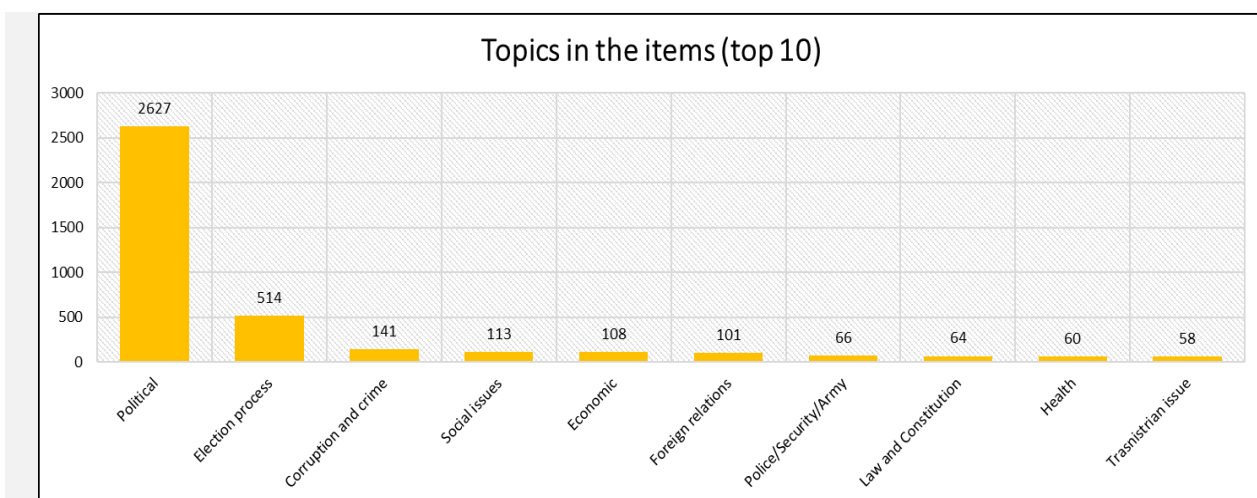
From 1 June to 10 July 2021, the 10 online media outlets monitored together published 4006 items that directly or indirectly addressed the campaign for the parliamentary elections anticipated on 11 July 2021. Of these, most were news stories – 3793 – or about 95% of the total. In addition, 160 comments, editorials or other opinions were published, which accounted for almost 4% of the total number of media reports, while the remaining percentage was divided among 34 interviews, 17 electoral debates, and 2 Vox Populi polls.



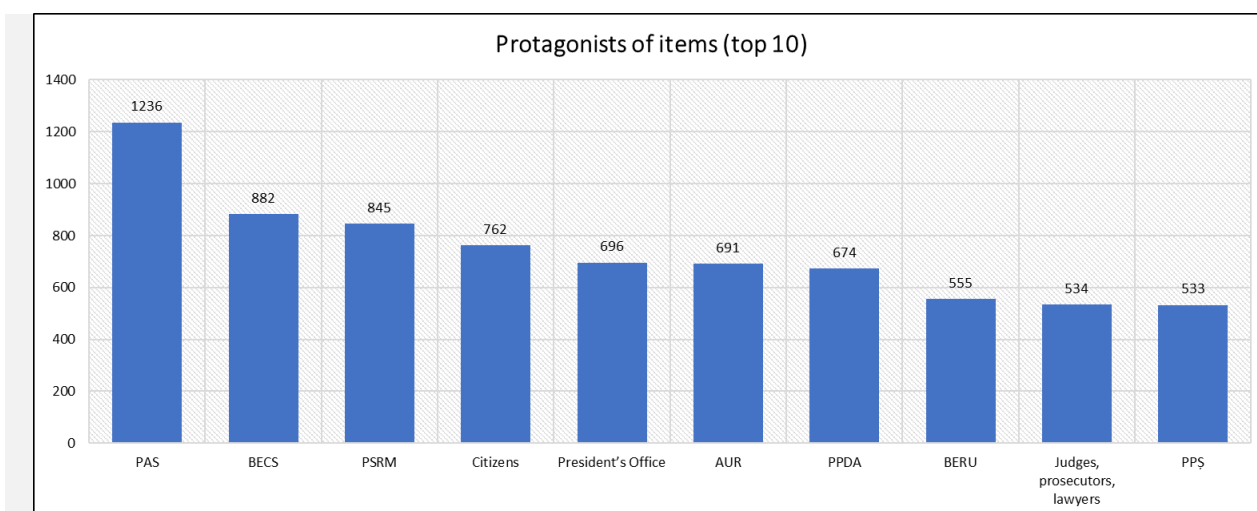
Most media products with a direct or indirect electoral character were published by **Realitatea.md** (631) and the fewest by **Gagauzinfo.md** (35). The other online media outlets published items relevant to monitoring as follows: **Noi.md** – 610; **Timpul.md** – 539; **Actualitati.md** – 45; **Unimedia.info** – 454; **Agora.md** – 375; **Newsmaker.md** – 352; **Kp.md** – 313; and **Sputnik.md** – 241. At the same time, **Realitatea.md** published the most news stories with an electoral character (625); **Timpul.md** – the most comments (89); **Agora.md** – the most interviews (18); **Newsmaker.md** – the most debates (14), while **Kp.md** and **Realitatea.md** published the two Vox Populi polls.

Over 99% of the stories monitored, or 3976, were published in a text format. At the same time, 769 texts were accompanied by video images and 25 – by audio recordings. The total amount of items monitored, quantified in characters (text) and seconds (video and audio) thus constituted 8615412 characters for texts, 1155422 seconds or about 321 hours for videos, and 7821 seconds or more than two hours for audios.

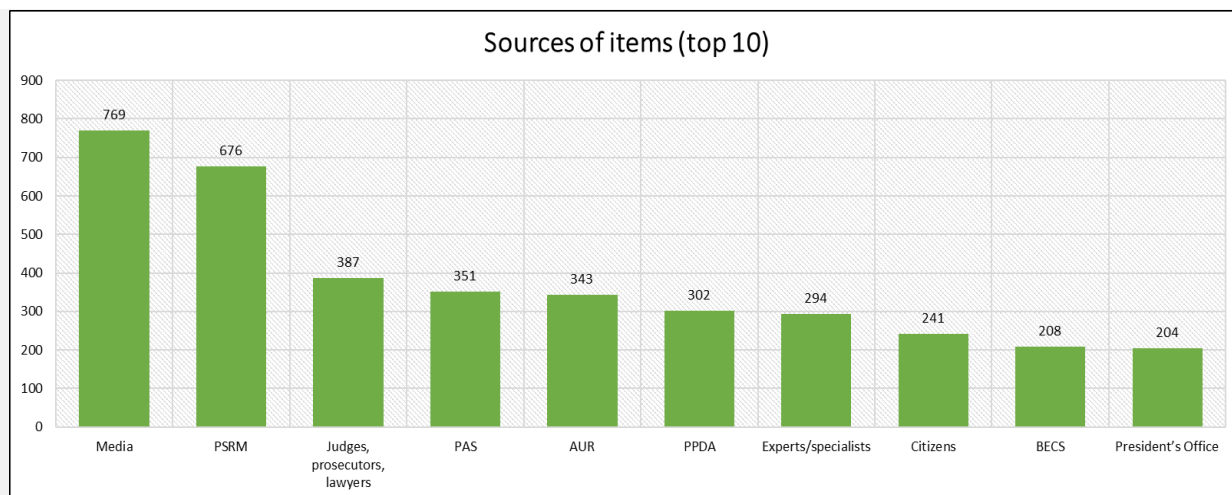
Most often (in 2627 cases), the items targeted the political area in an electoral context, which was approached over 5 times more often than the election process as a whole. Other topics covered by the 10 online publications were corruption and crime – 141 times; social issues – 113 times; economy – 108 times; foreign relations – 101 times; security – 66 times; legislation – 64 times; health – 60 times; or the Transnistrian issue in an electoral context – 58 times.



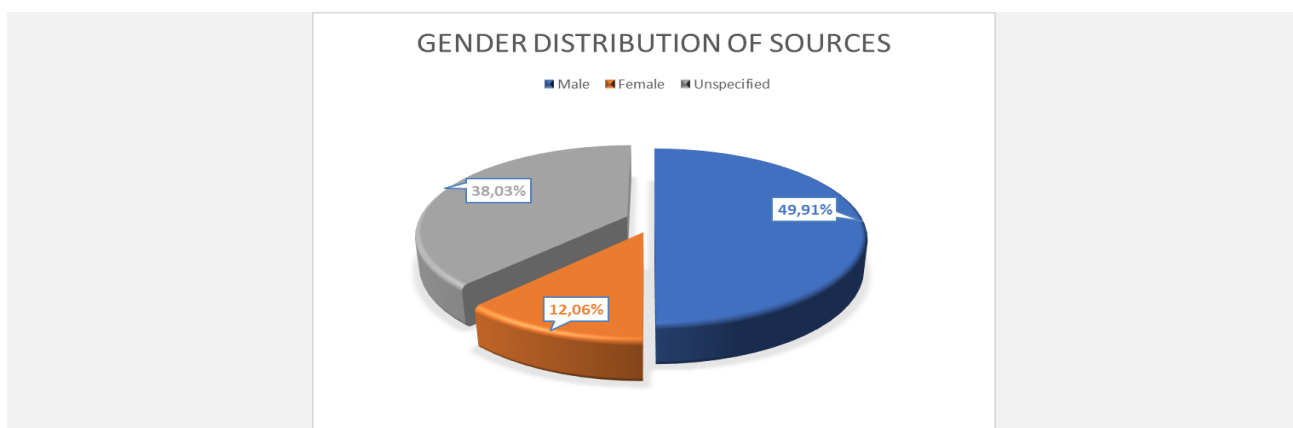
The 10 publications in their items targeted 60 categories of protagonists, which included all the 23 candidates registered in the campaign for early elections. Most often in this capacity appeared the representatives of PAS – 1236 times, followed by those of BECS, targeted 882 times and of PSRM, with 845 such appearances. At the same time, the first ten categories of protagonists also included the citizens – with 762 appearances; the Presidency – targeted in 696 cases; AUR representatives, who were written about 691 times, of PPDA, with 674 appearances, of BERU with 555, of the legal system, with 534, or those of PPŞ, who had the capacity of protagonists 533 times. Six candidates out of 23 thus found themselves in the first 10 most targeted categories of protagonists of the stories published by the 10 online media outlets.



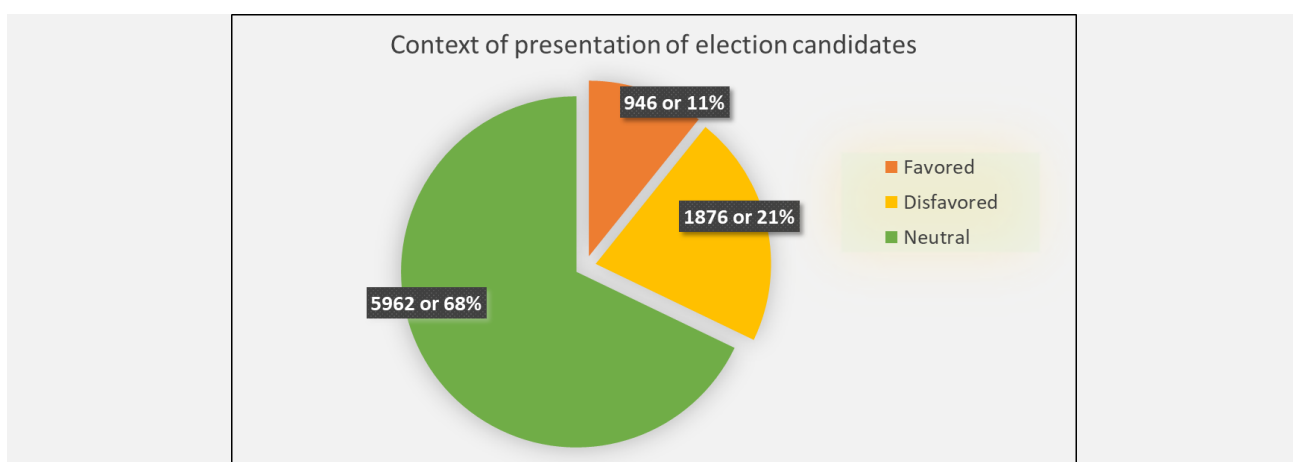
During the period monitored, the 10 online publications cumulatively quoted 50 categories of sources, including all the election candidates. Most often, they referred to other media sources, quoted 769 times, as well as to PSRM, whose representatives appeared 676 times as sources. Less frequently they quoted the representatives of the legal system – 387 times; of PAS – 351 times; AUR – 343 times; PPDA – 302 times; as well as experts, quoted 294 times, citizens – 241 times; BECS representatives – 208 times, or the Presidency – 204 times. Other categories of sources were used even more rarely.



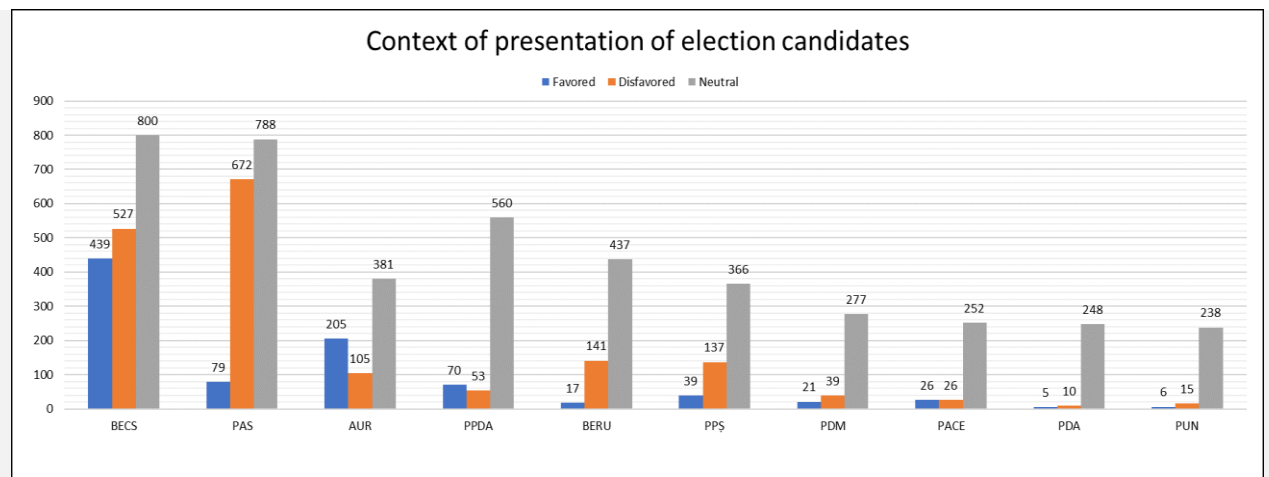
At the same time, the sources quoted were disproportionate in terms of gender, in favor of men. Of the 5099 sources quoted in total by the 10 publications, half, or 2545 were men, 615, or just over 12%, were women, and in 1939 cases (about 38%), the sex of sources was not specified. Hence, women were quoted over 4 times less often than men were.



Most of the time, the candidates were covered in neutral contexts (in about 68% of cases). Similarly, in 11% of cases the candidates were placed in rather favorable contexts, and almost twice as often – in contexts that disadvantaged them. At the same time, no candidate appeared only in neutral contexts.



Hence, BECS and AUR were favored by their contexts more often than other candidates – 439 and 205 times, accordingly. On the other hand, PAS was most often disfavored in media reports – 672 times. AUR, PPDA, PLD and PPO, in their turns, were in a higher number of times favored than disfavored. The other candidates, in addition to neutral media coverage, had several rather negative contexts. The ratio between times favored and times disfavored for each candidate looked as follows: BECS – 439/527 times; PAS – 79/672 times; AUR – 205/105 times; PPDA – 70/53 times; BERU – 17/141 times; PPŞ – 39/137 times; PDM – 21/39 times; PACE – 26/26 times; PDA – 5/10 times; PUN – 6/15 times; PACCC – 3/48 times; PDCM – 9/10 times; PLD – 17/3 times; PPO – 4/1 times; PRM – 4/9 times; PS – 1/12 times; NOI – 14 times disfavored; VV – 6 times disfavored; POM – 4 times disfavored; PPNOI – 3 times disfavored; MPSN and PPM – twice disfavored; and PVE – once disfavored.



2.3. Editorial behavior of publications on Election Day (11 July 2021)

- **Actualitati.md** had the same editorial policy on Election Day as during the entire monitoring period. It substantially published news stories based on the statements of BECS representatives and allegations against PAS. It also published a large number of news items about alleged violations of the election process in the diaspora. These were not based on reliable sources; the newsroom did not look for reactions, nor published them when they existed.
- **Agora.md** covered the Election Day in a fair and balanced manner and published news about the elections every 5 to 15 minutes. All election candidates were presented neutrally and given space for statements after exercising their right to vote. Throughout the day, the newsroom also published informative stories about the turnout, the violations reported by law enforcement during the day, news about the voting in the diaspora and the Transnistrian region, with live interventions by Moldovans from a number of European countries as well as with people on the left bank of the Nistru River, captured talking about voter transportation and bribing. The newsroom covered all the statements of politicians, CEC members, etc. Similarly, the information consumer had access to comparative infographics, the international press magazine about the elections in Moldova, etc.
- **Gagauzinfo.md** covered the Parliamentary Election Day through neutral news with updated information on the turnout/statistics of voters in Găgăuzia, about how Irina Vlah voted, while a Vox populi story presented what expectations people had following the elections. The publication also referred to the violations reported during the

Election Day as well as to the voting process in the diaspora. No item targeted the election candidates or how they voted.

- As it did during the campaign, **Kp.md** presented mostly BECS, its leaders and their statements at exit from the polling stations, the first participation of Igor Dodon's son in the election, the PSRM leader's visit to the church before going to vote etc. Of the other candidates, **Kp.md** reported only about how Gheorghe Cavaliuc voted. Also on Election Day, **Kp.md** published news stories about how attempts were made to bribe the voters in the diaspora or by the MPs from PAS: *"Vladimir Bolea, MP from PAS, is coordinating a group of combatants in Cocieri: is destabilization being prepared during the elections in Moldova?"*; *"Ballots are brought in and taken out from the polling stations: the mess abroad is on video, and the Moldovan diaspora is rejoicing"*; *"I hope they give us 50 euros each, as they did at the presidential elections": a scandalous video of the Moldovan diaspora voting abroad*; *"Organized transport in Iasi: Moldovan citizens in Romania are brought to the stations"*; *"If this is not a violation, then what is it?: in Spain, the voter was shown whom to vote for in the elections in Moldova."* The publication also wrote that the voting process in the Transnistrian region went smoothly. **Kp.md** also presented data on the turnout at certain hours during the day and urged people to go vote through the messages of several artists.
- **Newsmaker.md** covered in a balanced manner the Election Day, the election process as a whole, the voting process, including in detention institutions, in the diaspora and in the Transnistrian region, but also the statements of politicians and election candidates. It also wrote about the violations found by Promo-Lex but also by the law enforcement, the protest organized by a group of people, including combatants, at the entrance to Varnița to watch how the elections were being organized at the polling stations in that village. For all the allegations made by the candidates against each other, **Newsmaker.md** presented the replies of those concerned.
- **Noi.md** published a great deal of news on Election Day, starting with the first Moldovans who voted, the queues at the polling stations in the diaspora, in Varnița, etc., and continuing with the media coverage of voting by politicians, Igor Dodon's son or representatives of the election candidates. The texts of the news stories on how the candidates voted were different; some candidates were presented with statements, others were not, some with video images, others without them. **Noi.md** also presented the figures from CEC on the turnout at certain hours, information about the request for the mobile ballot box, about how the detainees voted, or how diaspora voted at different hours.
- **Realitatea.md** published a large number of election news items on Election Day that targeted a large number of candidates. Except for some slightly biased headlines or comments, it generally had a balanced editorial behavior.
- **Sputnik.md** actively covered the Election Day (58 news items on the parliamentary elections were published until 21.00 hours). Most of them were about the voting process in the country, abroad, and in prisons; the procedures to follow for the elections to be validated; incidents presented by GPI and Promo-LEX, the voting process in the Transnistrian region; the voter profiles, but also the list of the election candidates. It recalled how the early elections happened and indirectly mentioned that Maia Sandu was responsible for triggering the elections. There were also stories that presented the (unilateral) opinions of some experts but also of the CIS observers. Of the candidates, only Igor Dodon, Vladimir Voronin (at least 3 stories with each of them), Igor Grosu (who had the shortest quote of all) and Andrei Năstase were presented how they voted. The same for the CPA representatives – President Maia

Sandu, Speaker of the former Parliament Zinaida Greceanîi, the Interim Prime Minister Aurel Ciocoi, Mayor Ion Ceban, and TAUG Governor Irina Vlah. It also published photos and videos of these people. Most of them were with Igor Dodon and Vladimir Voronin.

- **Timpul.md** published 12 election news stories on Election Day. Most of them referred to the violations registered in the Transnistrian region, namely to the statements of the persons who said they were paid to vote for BECS or the ȘOR Party. Other news items referred to the turnout, including in the diaspora and the locations where AUR leaders voted, who chose to vote in Italy, but also to the CEC briefing on the morning of 11 July. No news was published about the other election candidates, or about the preliminary results.
- **Unimedia.info** covered the Election Day by presenting the statements of some candidates, including Igor Dodon and Vladimir Voronin, as well as Renato Usatîi, Octavian Țîcu, Dorin Chirtoacă, Igor Grosu, Ion Chicu, Gheorghe Cavaliuc, Andrei Nastase, Pavel Filip, and Marina Tauber. News stories were often accompanied by video footage. It also wrote about Igor Dodon's eldest son who voted for the first time, or about how Ion Ceban, Zinaida Grecianii and Maia Sandu voted. Some candidates were mentioned in negative contexts by the other candidates (Vladimir Voronin: *"the AUR (GOLD in Rom.) people who were provocative during the election campaign"*), and others were favored through statement selection (*"Marina Tauber, among the earliest politicians at the polling station: 'We wish Moldova that every of its citizen live as in Orhei'"*). In addition, it displayed a (paid) BECS advertising banner on its website throughout the day of 11 July, which disappeared when the polling stations closed. The rest of the news items posted on the **Unimedia.info** portal contained updated information from CEC on the conduct of the election and turnout as well as on the violations announced by the GPI.

2.4. General conclusions:

- 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 and audio items, to a lesser extent.
- Most relevant items referred to the political area, while the electoral process was covered over five times less.
- 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.
- Other media outlets were most often quoted as sources.
- The stories published by all 10 media outlets monitored were disproportionately gendered in favor of men who were quoted over four times more often than women were.
- BECS was most often placed in positive contexts that favored it.
- PAS was most often placed in negative contexts that disadvantaged it.

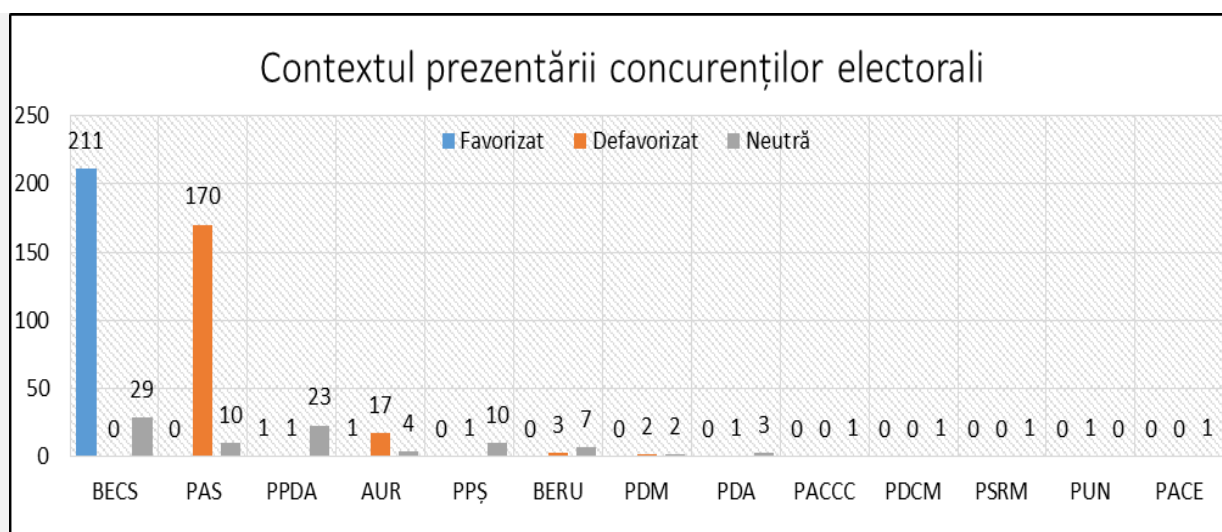
- Six out of 10 media publications monitored presented information on the election campaign in a manner that lacked balance, more or less, directly or indirectly promoting the agendas of some candidates.
- Two out of 10 publications (**Actualitati.md** and **Kp.md**) had similar editorial behaviors, promoting openly, directly and substantially BECS, with the same intensity disfavoring PAS and the President of Moldova Maia Sandu. In case of allegations, insinuations, etc., the reactions of those concerned 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. **Sputnik.md** visibly disadvantaged AUR.
- One publication (**Unimedia.info**) promoted more visibly, especially towards the end of the election campaign, the campaign activities of BECS, as well as the statements and opinions of the leaders of the bloc, especially of Igor Dodon.
- One publication (**Timpul.md**) promoted the electoral agenda of AUR, disfavoring and discrediting other competitors, especially PAS and BECS but also BERU and PPŞ. **Timpul.md** had a biased editorial policy, presenting electoral events and candidates selectively and with an attitude devoid of journalistic fairness.
- Two publications (**Agora.md** and **Newsmaker.md**) had balanced editorial policies in relation to all the candidates, throughout the monitoring period, without favoring or disfavoring anyone.
- The regional publication **Gagauzinfo.md** paid insignificant attention to the election campaign, publishing an extremely small number of stories on this subject.
- One publication (**Realitatea.md**) 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, labeling and items that qualified as electoral publicity but without being marked as such.

2.4 Context of presentation of electoral candidates in the period from 1 June 2021 to 10 July 2021 (graphics)

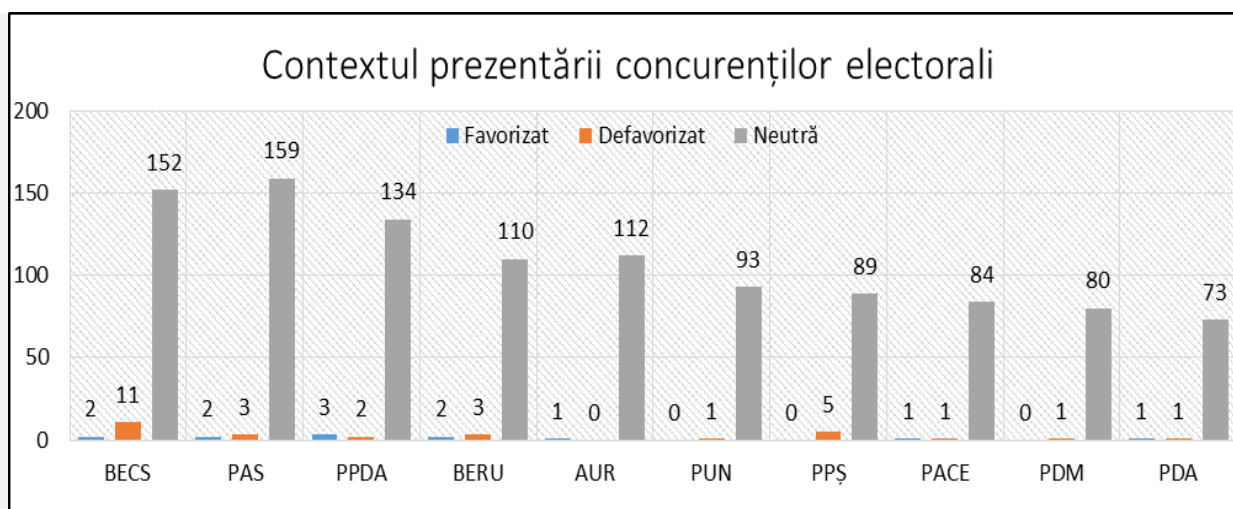
Favorizat = **Favored**;
Defavorizat = **Disfavored**;
Neutră = **Neutral**



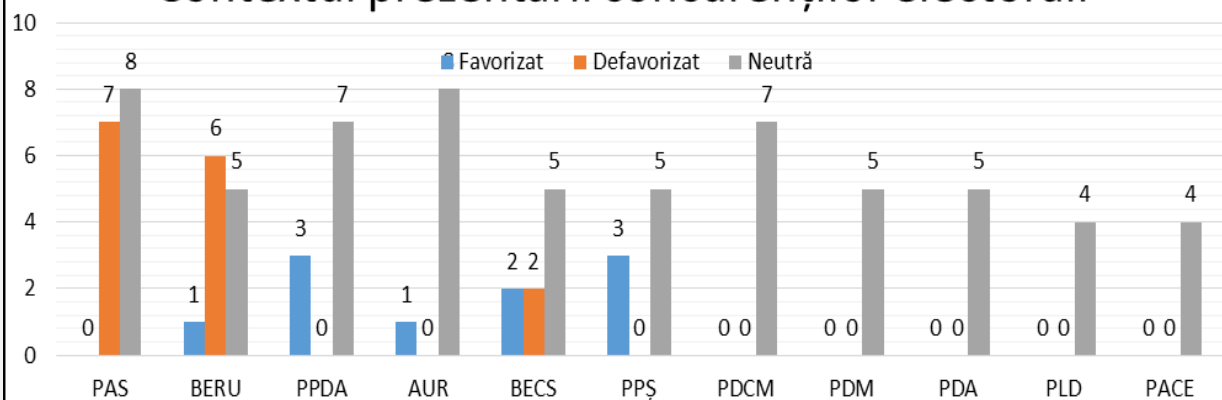
Actualitati.md



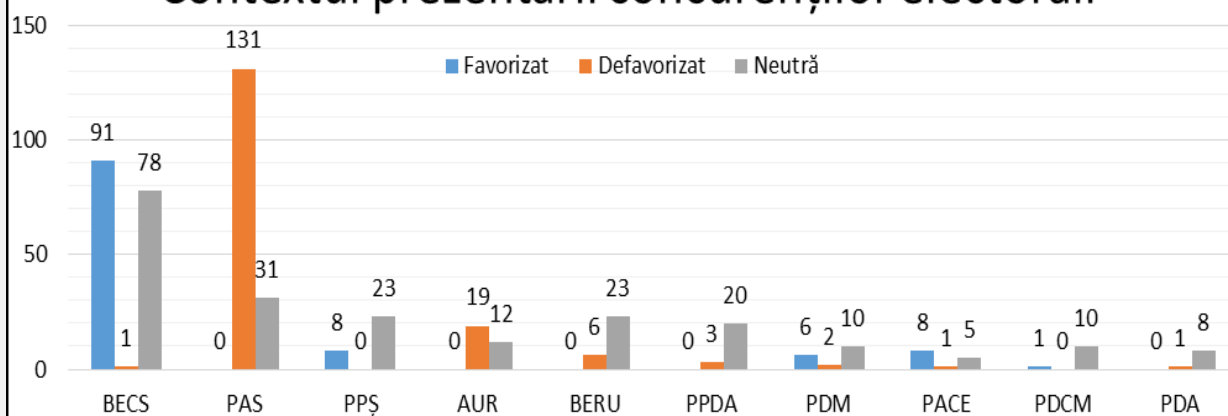
Agora.md



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

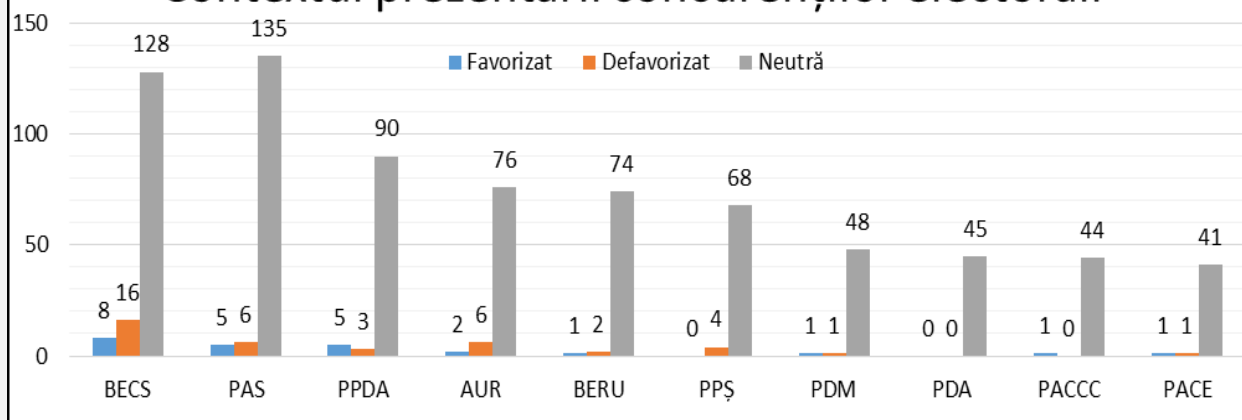


Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

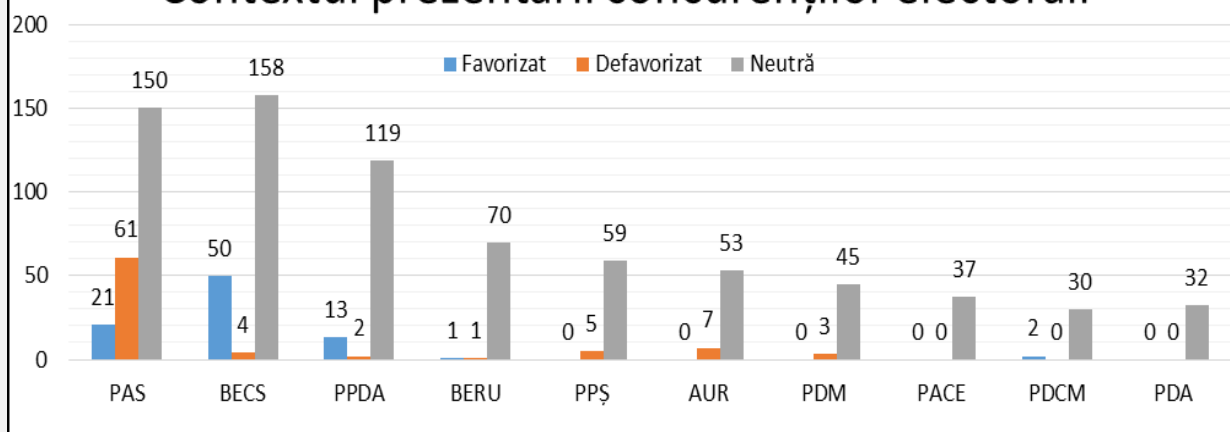


NewsMaker
Newsmaker.md

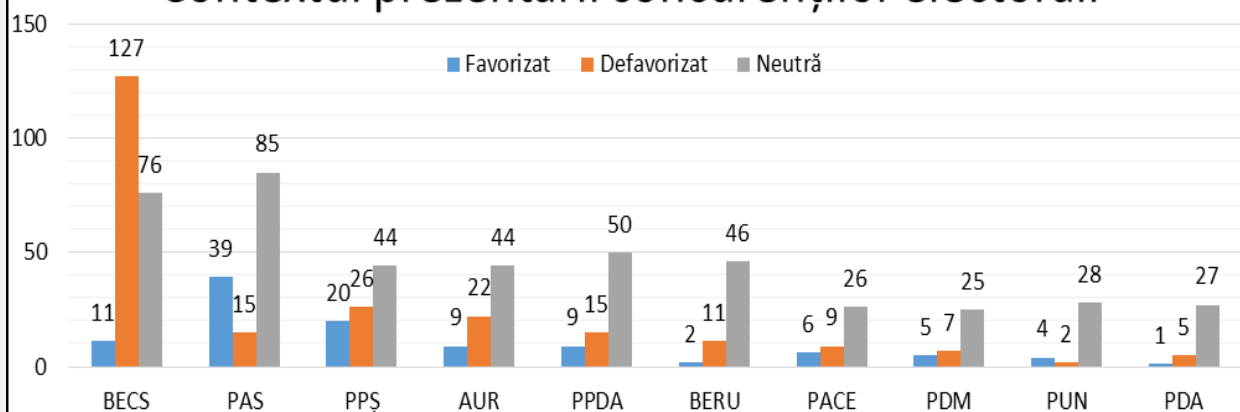
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali


Noi.md

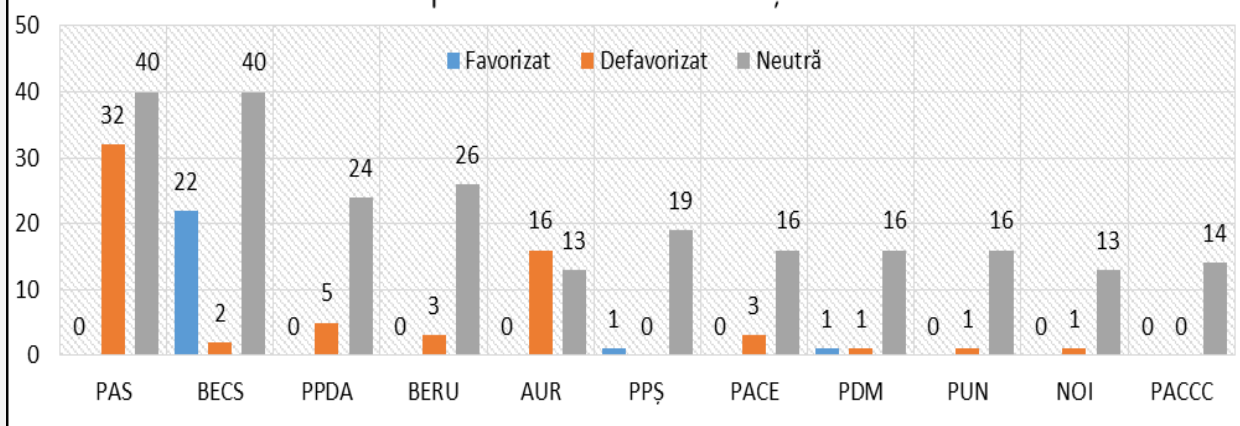
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



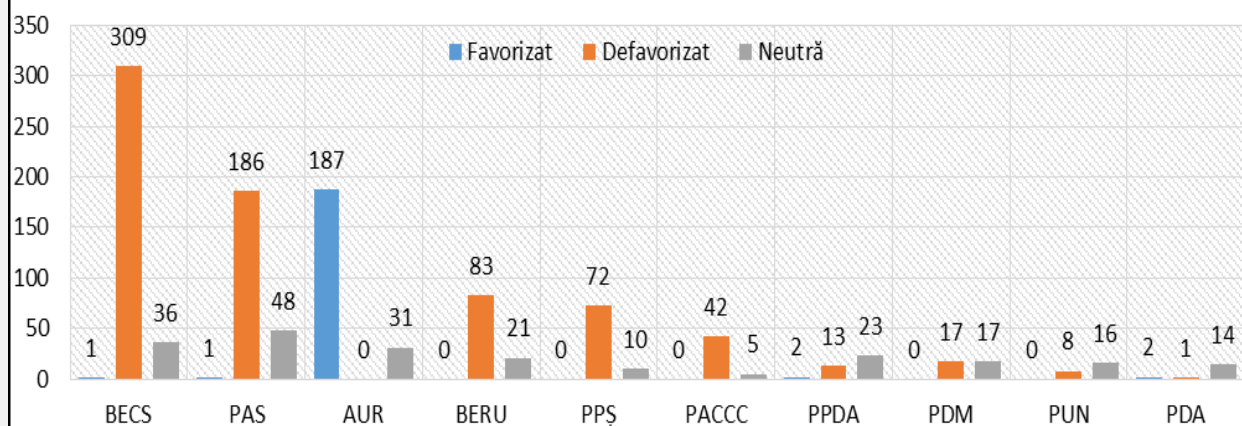
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

