



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

Report no. 4  
1 – 11 July 2021

(Summarized version. [Full report in Romanian](#) can be accessed  
on Association of Independent Press (API) website [www.api.md](http://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.md<sup>1</sup> (Russian), Agora.md<sup>2</sup> (Romanian), Gagauzinfo.md<sup>3</sup> (Russian), Kp.md<sup>4</sup> (Russian), Newsmaker.md<sup>5</sup> (Russian language version), Noi.md<sup>6</sup> (Romanian language version), Realitatea.md<sup>7</sup> (Romanian), Sputnik.md<sup>8</sup> (Romanian), Timpul.md<sup>9</sup> (Romanian), Unimedia.info<sup>10</sup> (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.

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

<sup>2</sup> Founded by Interakt Media SRL (administrator – **Irina Ghelbur**)

<sup>3</sup> Founded by Iusivmedia SRL (administrator – **Iulia Cîlcic**)

<sup>4</sup> 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**

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

<sup>6</sup> 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**)

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

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

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

<sup>10</sup> 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).

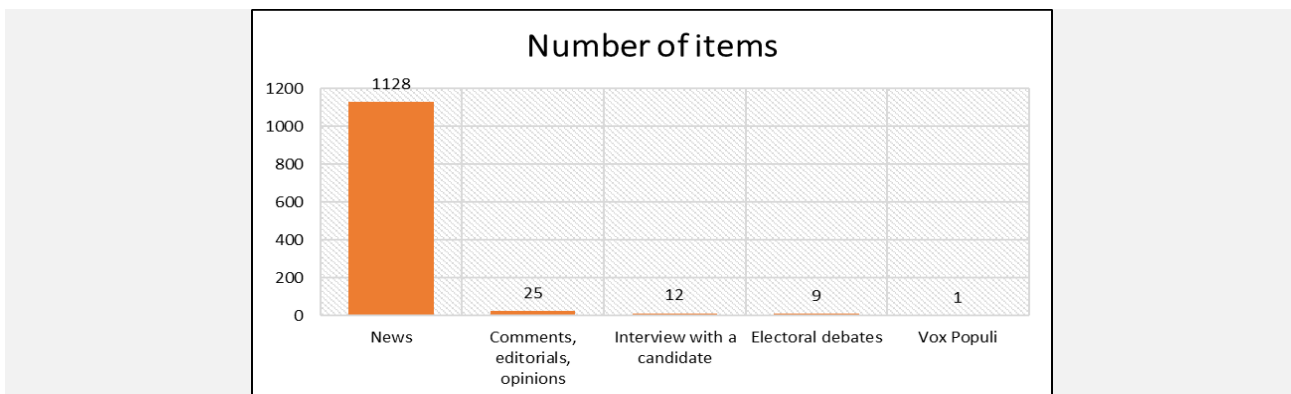
### **1.8. Parties and acronyms used in the report**

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 (for the period from 1 to 10 July 2021)

### 2.1 General trends

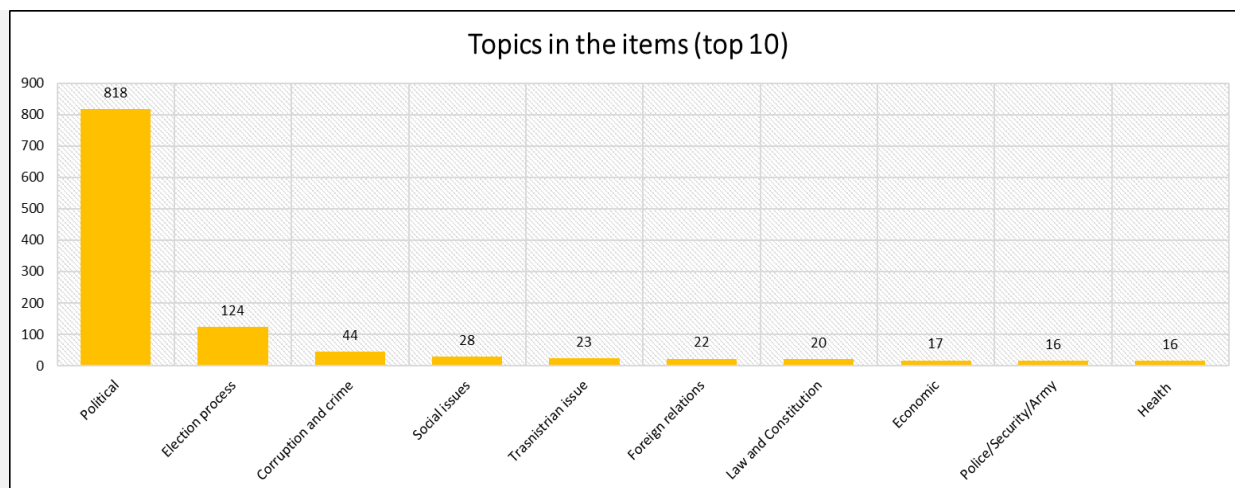
Between 1 and 10 July 2021, the 10 online media outlets monitored together published 1175 items that directly or indirectly addressed the campaign for the parliamentary elections anticipated on 11 July 2021. Most of them were news stories – 1128, the equivalent of 96% of the total. The other 4% were distributed among comments, editorials or other opinions (25 items), interviews (12), electoral debates (9) and one Vox Populi item.



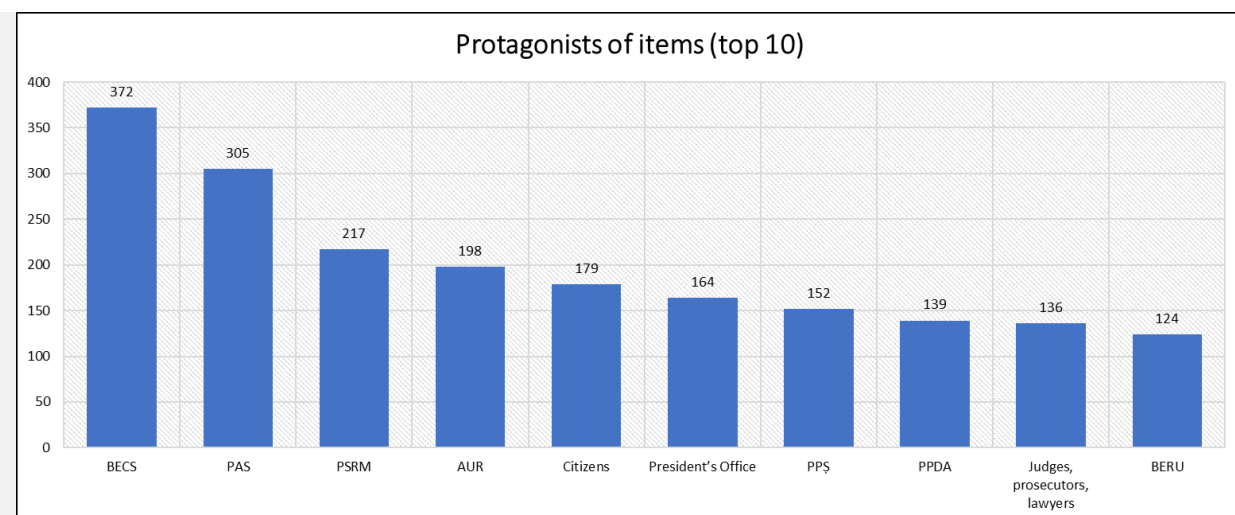
Most media products with a direct or indirect electoral character were published by **Realitatea.md** (222), and the fewest – by **Gagauzinfo.md** (7). The other online media outlets published materials relevant to the monitoring as follows: **Noi.md** – 150; **Actualitati.md** – 147; **Unimedia.info** – 144; **Agora.md** – 113; **Kp.md** – 112; **Newsmaker.md** – 103; **Timpul.md** – 89; and **Sputnik.md** – 88. At the same time, **Realitatea.md** published the most news stories with an electoral character (221) as well as the only Vox Populi item; **Kp.md** – the most comments (10); **Agora.md** – the most interviews (7), and **Newsmaker.md** – the most debates (6).

Most of the time, media products with a direct or indirect electoral character were published in a text format (1162 times). At the same time, in 301 cases, they were accompanied by video images, and in 7 cases – by audio recordings. The total volume of the items monitored, quantified in characters (text) and seconds (video and audio) thus constituted 2528489 characters, 373839 seconds, or over 103 hours for video images, and 2830 seconds, or about 47 minutes for audio products.

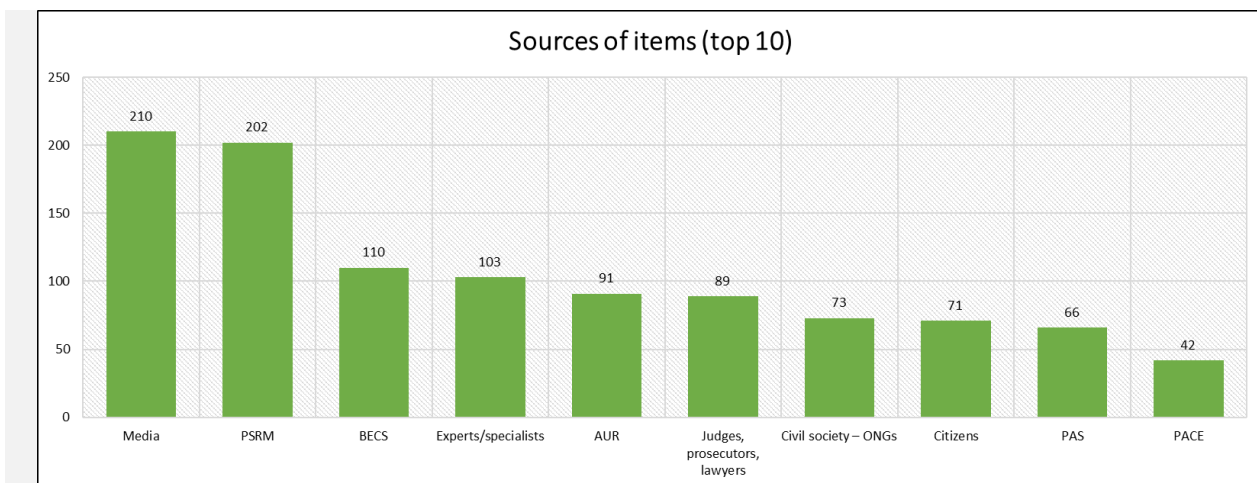
Most of the items focused on the political area in an electoral context, which is approached over six times more often than the election process as a whole. To an even lesser extent, media products targeted corruption and crime, social issues, the Transnistrian issue, foreign relations, legislation, the economy, the police/security/army, or health in an election context.



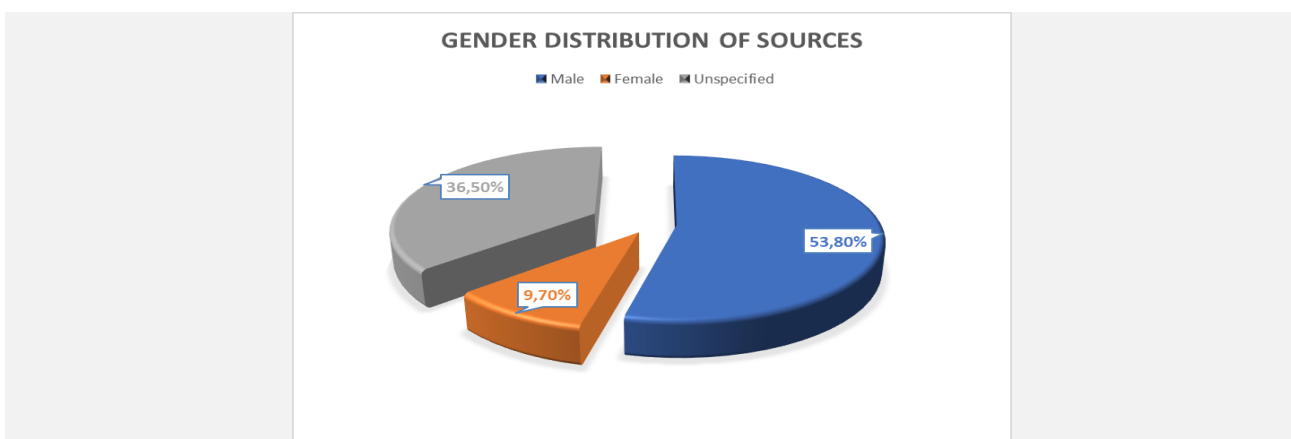
The 10 publications targeted 42 categories of protagonists in their stories, which included all 23 candidates. Most often in this capacity appeared the BECS representatives – 372 times, followed by those of PAS, targeted 305 times and of PSRM, with 217 such appearances. In addition, AUR representatives were written about 198 times; citizens – 179 times; and the Presidency – 164. Similarly, the first ten categories also included the representatives of PPŞ (152 times), PPDA (139 times), the legal system (136 times) as well as BERU (124 times).



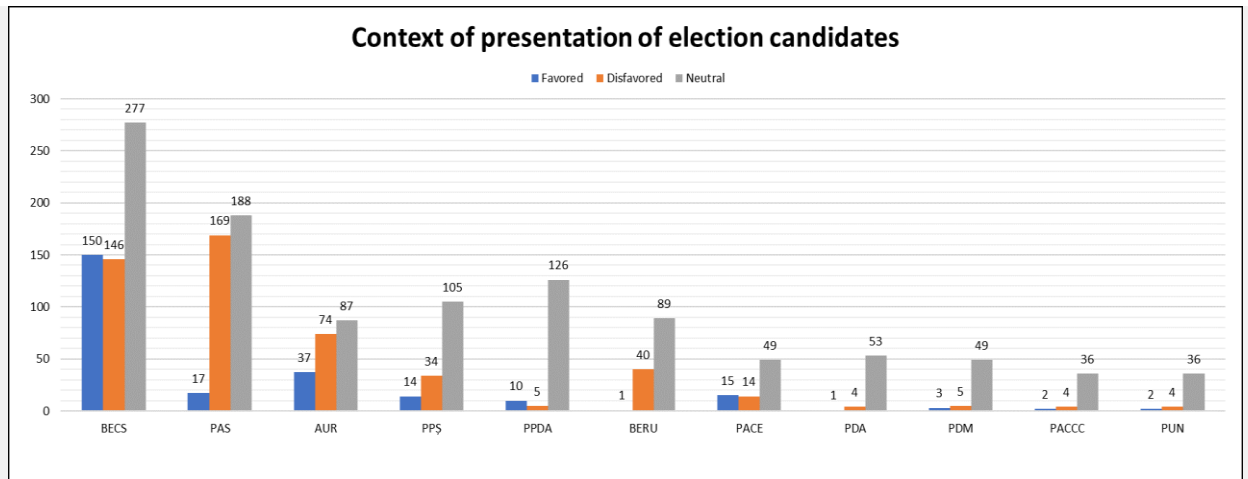
During the reference period, the 10 online publications monitored in cumulation quoted 43 categories of sources, including all the candidates. Most often, other media sources were used (210) times, but also PSRM (202 times), BECS (110 times), and experts (103 times). In addition, the capacity of sources for the stories published by the 10 outlets was also held by the representatives of AUR – 91 times; legal system – 89 times; civil society – 73 times; the citizens – 71 times; PAS – 66 times, or PACE, with 42 appearances as sources.



At the same time, the total number of sources quoted in the reference period amounts to 1422, which are still disproportionate from a gender perspective, in favor of men. Hence, more than half of the total number of sources were men (765 or 53.80%), women being quoted over 5 times less often – 138 times, or 9.70%. In other 519 cases, equivalent of 36.50%, the type of sources was not specified.



In the last decade of the election campaign, the 10 publications covered the candidates mainly in a neutral manner, 3 of them appearing exclusively in such a context (PVE, PPM and MPSN). For the other 20 candidates, although the neutral context dominated, they were also favored or disadvantaged, in different proportions. Hence, BECS was favored the most (150) but disfavored almost as many times (146), while PAS was further substantially disfavored (in 169 cases, versus 17 placements in a positive context). The other 18 candidates were favored/disfavored as follows: AUR – 37/74 times; PPS – 14/34 times; PPDA – 10/5 times; BERU – 1/40 times; PACE – 15/14 times; PDA – 1/4 times; PDM – 3/5 times; PRM – 4/2; PACCC and PUN – 2/4 times each; PLD – twice favored; NOI – 7 times disfavored; PDCM and PS – each disfavored twice; PPO, POM and PPNOI – each disfavored once; and VV – 5 times disfavored.



### 2.3. Editorial behavior of publications on Election Day

- **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. 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. On 11 July 2021, **Agora.md** published news about the elections every 5 to 15 minutes.
- **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. However, **Realitatea.md** published news about alleged fraud at the stations opened for the citizens from the left bank of the Nistru River but did not refer to the ones opened abroad.
- **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, especially Igor Dodon and Vladimir Voronin, but also Renato Usatii, Octavian Ticu, Dorin Chirtoacă, Igor Grosu, Ion Chicu, Gheorghe Cavaliuc, Andrei Nastase, Pavel Filip, or Marina Tauber. The news was often accompanied by video footage. It also wrote about the eldest son of Igor Dodon, who voted for the first time, or about how Ion Ceban and Zinaida Grecianii voted. Some candidates were mentioned in a negative context by other candidates (Vladimir Voronin: *"the AUR [GOLD in Rom.] people who were provocative during the election campaign"*), while others were favored through the statements selected (*"Marina Tauber, among the earliest politicians in the polling station: 'We wish Moldova that every citizen lives like in Orhei'"*). In addition, a BECS advertising banner (paid) was displayed on the site throughout the day of 11 July, which disappeared when the polling stations closed. The rest of the news stories placed on **Unimedia.info** contained updated information from CEC on the conduct of the election and the turnout, but also on the electoral violations, announced by GPI.

#### 2.4. General conclusions:

- In the last decade of the election campaign, 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, the electoral process being covered over 6 times less.
- All the candidates registered in the election campaign were targeted in the reports of the 10 publications but in different proportions.
- BECS appeared most often as the protagonist.
- All candidates appeared as sources in the stories published by the 10 online media outlets.
- Other media sources 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 was most often placed in positive contexts that favored it.
- 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.

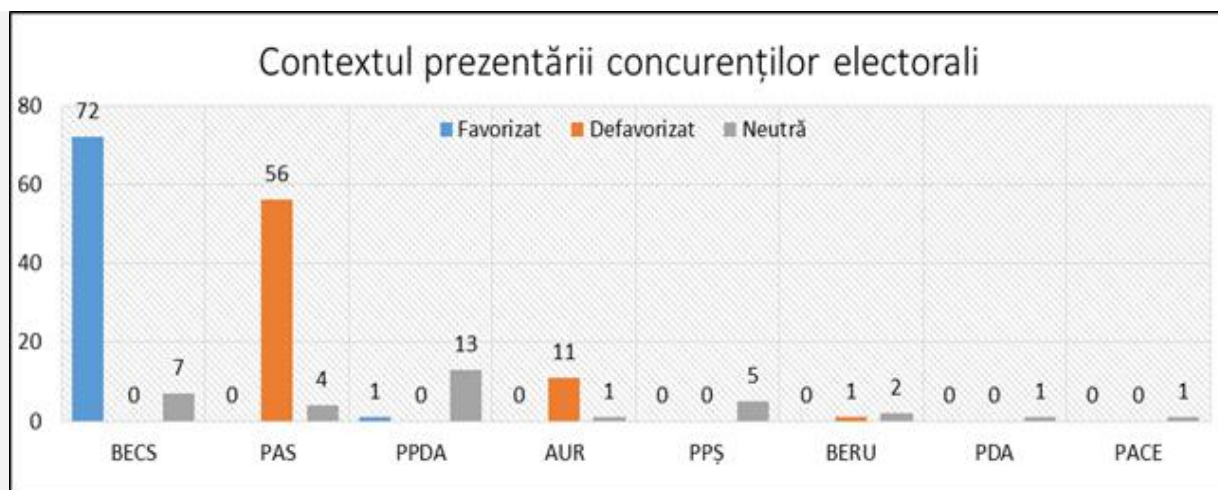
- Other 3 publications (**Noi.md**, **Sputnik.md** and **Unimedia.info**), although more discreetly, placed BECS more often in favorable contexts and PAS in unfavorable contexts, while **Sputnik.md** and **Unimedia.info** visibly disfavored AUR as well.
- One publication (**Timpul.md**) promoted the electoral agenda of AUR, disfavoring and discrediting other competitors, especially PAS and BECS but also BERU and PPȘ. **Timpul.md** 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 the 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.
- One publication (**Realitatea.md**) covered the election campaign by providing space to a large number of election candidates but repeatedly allowed favoring and disfavoring, unilateral comments, statements without reactions, labeling etc. Some materials with the character of unmarked election advertising were published.

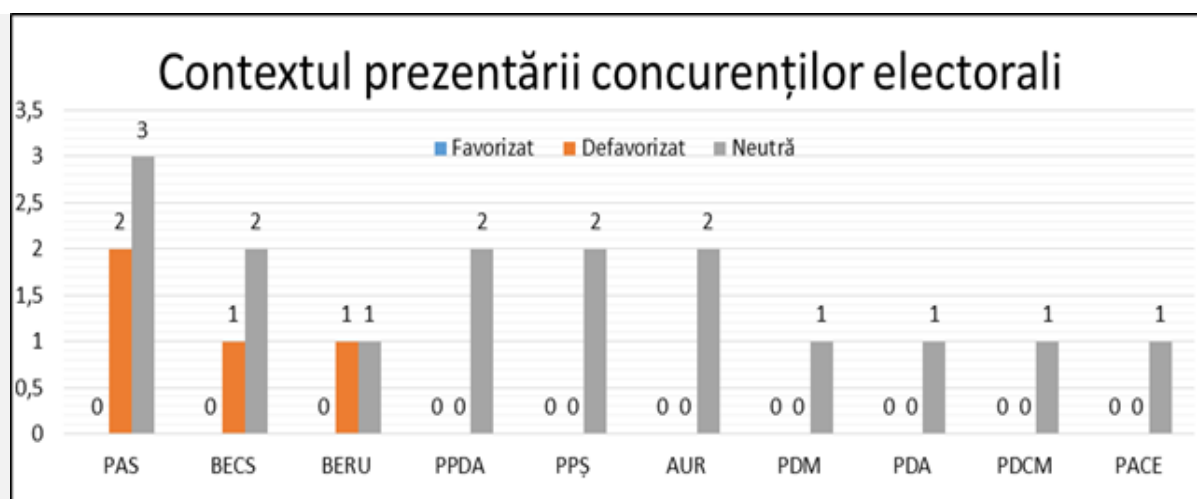
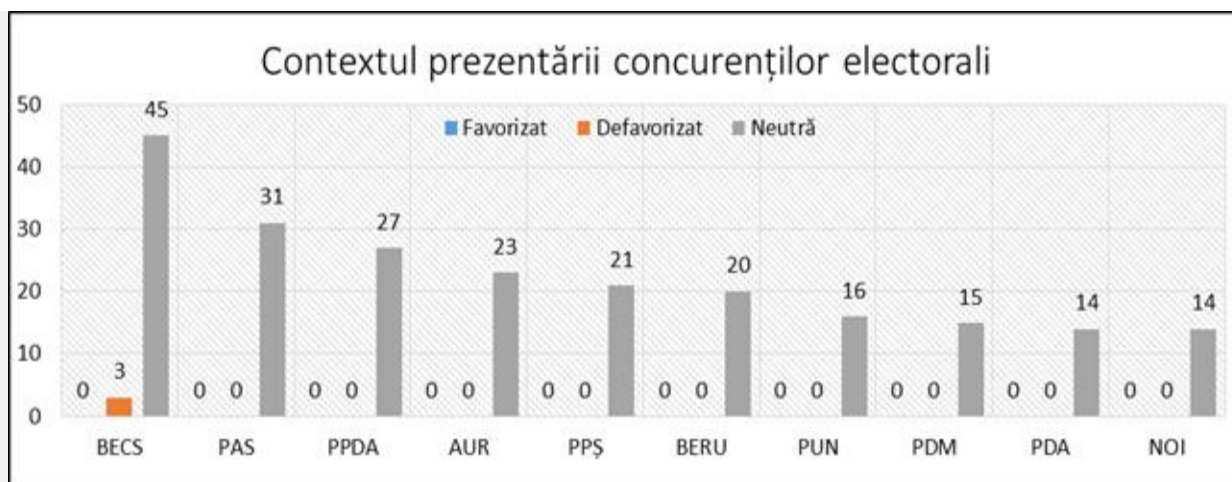
## 2.4 Context of presentation of electoral candidates in the period from 1 to 10 July 2021 (graphics)

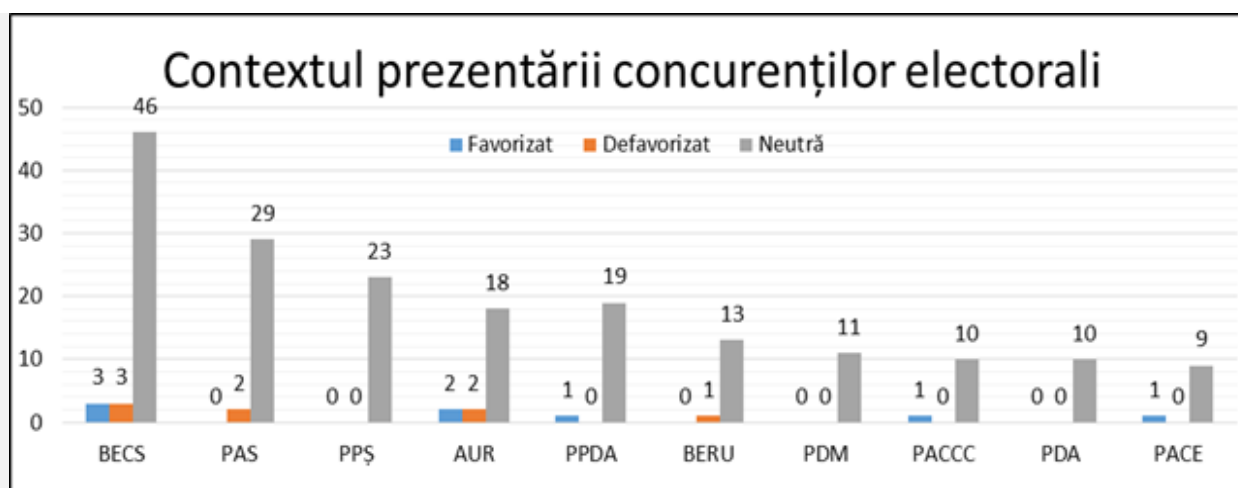
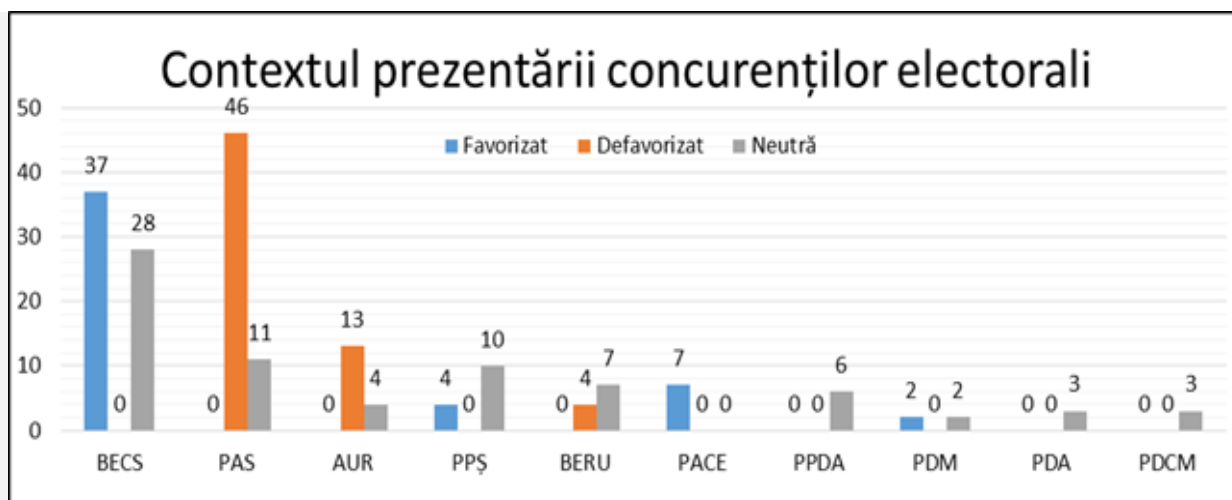
Favorizat = **Favored**;  
 Defavorizat = **Disfavored**;  
 Neutră = **Neutral**



[Actualitati.md](http://Actualitati.md)

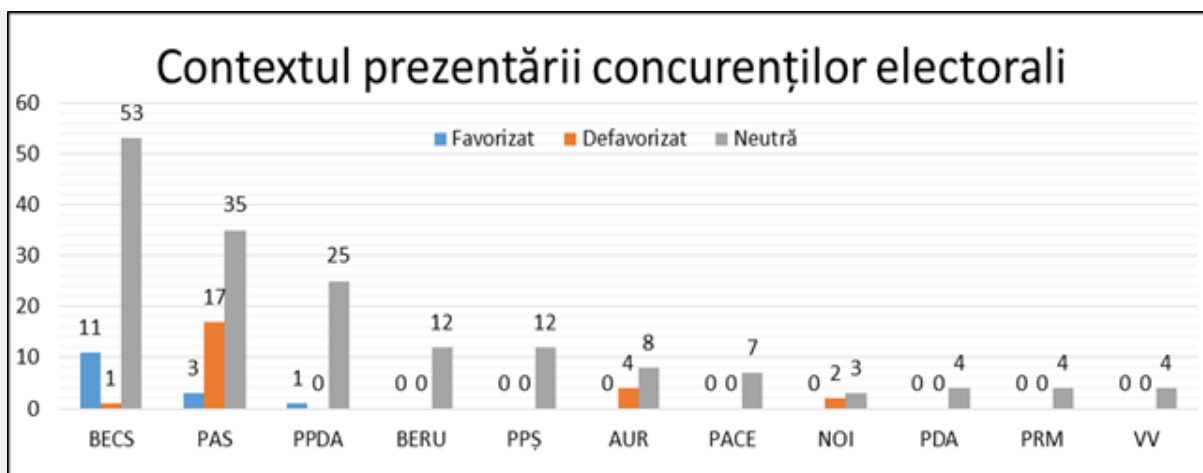




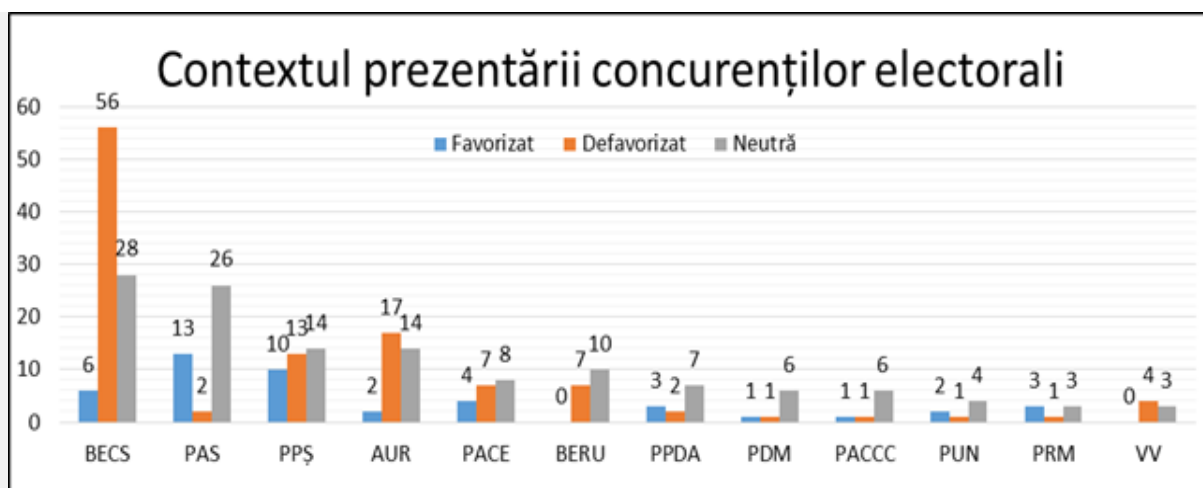




[Noi.md](http://Noi.md)

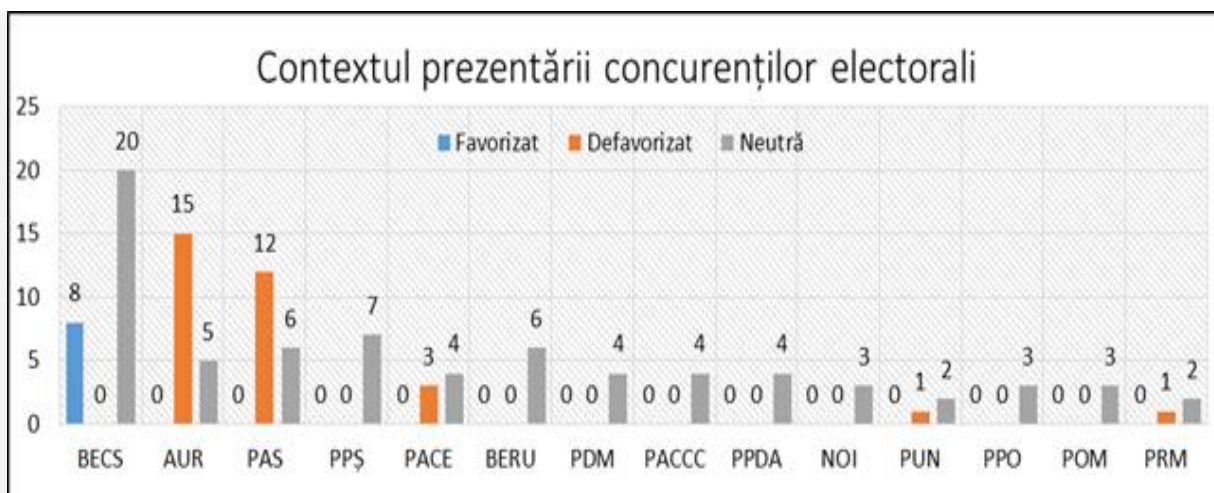


[Realitatea.md](http://Realitatea.md)





[Sputnik.md](https://sputnik.md)



[Timpul.md](https://timpul.md)

