

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

Report no. 2
11 – 20 June 2021

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



National Endowment *for* Democracy
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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 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).

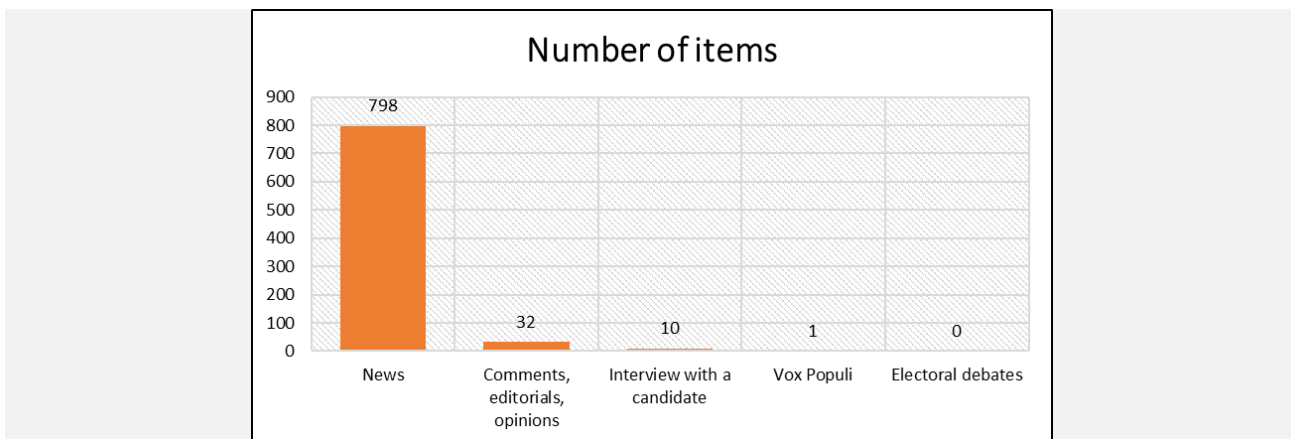
1.8. Parties and acronyms used in the report

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

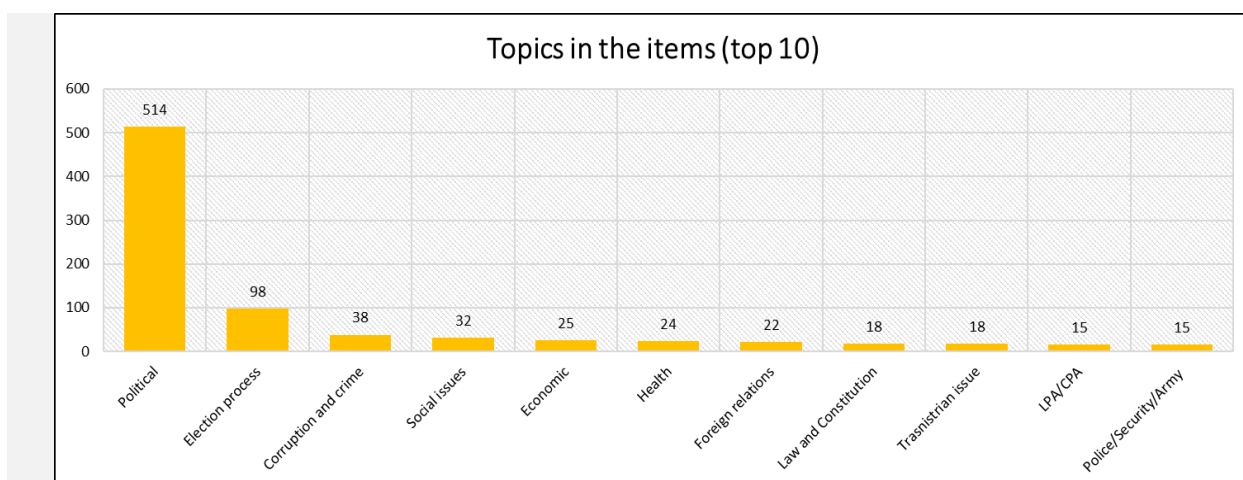
Between 11 and 20 June 2021, the 10 online media outlets monitored in total published 841 stories that directly or indirectly addressed the campaign for the parliamentary elections anticipated on 11 July 2021. As in the previous reporting period, most items were news stories - 798 or almost 95% of the total. In 32 cases, or almost 4%, the items published were comments, reviews or opinions, and in other 10 cases were interviews with a candidate. Last but not least, a Vox Populi survey was published in the period reported.



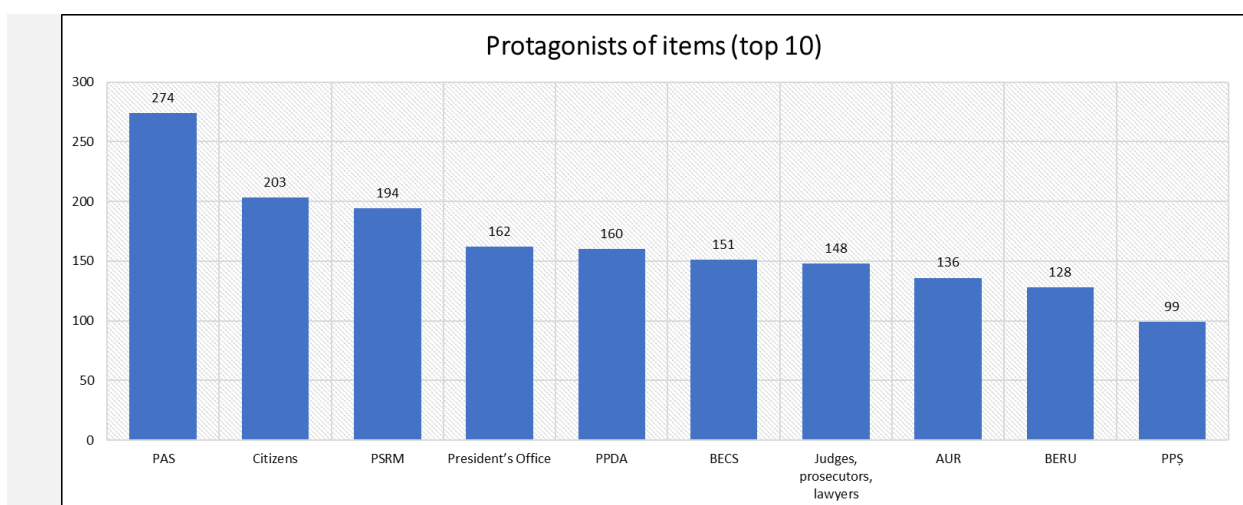
The most media products with a direct or indirect electoral character were published by **Noi.md** (145), and the fewest – by **Gagauzinfo.md** (6). The other online media outlets published items relevant to monitoring as follows: **Timpul.md** – 137; **Realitatea.md** – 127; **Unimedia.info** – 90; **Actualitati.md** – 88; **Kp.md** – 79; **Agora.md** – 78; **Newsmaker.md** – 65; and **Sputnik.md** – 26. At the same time, **Noi.md** published the most news with an electoral character (142), **Timpul.md** – the most comments (14), **Agora.md** – the most interviews (5), and **Kp.md** published one Vox Populi survey.

Next, most stories were published in a text format (831 cases) but 146 of them were accompanied by video images and 7 – by audio recordings. Hence, from 11 to 20 June, the volume of the items monitored, quantified in characters (text) and seconds (video and audio) amounted to 1797581 characters, 179944 seconds, or almost 50 hours for video images, and 3043 seconds, or almost 51 minutes for audio materials.

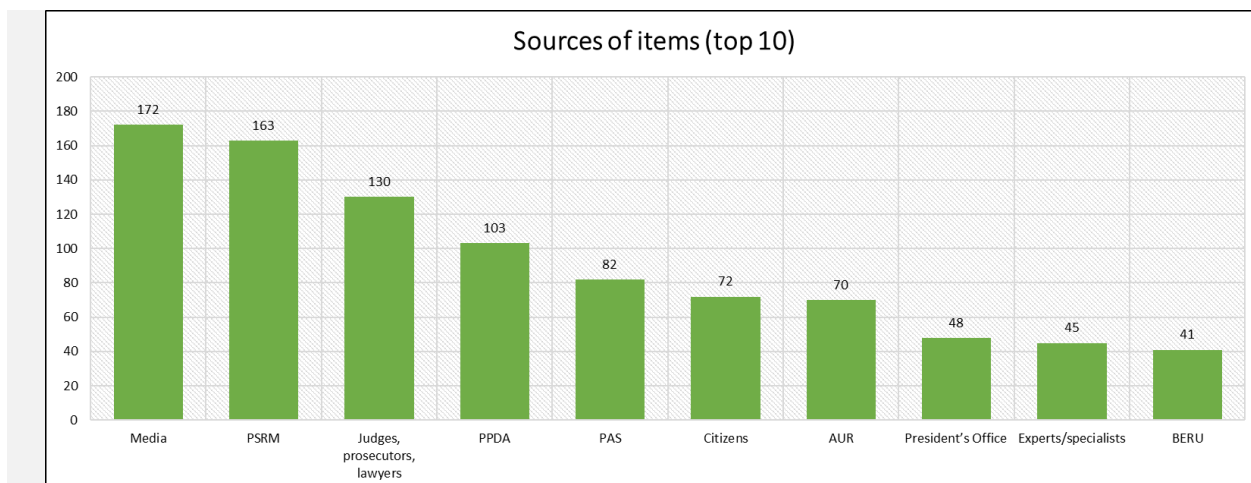
Over 61% of the total number of items published by the 10 online media outlets subject to monitoring tackled issues in the political field, and only 11.65% referred to the election process as a whole. Even less was written about corruption and crime, social issues, economy, health, foreign relations, legislation, the Transnistrian issue, the work of local and central public administration or that of the police/army in an electoral context.



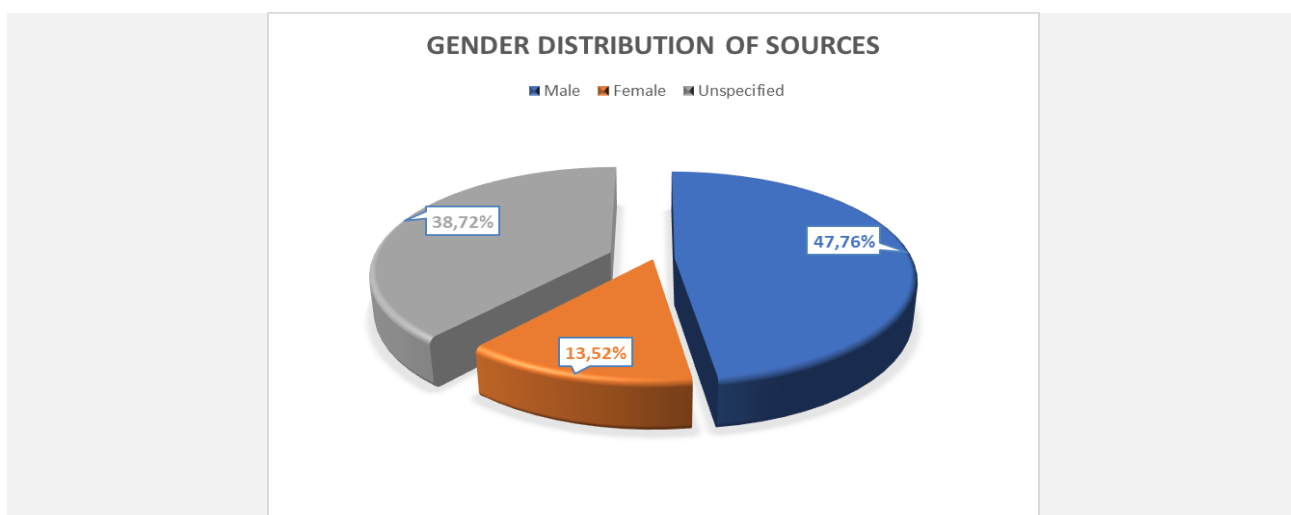
The 10 online publications, in their items targeted 44 categories of protagonists, including 22 parties and election blocs registered in the early parliamentary election campaign, but also the initiative groups of independent candidates. The PAS representatives appeared most often as protagonists (274 times), followed by citizens, with 203 such appearances, and by the PSRM representatives, who had the capacity of protagonists 194 times. Similarly, the Presidency was targeted 162 times in the media reports, at a short distance followed by PPDA representatives (160 appearances) as well as by BECS (151), judges, lawyers (148), AUR (136), BERU (128) and PPŞ (99).



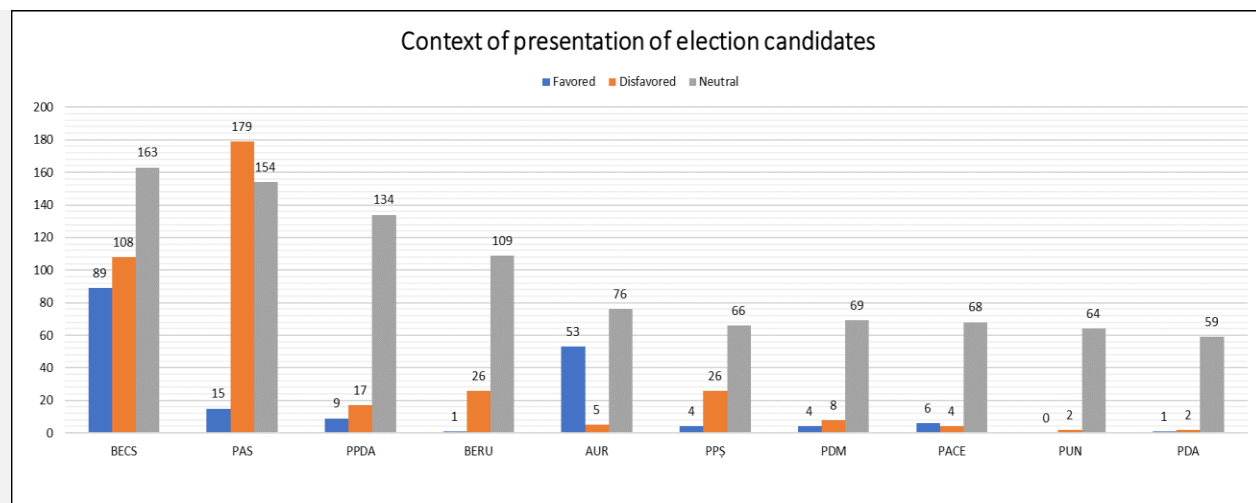
At the same time, a total of 38 different categories of sources were used to document the stories, including 21 election candidates. As in the previous reporting period, other media sources were most often quoted (172 times). The PSRM representatives had 9 references less, being quoted 163 times, and the representatives of the judiciary, with 130 references, ranked third. They were followed by PPDA, with 103 references, PAS (82), citizens (72), AUR (70), the Presidency (48), experts (45) and BERU, with 41 references in the period monitored.



In addition, the 10 publications quoted a total of 1183 sources between 11 and 20 June 2021. Of these, 565, or almost 48%, were men; 160, or 13.52% were women; and 458, or almost 39%, were not specified in terms of gender. Hence, the sources further lacked balance in terms of sex, with male sources being used almost 4 times more often than female sources.



From 11 to 20 June 2021, 6 election candidates were covered exclusively in a neutral manner by the 10 publications. These were PPNOI, POM, PPO, PRM, PVE and MPSN. The other candidates, in addition to neutral contextualizations, were also favored or disadvantaged. PAS was the most disfavored candidate, being the only case with placements in negative contexts exceeding the ones in neutral contexts (179 times disfavored). On the other hand, BECS and AUR were more often favored in the media reports of the 10 publications compared to the other candidates (89 times for BECS and 53 for AUR). The other candidates were favored/disfavored as follows: PPPDA – 9/17 times; BERU – 1/26; PPŞ – 4/26; PDM – 4/8; PACE – 6/4; PDA – 1/2; PACCC – 1/12; PLD – 5/1; PDCM – 3/1; NOI – one time disfavored; PS – 3 times disfavored; PPM and PUN – 2 times disfavored each.



2.2 General conclusions and trends:

- Between 11 and 20 June 2021, the 10 online publications monitored covered the electoral events mainly through their news.
- **Noi.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 but to a lesser extent.
- Most relevant items referred to the political field, the election process as a whole being covered over 5 times less.
- All the candidates registered in the election campaign were targeted in the reports of the 10 publications, but in different proportions.
- PAS candidate appeared most often as the protagonist.
- Other media sources were cumulatively quoted most often by the 10 online publications.
- The stories published by all 10 media outlets monitored were disproportionately gendered in favor of men who were quoted over three times more often than women.
- BECS and AUR candidates were most often placed in positive contexts that favored them.
- PAS candidate was most often placed in negative contexts that disadvantaged it.
- Seven out of 10 media publications monitored promoted the agendas of some election candidates, directly or indirectly, and failed to present the information in a balanced manner.
- Three out of 10 publications (**Actualitati.md**, **Kp.md** and **Noi.md**) promoted BECS candidate openly, directly and substantially, disfavoring the PAS candidate as well as President Maia Sandu, with the same intensity. **Actualitati.md** and **Kp.md**, in particular, had similar editorial behaviors during the reporting period, intensely promoting the BECS candidate and the PSRM representatives. At the same time, both publications placed PAS as well as the Moldovan President Maia Sandu in unfavorable contexts in their stories published. For allegations, insinuations, etc., the reactions of the persons targeted were missing.
- Other 3 publications (**Gagauzinfo.md**, **Sputnik.md** and **Unimedia.info**), although more discreetly, placed BECS candidate more often in favorable contexts and PAS – in unfavorable contexts. **Unimedia.info** also presented PPDA, PACE and PDM in

favorable contexts numerically. Some stories qualified again as electoral advertising but were not marked as such and appeared in the general news flow.

- A publication (**Timpul.md**) promoted the election agenda of AUR candidate, disfavoring and disparaging other candidates, especially PAS and BECS. **Timpul.md** further had a biased editorial policy, presenting events and the candidates selectively and with an attitude devoid of journalistic fairness.
- Two publications (**Agora.md** and **Newsmaker.md**) had a relatively balanced editorial policy in relation to all the candidates. **Agora.md** had the most unbiased editorial behavior among the publications monitored.
- One publication (**Realitatea.md**), although covered the electoral events in an unbiased manner as a whole, favored PAS, especially in its videos, and disfavored especially BECS and PPDA. It also published some texts with advertising content, which were not marked accordingly.

2.3 Recommendations for the online publications monitored:

Actualitati.md, Kp.md and Noi.md:

- For a fair and pluralistic informing of the public, it is recommended that the publications take into account the ethical rules of the journalist profession and present facts in an unbiased manner, including all stakeholders and their opinions on the facts reported. The Moldovan Journalist's Code of Ethics stipulates, among other things, *"The journalist shall make a clear distinction between facts and opinions and shall not present opinions as facts."* The same document also stipulates, *"The journalist shall express their opinion honestly and ethically and shall not deliberately distort facts or data."*
- Also, given the role of the press in contributing to the cohesion, and not to the division of the society, the publication are advised to refrain from unilateral, subjective and biased dissemination of messages that may form an incomplete picture of reality for the public. The Code of Ethics stipulates, *"The journalist shall obtain and present the opinions of all parties relevant to the subject. The journalist shall demonstrate the plurality of the opinions, even if they disagree with them."*

Sputnik.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 the journalists further to pay more attention to their wording, so that they do not favor or disfavor 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 outlet to pay more attention to election topics and present the information user with more details on the election campaign, candidates, relevant events, etc., so that the population can make an opinion 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.

- Accuracy is also required for items that have pronounced elements of electoral advertising, but are not included in the section for this type of items. The Code of Ethics stipulates, *"It is mandatory to clearly separate journalistic products from commercial advertising, from items made for advertising purposes, from political (electoral) advertising. Commercial advertising, items made for advertising purposes, political (electoral) advertising shall be marked distinctly and presented so that they cannot be confused with journalistic products."*

Agora.md:

- It would also be advisable to have a greater presence of citizens in the media reports related to the election campaign.

Newsmaker.md:

- It is further advised to draw more attention to the video images taken from the websites of political parties, election candidates or politicians. Such images often make allegations or labeling etc. thus favoring or disfavoring certain candidates. If the newsroom does not analyze such images and, for example, fails to present the reactions of the parties targeted, attacked etc., it violates the ethical rules of fair and unbiased presentation of information.

Realitatea.md:

- The recommendation on video images is valid here as well.
- Not less important is the need to differentiate clearly the journalistic content from the advertising one. The Code of Ethics recalls, *"Disguised advertising information, presentation of unmarked advertising information or its presentation as a journalistic product shall be prohibited."*

Timpul.md:

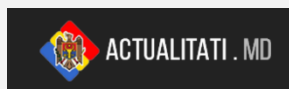
- The newsroom is further urged to follow the ethical rules of journalism and ensure a balanced and pluralistic informing of the public with reference to election items. Abstaining from aggressive promotion of a candidate and presenting all relevant electoral events in good faith would contribute to diverse informing of the public. 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."*
- Last but not least, a clearer separation of facts from opinions would be advisable. The same Code of Ethics details, *"Opinions and factual items shall be delimited in such a manner that anyone can easily make an appropriate distinction between them."*

2.4 Context of presentation of electoral candidates (graphics)

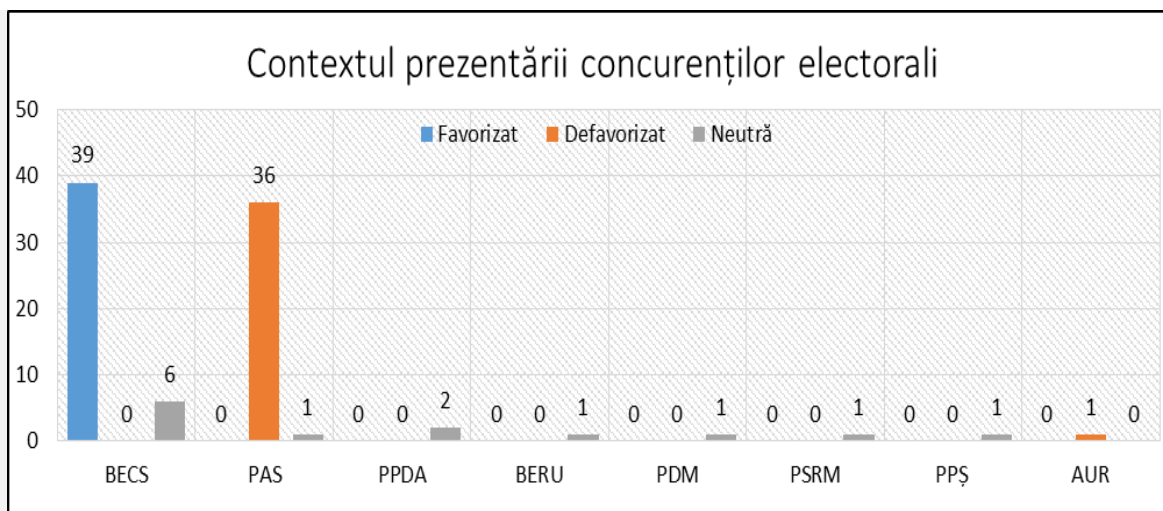
Favorizat = **Favored**;

Defavorizat = **Disfavored**;

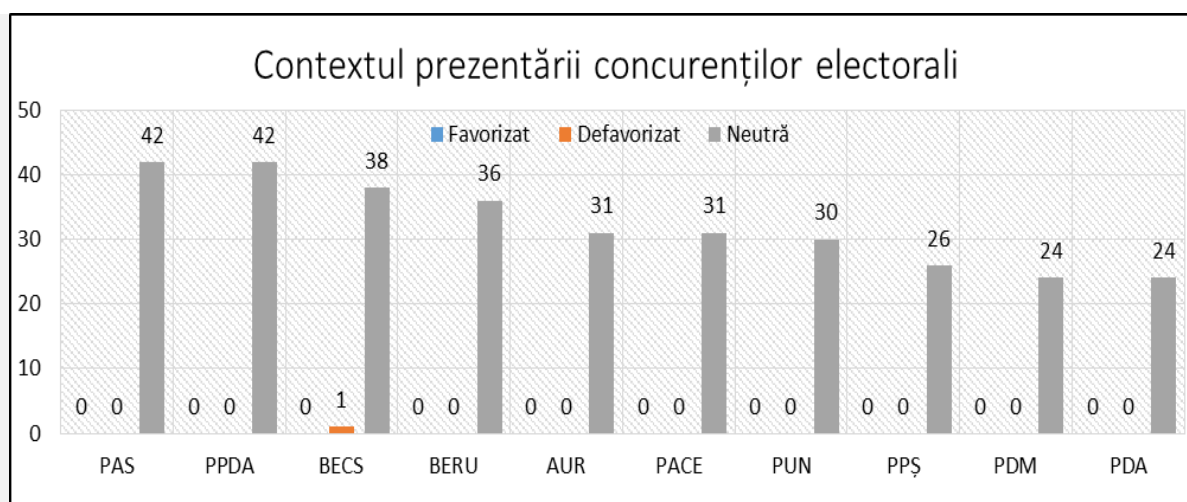
Neutră = **Neutral**



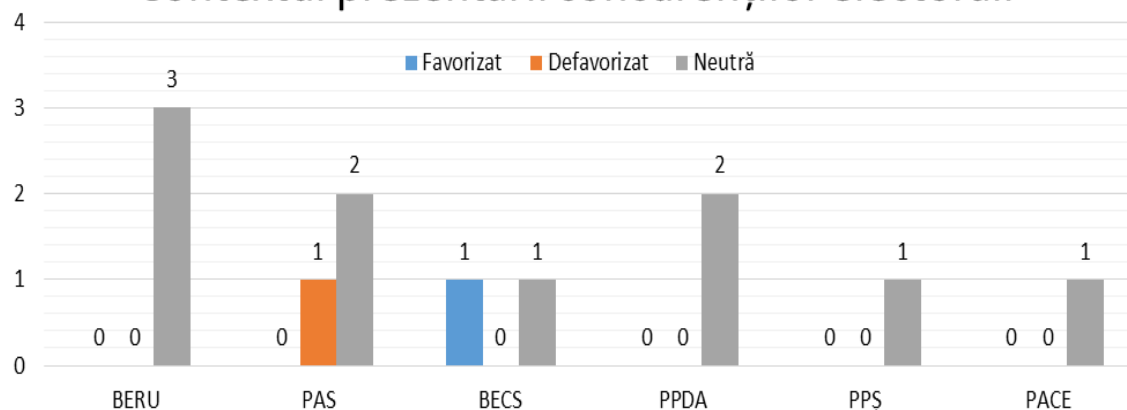
Actualitati.md



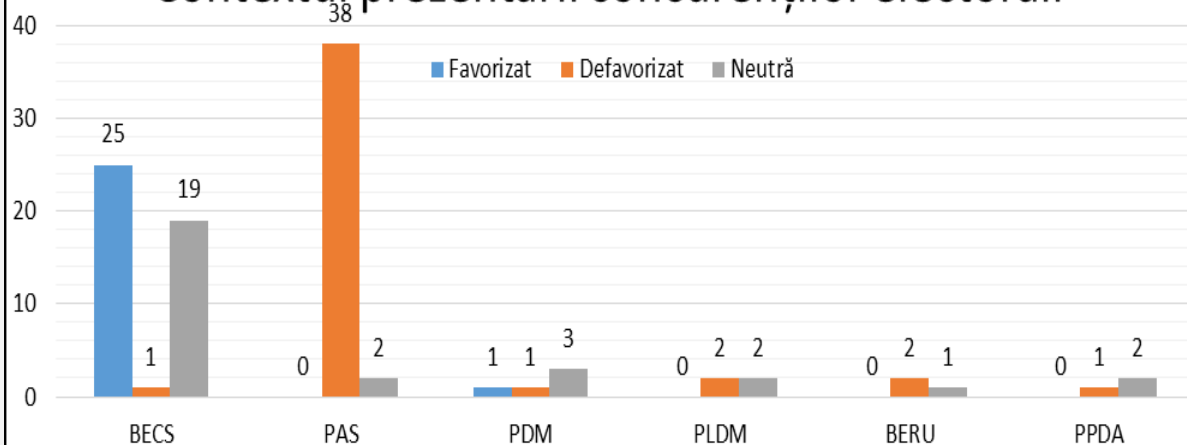
Agora.md



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

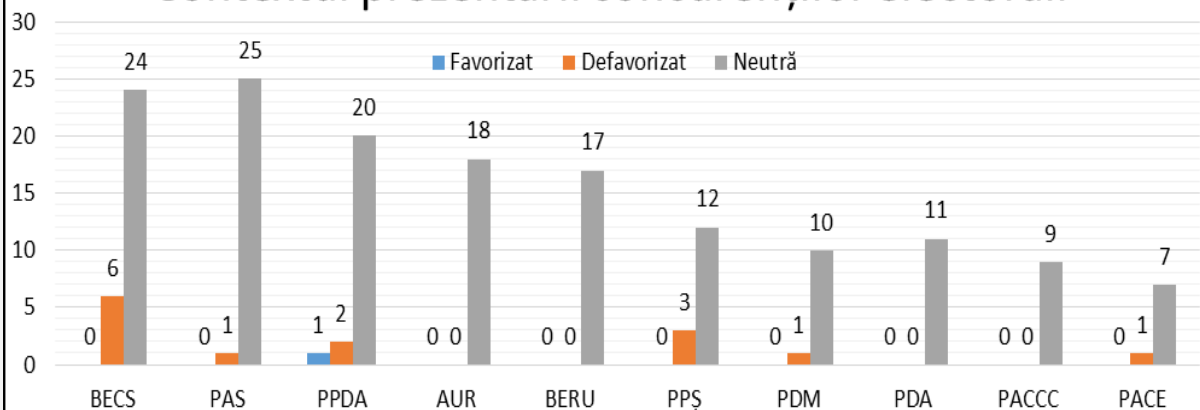


Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

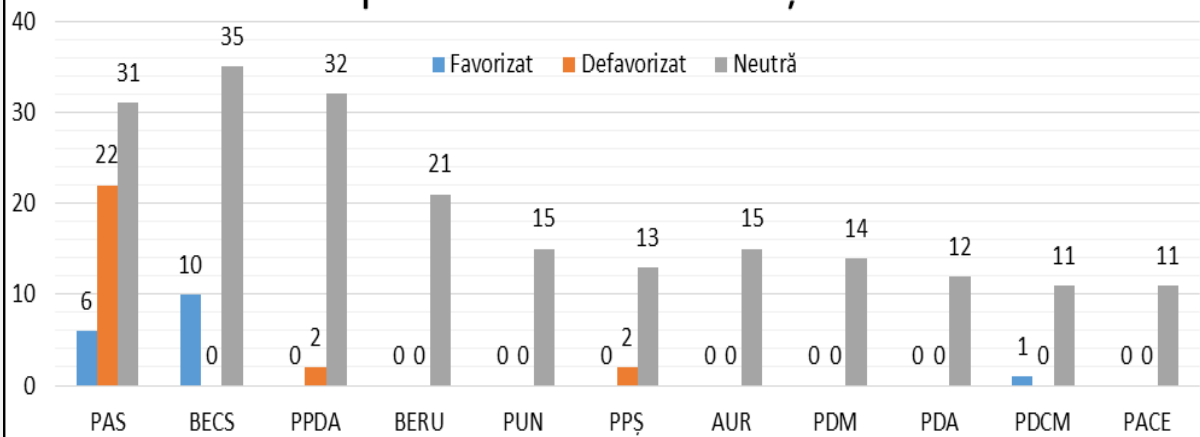


NewsMaker
Newsmaker.md

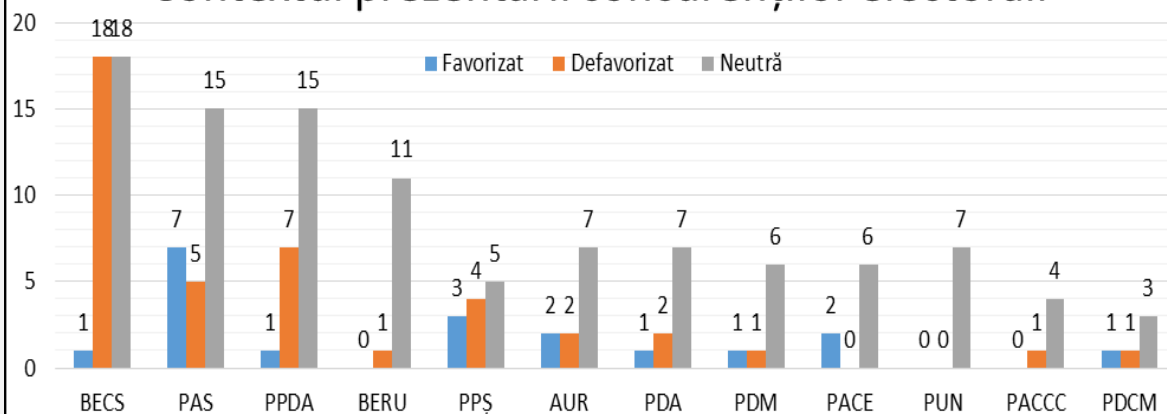
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali


Noi.md

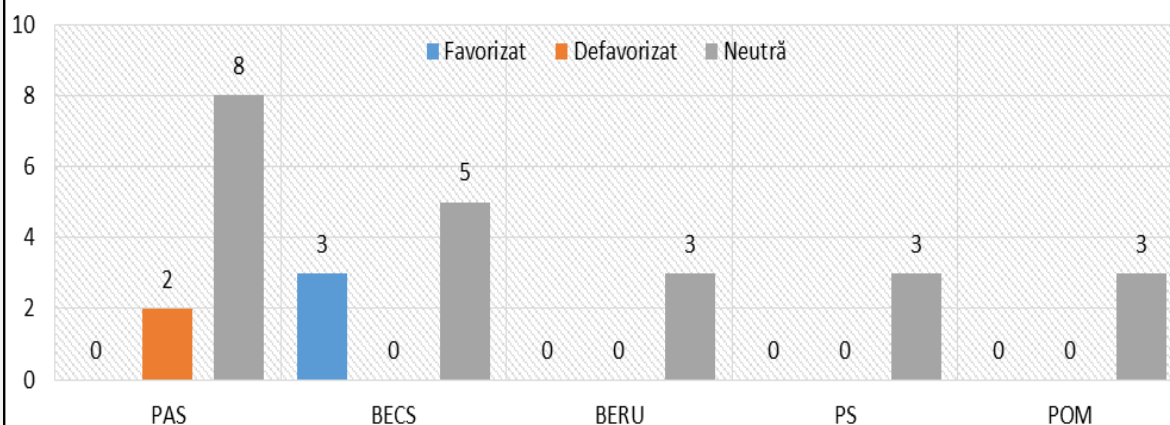
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



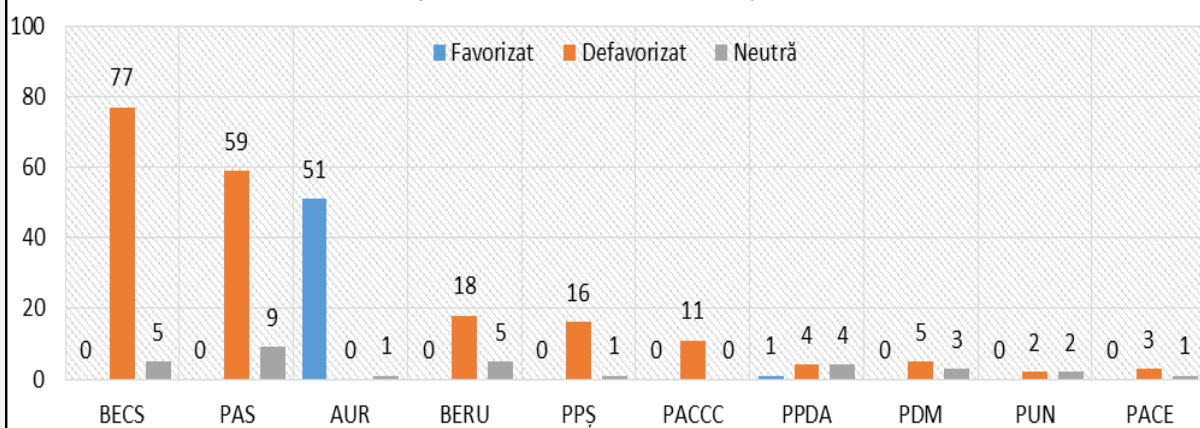
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



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