

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

Report no. 1
1 – 10 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.md](#)⁶ (Romanian language version), [Realitatea.md](#)⁷ (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).

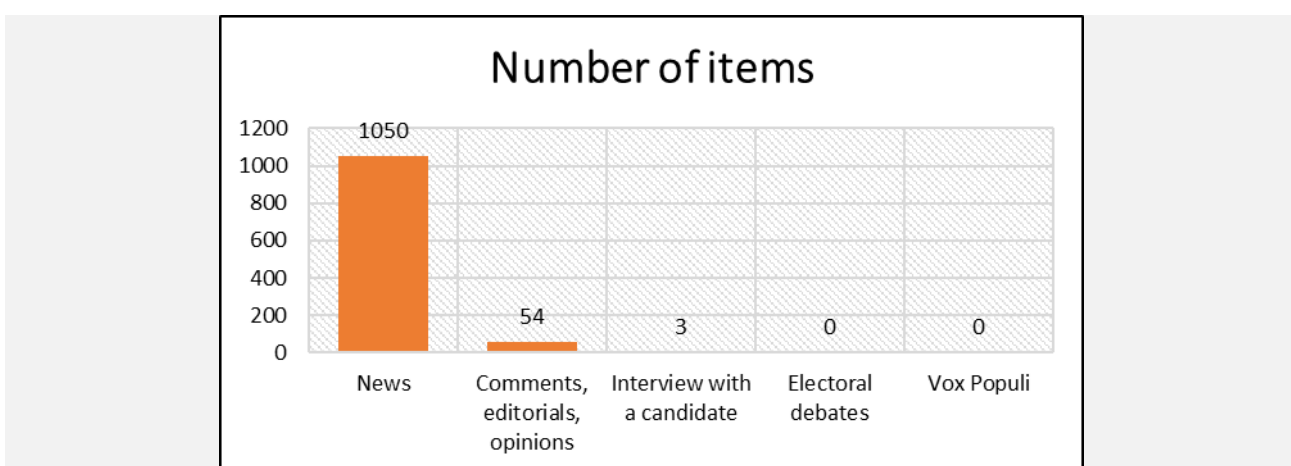
1.8. Parties and acronyms used in the report

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

II. DATA ANALYSIS

2.1 General trends

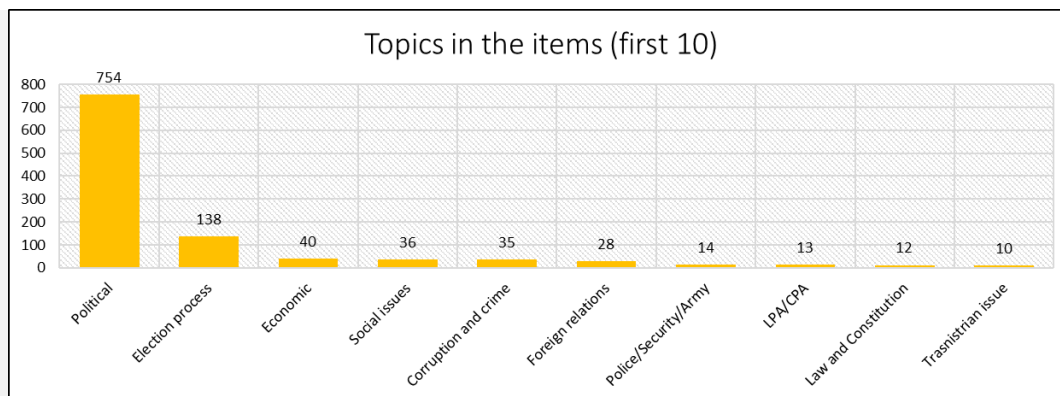
From 1 to 10 June 2021, the 10 online media outlets monitored together published 1107 items that directly or indirectly referred to the election period and campaign for the parliamentary elections anticipated on 11 July 2021. Most media products – 1050, or almost 95% - were news stories on the candidates registered in the elections or who have filed their applications to the Central Election Commission (CEC), on the launches of the candidates registered in the election campaign, on the election authority's work, as well as on the statements, allegations, replies, events of a political and/or electoral character of those concerned. Other 54 stories (or 4.9%) were published in the form of comments, editorials or opinions. Three interviews with the election candidate representatives were also published in the period monitored.



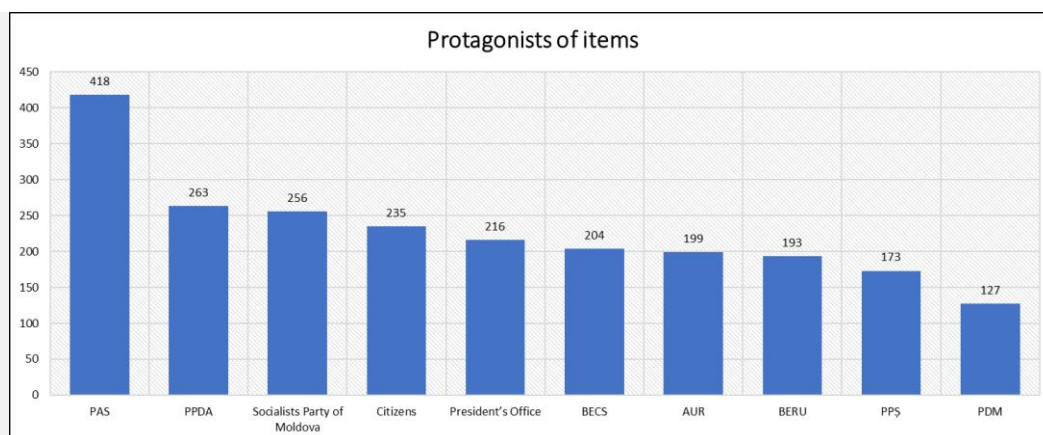
Most media products with a direct or indirect electoral character were published by **Noi.md** and **Timpul.md** (188 items each), while **Gagauzinfo.md** had the fewest relevant stories in this regard (12). At the same time, **Realitatea.md** had 150 relevant items, **Unimedia.info** – 135; **Newsmaker.md** – 118; **Actualitati.md** – 103; **Agora.md** – 88; **Sputnik.md** – 77, and **Kp.md** – 48. At the same time, **Noi.md** published the most news stories with an electoral character (186), and **Timpul.md** – the most comments (38).

Most of the items were texts (1106 cases). However, 168 stories were accompanied by video images (74) or the texts were supported by audio recordings (11). Between 1 and 10 June 2021, the volume of the items monitored, quantified in characters (text) and seconds (video and audio), amounted to 2377908 characters, 390698 seconds, or over 108 hours for video images, and 1948 seconds, or over 32 minutes for audio stories.

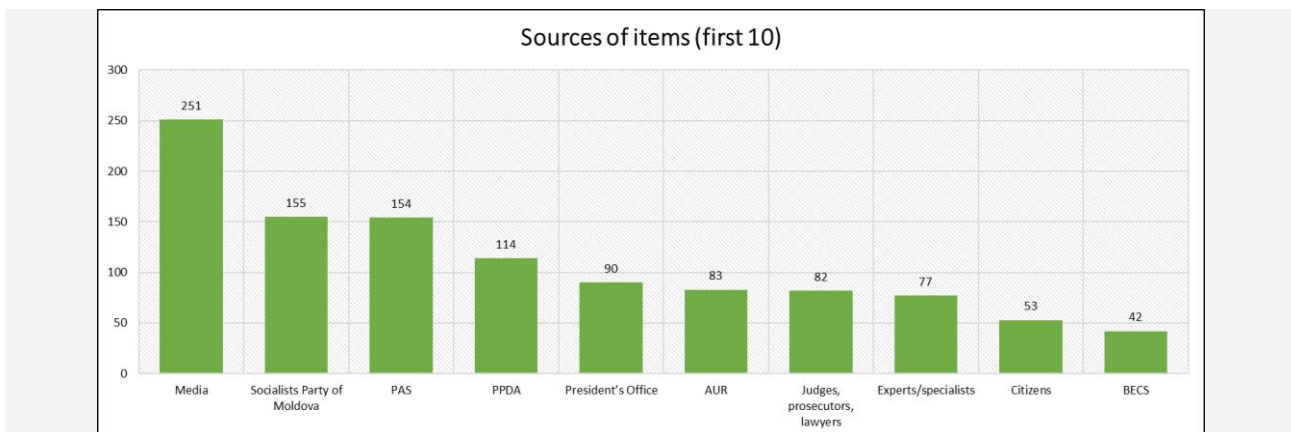
Most often, the 10 online media outlets monitored addressed issues related to the political field (754 stories), in an electoral context, and over five times less referred to the electoral process as a whole (138 stories). The economic and social issues, corruption, foreign relations, security issues, the work of local and central public administration, legislation or the Transnistrian issue in an electoral context were tackled much less.



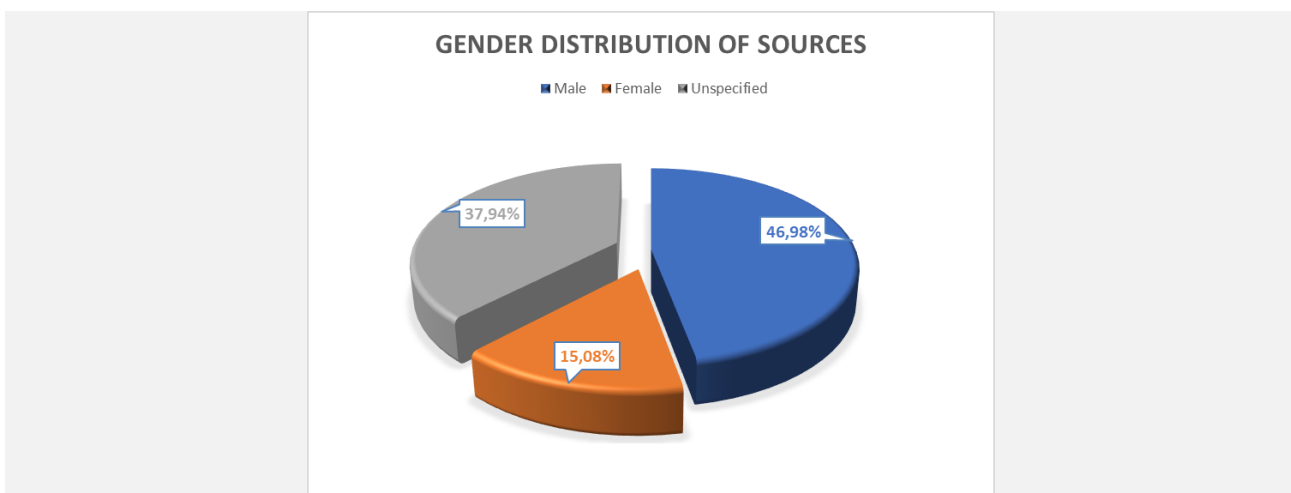
In total, the 10 online publications targeted 58 categories of protagonists, including 17 parties and electoral blocs registered in the campaign for early parliamentary elections as well as 5 potential candidates who have filed their applications for registration with CEC. The most appearances as protagonists had the representatives of the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) - 418 times, followed by those of the "Dignity and Truth Platform" Party (PPDA), with 263 appearances, and by those of Socialists Party of Moldova (PSRM), with 256 appearances. The first 10 categories also included the citizens (235 times), the representatives of the President's Office (216 times), those of the Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists (BECS) (targeted in 204 cases), those of the "Alliance for the Union of Romanians" Political Party (AUR) (199 times), representatives of the "Renato Usatii" Electoral Bloc (BERU) (193 times), of "Șor" Political Party (PPȘ) (173 times) as well as those of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) (targeted in 127 items).



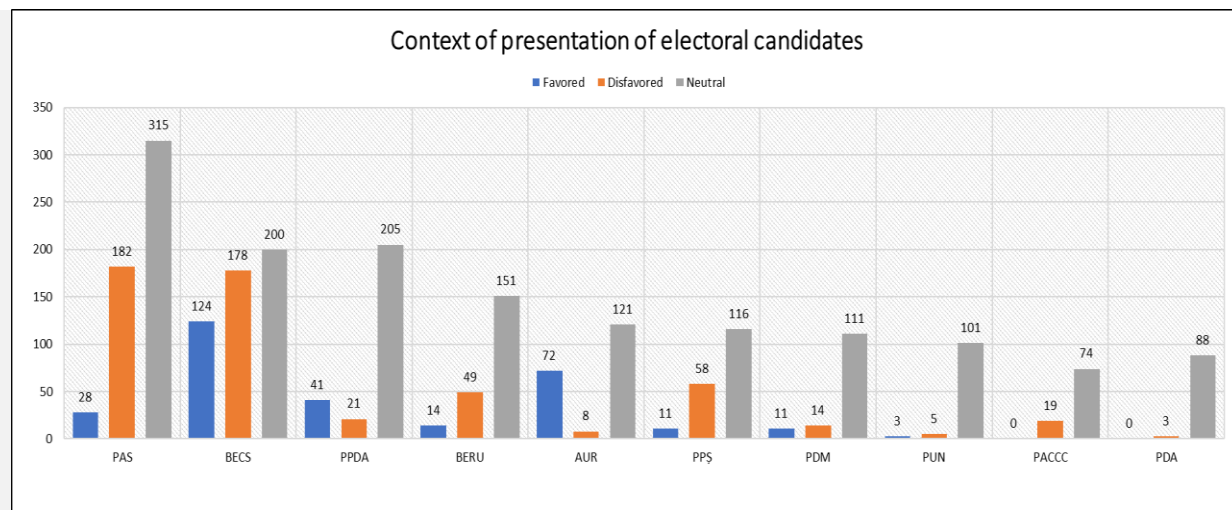
During the period monitored, the items published by the 10 online media outlets quoted 40 different categories of sources, including 17 electoral candidates, registered in the campaign, and a potential one, most often the journalists referring to other media sources (251 times). The podium is completed in almost identical proportions by PSRM and PAS representatives, quoted 155 times and 154 times, accordingly. Other sources also came from PPDA (114 times), the President's Office (90 times), AUR (83 times), justice sector (82 times), experts (77 times), citizens (53 times), and BECS (42 times).



Similarly, the 1426 sources quoted in total between 1 and 10 June 2021 lacked balance in terms of gender, with men being quoted 3 times more often than women. Specifically, of the total number of sources, 670 – or nearly 47% – were men; 215 – or just over 15% – were women; and in 541 cases – accounting for almost 38% – the type of the source was not specified.



The candidates registered or who have filed their applications for registration in the campaign for early parliamentary elections appeared in various contexts during the period monitored, most often the approach being neutral. However, PAS was most often disfavored (in 182 cases), with 28 appearances in rather favorable contexts, while BECS was most often favored (in 124 cases) but also appeared in negative contexts (178 times). The other candidates were favored/disfavored as follows: PPDA - 41/21 cases; BERU - 14/49 cases; AUR - 72/8 cases; PPŞ - 11/58 cases; PDM - 11/14 cases; PUN - 3/5 cases; PACE - 4/7 cases; PDCM - 4/6 cases; PS - 1/1 cases; PACCC - disfavored in 19 cases; PDA - disfavored in 3 cases; MPSN - disfavored in 2 cases; PLD - favored in 9 cases; NOI - disfavored in 3 cases; PPO - favored in 4 cases; PVE - disfavored in one case; PRM - disfavored in one case; POM - disfavored in two cases; NOI/PAŞ - disfavored in one case. The only candidate who appeared exclusively in a neutral context was the "Patriots of Moldova" Party (PPM), with 15 times covered in such a manner.



2.2. General conclusions:

- Between 1 and 10 June 2021, the 10 online publications monitored covered the electoral events mainly through their news.
- **Noi.md** and **Timpul.md** published the largest number of (identical) stories relevant to the electoral context, while **Gagauzinfo.md** – the lowest number.
- Most of the items were published in a text format, but there were also video and audio items, to a lesser extent.
- Most relevant items referred to the political field, the election process as a whole being covered 5 times less.
- All the candidates registered in the campaign as well as potential candidates were targeted in the media reports of the 10 publications, but in different proportions.
- The election candidate PAS was targeted most often as a protagonist.
- Other media sources were quoted, cumulatively, most often by the 10 online publications.
- The stories published by the 10 media outlets monitored were disproportionately gendered in favor of men, who were quoted over three times more often than women.
- The election candidate BECS was most often placed in a positive context that favored it.
- The election candidate PAS was most often placed in a negative context that disfavored it.
- **Actualitati.md** and **Kp.md** had similar editorial behaviors during the reporting period i.e. promoting the candidate BECS and the PSRM representatives. At the same time, both publications placed PAS as well as the President of the Republic of Moldova Maia Sandu in unfavorable contexts in the stories published. For allegations, insinuations, etc., the reply of those targeted was missing.
- **Noi.md**, **Sputnik.md**, although covering wider ranges of electoral events, showed higher liking for BECS, but also a critical and unfavorable attitude towards PAS.
- **Gagauzinfo.md** paid little attention to electoral issues. Although no clear trend of favoring or disfavoring the election candidates was found, PAS was slightly disadvantaged, while PPŞ, PPDA or BECS appeared more in contexts that favored them.
- **Unimedia.info** numerically presented PAs more often neutrally, but also in a context that disfavored it; BECS - in an unfavorable and neutral context, and PPDA enjoyed the most favorable stories compared to the other candidates. Several items qualified as election advertising but were not marked as such and appeared in the general news flow.

- **Agora.md** and **Newsmaker.md**, as a whole, had a relatively balanced editorial policy on the media coverage of topics with a direct or indirect electoral character. The texts of the stories were in most cases unbiased but the video images attached in several cases contained elements that favored or disfavored certain candidates.
- **Realitatea.md** covered the electoral events in a relatively balanced manner, with certain video images favoring or disfavoring certain electoral candidates. In some cases, advertising content was found, which was not marked accordingly.
- **Timpul.md** had a biased editorial policy and presented the electoral events and candidates selectively and with an attitude devoid of journalistic fairness. The publication openly supported and massively favored the AUR election candidates, displaying a hostile attitude towards the other candidates.

2.3. Recommendations for the online publications monitored:

Actualitati.md and Kp.md:

- For a correct 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 cohesion, and not to the division of the society, it is advisable for publications to refrain from the 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 opinion of all parties relevant to the subject. The journalist shall demonstrate the plurality of the opinions, even if they disagree with them."*

Noi.md, Sputnik.md:

- In order to respond as much 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 pay more attention to the main rules of news journalism, separating facts from news, and accurately formulating messages. The Journalist's Code of Ethics stipulates, *"The journalist shall use titles that correspond to the content of the media report and shall avoid those that mislead the public."*
- Also, taking into account the place and role of opinions expressed in relation to electoral subjects of public interest, it is good for the journalist to *"express their opinions on factual grounds based on information that, in good faith, they consider to be true and that, if necessary, can be checked."*

Gagauzinfo.md:

- Given the status of a regional publication, much needed to adequately inform the public in the south of the country, it would be advisable for the outlet to pay more attention to electoral issues and to present to the information user 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.
- At the same time, a diversification of information, by detaching from the activities (only) of regional authorities and by focusing on people and their interest (but also the right) to be informed in an unbiased, correct, and pluralistic manner about public

interest events, including the campaign for early parliamentary elections, would be necessary.

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. According to the Journalist's Code of Ethics, *"The journalist shall ignore the information if, after verifying the facts, it turns out to be false, manipulative or irrelevant to the topic tackled."*
- 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 same Code of Ethics stipulates, *"It is mandatory to clearly separate journalistic products from commercial advertising, from topics made for advertising purposes, from political (electoral) advertising. Commercial advertising, subjects made for advertising purposes, political (electoral) advertising shall be marked distinctly and presented so that they cannot be confused with journalistic products."*

Agora.md and Newsmaker.md:

- Even if multimedia elements are important and can add value to media reports, it is good to draw more attention to the video images taken from the websites of political parties, electoral 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 does not present, for example, the replies of the parties targeted, attacked etc., it violates the ethical rules for a correct or unbiased presentation of information.
- It would also be advisable to have a greater presence of citizens in the media reports related to the election campaign.

Realitatea.md:

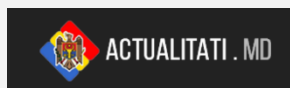
- The recommendation on video images is valid here as well.
- Not less important is the need to clearly present the journalistic content from the advertising one. The Code of Ethics stipulates, *"Disguised advertising information, presentation of unmarked advertising information or its presentation as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

Timpul.md:

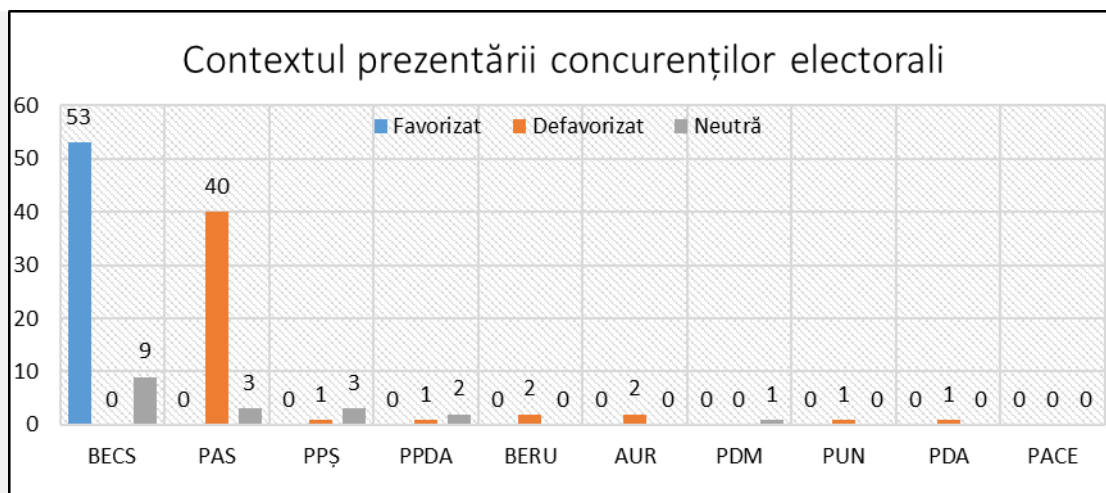
- The newsroom is urged to respect the ethical rules of journalism, ensuring a balanced and pluralistic information of the public with reference to electoral issues. Abstaining from an aggressive promotion of a candidate and presenting all relevant electoral events in good faith would contribute to a diverse information 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 states, *"Opinions and factual materials 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)

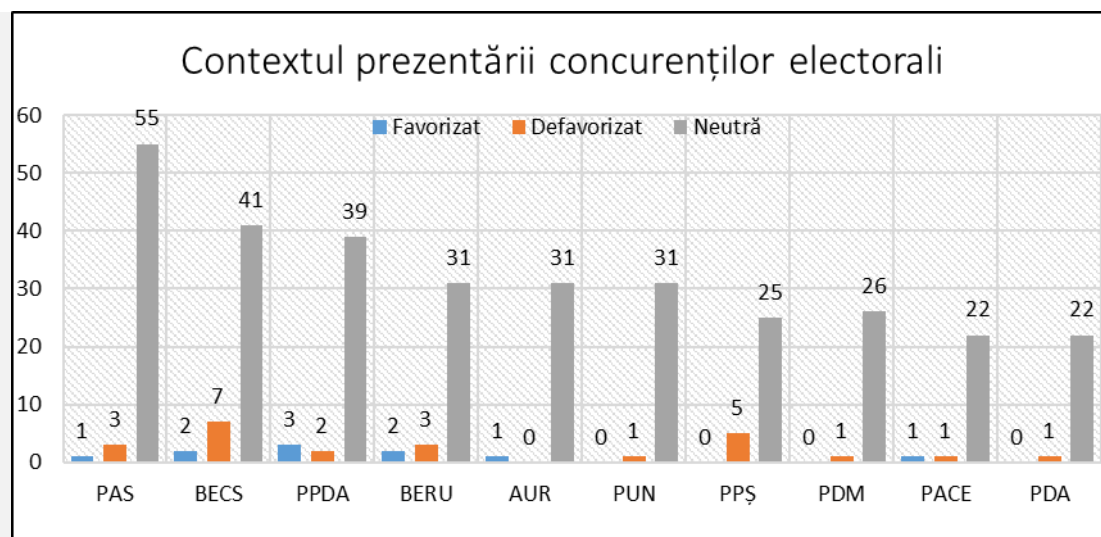
Favorizat = **Favored**; Defavorizat = **Disfavored**; Neutră = **Neutral**

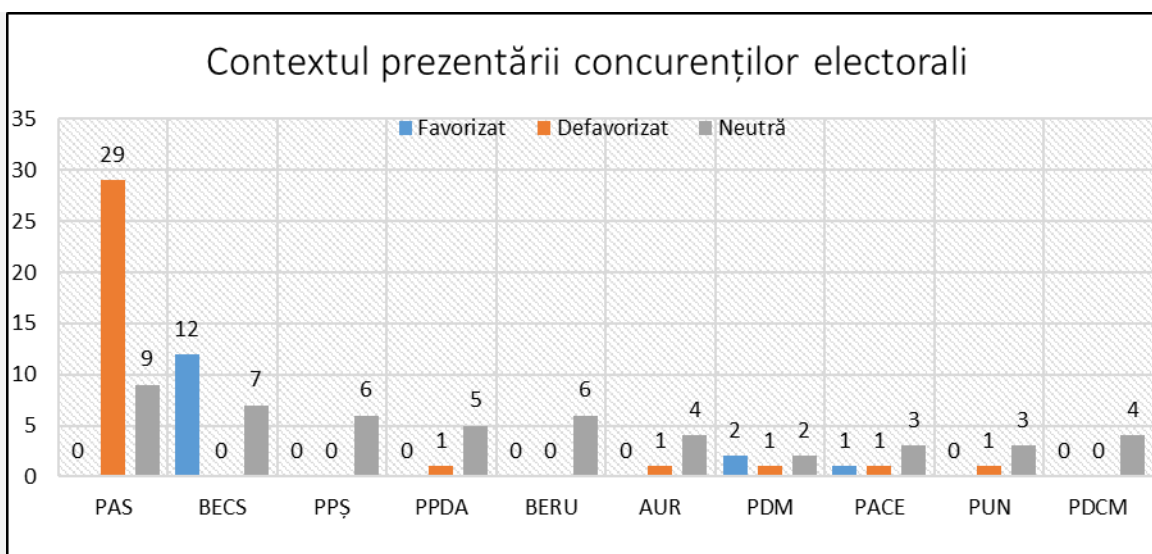
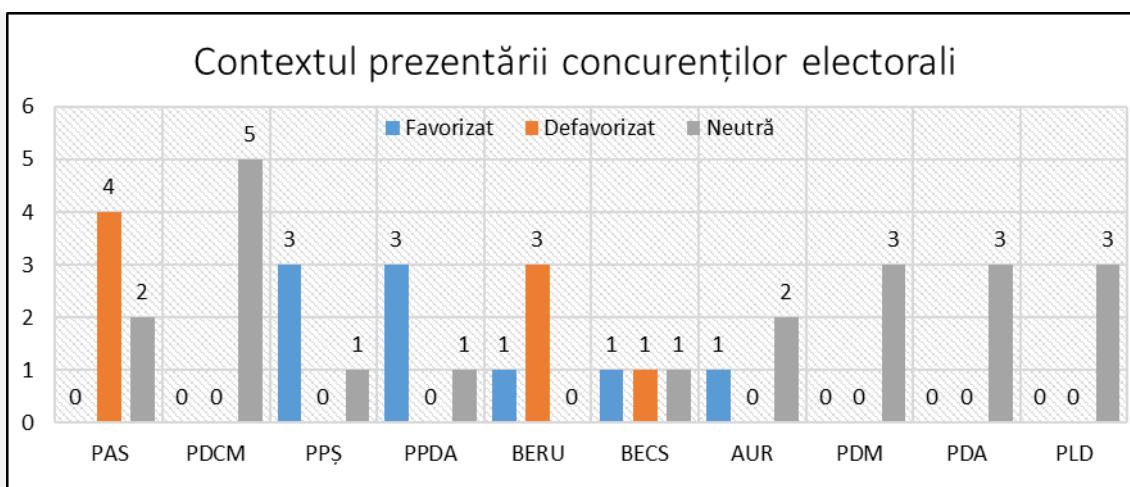


Actualitati.md

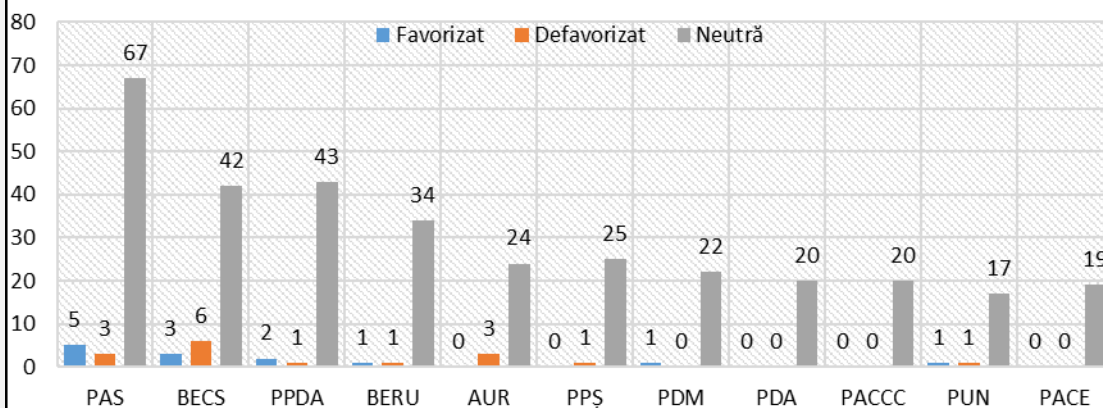


Agora.md

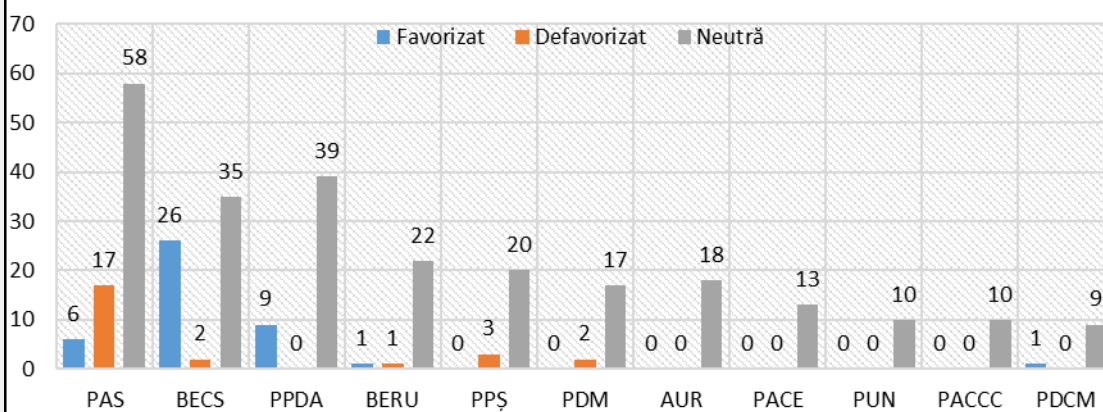




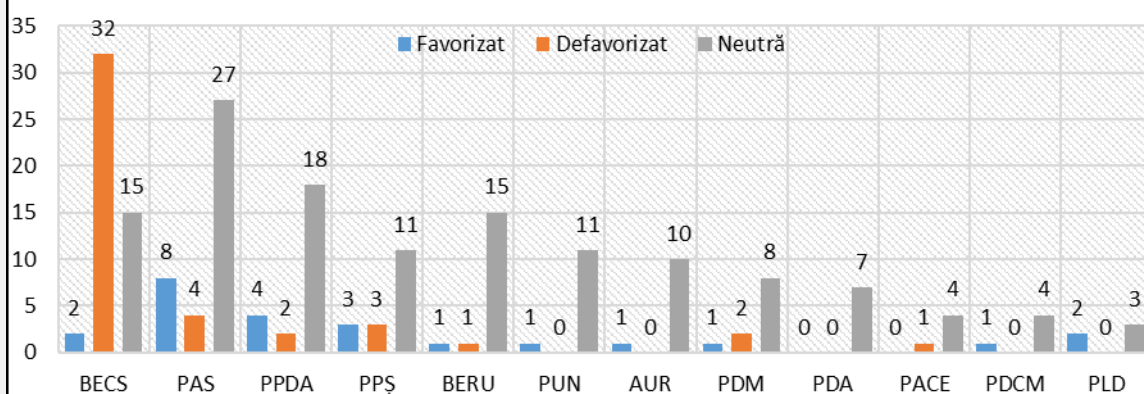
Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali



Contextul prezentării concurenților electorali

