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# Coverage of Corruption in Moldovan Media

Monitoring Report No.1/ **S U M M A R Y**

## I. General

This report presents the results of the monitoring of how 12 media outlets covered corruption issues. This is the first of three planned reports. The monitoring is carried out within the project "Strengthening Investigative Journalist Network in Republic of Moldova and Increasing Their Capacity To Investigate Corruption Cases," implemented by the Association of Independent Press in partnership with the Center for Investigative Journalism (CIJM).

**Subject of monitoring:** media content on corruption in **education, health, social care, agri-food** or **other** areas, with an indication, but without qualitative assessment.

**Period of monitoring:** June – July 2023

### Content of monitoring:

- a) In print and online media – full content;
- b) In broadcast media – main news edition of the day and, where appropriate, cycle or sporadic broadcast programs, between 17.00 and 23.00 – for television; and 17.00–20.00 – for radio.

### Media outlets monitored: selection criteria

- a) Public and private
- b) Local/regional and national
- c) Print, online and broadcast
- d) Renown (audience of media outlets)
- e) Romanian and Russian language
- f) Non-specialized in journalistic investigations and/or coverage of corruption issues

### List of media outlets monitored

1. TV Moldova 1
2. Jurnal TV
3. TV GRT (Comrat)
4. Elita TV (Rezina)
5. ProTV.md
6. Publika.md
7. TV8.md
8. Nokta.md (Comrat)
9. Esp.md (Bălți)

10. Radio Moldova
11. Newspaper *Unghiul* (Ungheni)
12. Newspaper *Observatorul de Nord* (Soroca)

**Monitoring indicators: quantitative and qualitative, according to methodology**  
(*Methodology attached*)

#### **Collection of data**

The data was collected for the entire monitoring period and covers the media outlets monitored taken together and separately, which allows to formulate general recommendations and recommendations for each media outlet monitored.

**Quantitative data:** the score given by the monitor to each content monitored according to the quantitative indicators in the Monitoring Sheet (*attached*) was summed up.

#### **Interpretation of quantitative data:**

The minimum score indicates insufficient coverage of the topics. Quantitative data are analyzed in a particular manner and are assessed/interpreted separately from the score collected by the qualitative indicators.

**Obtaining qualitative data:** the score given to each content according to the numerical values of the qualitative indicators in the Monitoring Sheet is summed. Each content subject to monitoring can score a maximum of 40 points.

#### **Interpretation of qualitative data:**

- Up to 5 points: corruption coverage practically missing
- Up to and including 12 points: corruption coverage is flawed
- Up to and including 19 points: corruption coverage is acceptable
- Up to and including 26 points: corruption coverage is relatively good
- Up to and including 33 points: corruption coverage is good
- Up to and including 40 points: corruption coverage is very good

### **CONCLUSIONS GENERATED BY QUANTITATIVE/QUALITATIVE**

1. The number of contents in the four thematic areas monitored (education, health, social assistance, agri-food sector) is insufficient to ensure a visibility of the phenomenon of corruption that is able to keep this social scourge topical and in the attention of society.
2. The periodicity of the appearance of the topics monitored in the media reveals either a planning that is at odds with reality, or a lack of planning of editorial activity in the segment of coverage of issues of general social interest, which ultimately reveals major lapses in editorial policy.
3. It seems implausible that, in reality, the number of corruption cases in health is 4-5 times higher than the number of corruption cases in education, social assistance and the agri-food sector combined. Rather, the media monitored neglected to cover them, thus contributing to a distorted perception of the real situation in these areas.
4. The apparent preference for news genres in the coverage of corruption, especially petty corruption, in fact indicates a narrow and superficial approach to the problem rather than a complex (as is the problem) and in-depth treatment thereof. It is important that every alleged case of corruption, big or small, is reported, but what matters most is that every case is cleared up. Assumptions fuel suspicions. Evidence breeds certainty. For the harmonization of social and inter-human relations, certainty comes first.

5. Own content makes up slightly more than half of the total number, although naturally it should prevail.
6. The number of main and secondary protagonists per subject monitored is unacceptably low. There are no outliers, where there is at least a relative lack of balance among the protagonists.
7. Some content, although small, is not distributed via social networks. In the age of information technology this is an anachronism. Going to where the content user/recipient is actually located is a better practice for the newsroom than waiting for the content user/recipient (who does not have to) to find the newsroom.
8. Most of the content on the themes monitored is produced in Chişinău and in the closest district to the capital – Ialoveni. Such a situation can be explained, but not justified – the phenomenon of corruption is widespread everywhere. The complete lack of relevant subjects from abroad and, above all, from neighbouring countries, cannot in any way contribute to the possible adoption of best practices in the coverage of corruption.
9. The vast majority of content – 80 percent – falls into the average and below average quality category. Users/beneficiaries of media content deserve to be offered quality journalism.

### **Results per media institution**

A qualitative evaluation of the items (out of a maximum of 40 possible points) found that Jurnal TV (26 points), Radio Moldova (25), TV8.md (24.82), TV Moldova 1 (23.50), Publika.md (23.00), ProTV (22.78), Esp.md (21.17), and Nokta.md (20.00) covered corruption items in the four areas quite well. It also found that the coverage of corruption in these areas is acceptable for *Unghiul* (15.75) and *Observatorul de Nord* (15.00), while Elita TV and TV GRT practically did not air corruption items on education, health, social assistance or in the agri-food sector in prime time.

### **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Coverage of corruption in general and coverage of corruption in the four areas of social interest (education, health, social assistance, agri-food sector) to become a priority topic in the editorial policy of the media monitored.
2. Coverage of corruption in the four areas should be systematic in order to ensure uniform media visibility, which can be achieved most rapidly by careful and precise planning of editorial tasks.
3. Broaden the range of journalistic genres in covering corruption cases, with a clear focus on analytical/investigative ones, as these are the most appropriate in elucidating any case we cover. However, a corruption case, if not solved, remains only a suspicion, a hypothetical case, nothing more.
4. Continue the practice of faithful coverage of foreign subjects, or of coverage with interventions, because it diversifies the media offer and helps to keep the issue topical. Cases of foreign coverage of dubious quality should be avoided. It should also be noted that taking over media content without its own quality content is not the profession of journalism.
5. Items on the topic should be spread/disseminated to as wide an audience as possible, using unconditional and unambiguous use of the channels available for this purpose and, first and foremost, the social networks most popular with users.
6. Broaden the geographical scope of coverage of corruption cases, based on the understanding of at least two assumptions/postulates: a) the lack of media coverage of corruption in a particular region contributes to an ingrained social misperception that corruption is missing in that region, and b) in order to eradicate any case of corruption,

it must first be uncovered and publicly exposed/disclosed. The geographic scope should also include topics at least from neighbouring countries in order to familiarize the public with good practices and to possibly gain useful experience in covering and fighting corruption.

7. There should be particular rigour with regard to the quality of the topics, given the specific nature of the phenomenon of corruption, the coverage of which requires all the precision, accuracy and strength of the evidence.
8. Strengthen professional capacities to ensure thorough documentation, additional skills in dealing with corruption issues and rigorous application of journalistic principles in the production of media content.

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