



mass - media

December 2015



in Moldova

Horizont la nivel
international

Elaborarea
interregională

Remarcabil
din R. Moldova a de
pând cu aprilie 2003,
de "consolidare a si
protecție a martorilor
de trafic de ființe um
scopurile urmărite, OS
neapără în

Who is Against The TV Digitization in The Republic of Moldova?

If the Republic of Moldova had complied with the commitments, undertaken under the Agreement signed within the Regional Radiocommunication Conference at Geneva in 2006, starting from June 17, 2015 the conventional analogical broadcastings would have ceased, passing to digital broadcasting. In fact, over two weeks from the deadline, on July 2, 2015, the Moldovan Parliament adopted only in the first reading the draft amendment to the Broadcasting Code, which sets out the stages of transition from analogue to digital television.

What do we win? What do we lose?

We all heard about the advantages of digitization, the main of them being the access to a much larger number of TV channels, with a high quality of images and sound. In practical terms this enables the consumer to get information from more sources and the radiobroadcasters to expand the coverage and to fight for audience under fair competition conditions.

The most widespread risk is the impossibility of owners of older TVs, without an incorporated DVB-T receiver to receive the digital signal and the need to purchase a set of top boxes for them. Researches show us that 7 of 10 households from Moldova receive the TV signal via antenna, but no study was carried out to reveal the number of Moldovans who still have an Alfa or Rubin TV in 2015, who would need an additional tuner. This is the reason why it is impossible to estimate the costs of a possible state subsidy to provide underprivileged groups with access to television. However, though, even if we did not observed the terms assumed to for implement the reform, the Moldovan officials stated that there will be a 2-3 year transition period, while in the Republic of Moldova it will be possible to receive both the analogical and digital signals.

Who is guilty?

The first stakeholders interested in the transition to the digital television to happen as late as possible are holders of current terrestrial broadcasting licenses. Digitization would deprive them of the advantage of national coverage, ensured by the analogical frequencies they hold or control. The emergence of multiplexes will put them in the same conditions with the televisions, which are now available only to subscribers of cable networks and to owners of satellite antennas. The current

broadcasters with national coverage would lose their leadership (in some cases – even monopolies) on the market, as well as the huge investments made in the network of transmitters and other analogue equipment. It is not a secret that the largest televisions in Moldova are controlled by influential politicians, which largely explains the slow pace of transition. Since appointment of the CCA members is politicized, in the lack of some clear criteria, set by law, of eligibility of channels for inclusion in the multiplex, it is not hard to imagine that selection will be made according to the principle of “in new times still with us”. Being accustomed to play by their own rules, chiefs of the largest televisions are reluctant to accept new players in their club, with whom they should compete fairly for audiences and implicitly for budgets.

Digitization is less dangerous for operators of cable networks and IPTV service providers. The number of channels, which can be broadcasted via a multiplex is limited and represents a “strictly need”. Once a large number of local channels is available to the TV viewer wherever in the country “over-the-air” and free of charge, cable operators will lose an important lever of influence and income - the right of making decisions on whether to include or not some televisions in the grid. The multiplex will make impossible local interventions and will deprive signal distributors to limit the public access to certain information.

Questions without answers

They talk about high costs of accession of televisions to digital networks, since the amounts vary from 20 to 30 thousand euros per month for each channel. We do not know however the basis on which such estimations were made. On one hand, excessive rates will be an obstacle for the channels, which will not afford such expenses and will favor the current media magnates. On the other hand, the purchase, installation and maintenance of terrestrial broadcasting equipment are also expensive, which means that any broadcaster shall provide for in the budget costs related to bringing the signal to the viewer. The unanswered question is whether the state shall cover a part of costs, in the case of multiplexes, so as to provide its citizens with a larger variety of information sources?

Dorin SCOBIOALA

Personal Data vs. Public Interest

The end of May surprised the public with two events that drew attention to personal data protection: suddenly, two institutions that provide data to the public were required by the National Center for Personal Data Protection (NCPDP) to no longer provide these data because they contained personal data. Namely, this refers to the State Registration Chamber (SRC), which used to provide data about the founders of companies, for a fee, and the Central Election Commission (CEC), which on May 30, 2015 announced it suspended the operation of its websites after the CEC had been made subject to an unannounced control by the NCPDP which had taken action on the basis of an alleged fact of illegal processing of personal data.

In the case of SRC, the NCPDP took action after the Government's initiative to provide free access to information about the founders of the companies (first name and last name), to be loaded on government data portal. At first there was just a negative opinion from the NCPDP, which was concerned, inter alia, about deletion and correction of data on the internet, when such data will no longer be reliable and will refer to a past situation. Until now the same data were provided to the public for a fee, not free of charge. The situation developed fulminantly: the NCPDP adopted a decision penalizing the SRC forcing it not to disclose data. The public data will no longer be available even for money.

These events were like a cold shower in the context of the fact that, finally, the public became aware of the issue of how the [Law](#) No. 133 of 08.07.2011 on the protection of personal data was written and interpreted. The idea is that the NCPDP specialists only know that all data must be protected and disclosed with the consent of the person concerned. For them there is no concept of public interest or prioritization of information disclosure against the interest of the person to keep it closed. The press reacted immediately with a [Statement](#), and the NCPDP beat a retreat, beginning to justify and state that journalists' access would not be restricted.

The actions of the NCPDP found no support from other public authorities, which expressed their disapproval, in one form

or another. In particular, the analysis of European law and standards was performed by the Ministry of Justice which, in its [conclusion](#) stated that the normative legal framework did not contain any impediment for publishing the full name of the founders of Moldovan companies – natural persons. In terms of European standards, the Ministry of Justice invokes [Chapter 2](#) of Directive 2009/101/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 September 2009.

The question we raise is what type of personal data can and should be made public. And here the answer should be simple: everything which is of a real public interest (i.e. not a mere curiosity) should be public. If there is a conflict with private interests, both interests should be weighed and priority should be given to the one with the greatest weight in terms of impact and needs of the society. This has been applied in domestic law of the Republic of Moldova since 2000, when the Law on Access to Information was passed, and since 2010, when the Law on freedom of expression was passed. Both laws address the issue of personal information and regulate the issue based on what is the reasonable and common sense public interest.

It is logical and reasonable that not all information about the person is considered "personal" in light of the rules restricting its use: e.g. data from the ID card – full name, place of birth, father's name and the IDNP. Living in the society without these data is impossible, so it is not an attribute of the person, but of the society. The rest of the information reported to them will be confidential depending on the content, but not absolutely. Thus, the general law should establish some basic principles of confidentiality and publicity. The particular issues, i.e. of the content, should be regulated by special laws and not by general law. Accordingly, electoral matters should be regulated by the Election Code, those related to healthcare, education, industry – by specialized laws etc. Or, when these special laws are approved, public importance or the delicacy of the content of information should be weighed specifically, taking into account the general principles of law, and this assessment should be closer to the idea of public interest, as it is made in the light of a specific situation.

Olivia PIRTAC

Journalism of Drones: Legal Aspects

Flight safety

There are no aviation security regulations specific to operation of drones in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, some representatives of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) consider that all civil aviation rules available for the board crew are also applicable to these drones. At the same time, others consider that these conditions cannot be applicable to drones as long as the legislation does not provide expressly the rules on their use.

At present, cases when flight authorisation for civil drones is required or issued are not known. No cases of persons penalized for the use of these devices are known either.

A draft Government Decision regulating this area is currently being prepared. The draft regulation has not been proposed to public debates yet, but taking into account the administrative practice and linguistic particularities, it is not difficult to imagine where the authors will inspire themselves from.

However, we hope that national authorities will consider the categories of operations proposed by the European Aviation Safety Agency EASA. Thus, the joinder of the activity of journalistic drones with the activity of civil aircraft with a board crew will impose an excessive task to journalists. Moreover, imposing some registration administrative procedures, ship and pilot certification and similar flights authorisation to other categories of civil aircraft may discourage the journalists from using drones in their investigations.

Liability

As mentioned above, the use of drones, in general and by journalists in particular is not yet legally regulated. However, the use of drones may have legal consequences under the already existing general legislation.

[1] Under Article 64, par. 2 of Criminal Code a conventional unit equals 20 MDL.



Pecuniary damage and injuries to human life and health

In case of an accident the operator of the drone may be subject to criminal and civil liability for the injuries he caused.

For average or gross injury to health caused by negligence, Article 157 of the Criminal Code prescribes an alternative sanction by a fine up to 300¹ conventional units or by unpaid work over community service from 180 to 240 hours or imprisonment up to 2 years. The court shall establish the punishment depending on specific circumstances of the case.

If the accident caused the death of the victim, Article 149 of Criminal Code provides for a punishment up to 3 years of imprisonment and a punishment from 2 to 6 years in case of 2 or more deaths.

In addition to criminal punishment, the operator of the drone shall be held liable under civil legislation as well, for the pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage cause to injured persons.

If the accident caused pecuniary damage, the operator of the drone shall be held liable under law of torts.

In case of damages, the operator of the drone can ensure his civil liability for damages that may arise from the operation of

the drone, to avoid or reduce pecuniary damage. As this type of insurance is not mandatory, there is no official methodology for measuring the risks and the insurance premium. However, the insurance companies, upon request can perform these calculations and propose personalized policies of optional civil liability insurance.

The amount of insurance premium shall depend to a significant extent on ensured risk categories and the amount of compensation covered by insurance² to be paid by the insurer at the time the insurance event.

Protection of privacy

For disclosure of privacy information by means of mass-media, Article 177 of Criminal Code provides punishment in the form of a fine from 200 to 500 conventional units or deprivation of rights to hold certain positions or to perform some activities for up to 1 year, or unpaid community service work from 180 to 240 hours, with a fine imposed to the legal entities from 1000 to 2000 conventional units.

In this case, the offender shall recover the pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage caused to injured party following the commitment of the crime.

In addition to criminal issues, the person alleging that his/her right to privacy has been violated can file a civil action under the Law on freedom of expression against the journalist and the media institution. In this case the interested person shall lodge a prior notification to the author (or institution that published the information) specifying the information that violated his right to privacy and the circumstances that prove the violation of this right.

Protection of personal data

The law on protection of personal data defines the personal data as "any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (subject to personal data). The identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identification number or to one or more factors specific to his or her physical, physiological, mental, economic, cultural or social identity".

The law also describes special categories of personal data as "data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, reli-

gious or philosophical beliefs, membership of a particular social group, data on health and sexual life, on criminal convictions, procedural coercive measures or offence sanctions".

At the same time, processing of personal data shall mean any operation or set of operations, which is performed upon personal data, whether or not by automatic means, such as collection, recording, organisation, storage, adaptation or alteration, retrieval, consultation, use, disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available, alignment or combination, blocking, erasure or destruction.

Restrictions provided by law shall not be applied if personal data are processed for journalistic, artistic or literary purposes only, if this processing concerns data that have been made public, voluntarily and manifestly by the subject of personal data or to data closely linked to the quality of public person of the subject of personal data or to the public character of the actions in which he/she is involved, according to conditions of the Law on freedom of expression.

However, the journalist or the media institution using a drone shall notify the National Centre for Personal Data Protection and register himself as operator of personal data.

In case of violation of processing and storage of personal data rules, the offender can be held liable under Contravention Code. Thus, Article 741 of Contravention Code provides fines from 150 to 500 conventional units and the prohibition to carry out a particular activity from 3 months to 1 year, depending on the nature and the seriousness of the violation.

We shall conclude that at the national law on flights operation and security field is permissive as there are no rules or special restrictions for using drones. The lack of strict administrative procedures of authorisation of flights favours the use of drones, including for journalistic purposes.

However, the operators must act with the greatest caution to prevent risks on human life, health and goods of other persons, to avoid collection and dissemination of personal data unless the situation and the journalistic interest justify it. Or, as noted earlier, these actions can entail civil, contravention or criminal liability of the journalist and of the media institution.

Andrei BIVOL

[2] This can be unlimited or limited to a certain level.

Usurped Journalism: The Common Sense Without Audience in Moldova

On Friday, certain articles were issued in the mass media, clearly showing how much the „maintenance” of an analyst who serves the interests of a certain political party costs - 384 787 MDL (17063 Euro). For this amount, a certain “analyst” played with the public opinion for quite a while, spread lies and even found arguments to back them up – as if he generated value judgments, which would help the viewer better understand the socio-political phenomena undermining the society.

“We pay „analysts”. Where’s the harm in that?”

The “analyst” paid with 384 787 MDL was serving the interests of the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), and the accounting document posted on the Internet (which is evidence in a judicial case) reveals the names of certain media institutions sponsored by the same party. It seems though that PLDM is not the leader when it comes to subordinating the mass media. On October 17, “ziarunational.md” published a declaration of Marian Lupu - the leader of the Democratic Party (PD), where he admitted that PD “has enough analysts” who can appear on cameras “and comment on various topics”. And he is wondering: “Where’s the harm in that? Everybody has analysts!” Other “troubadours” with expressive faces are included in this list. Their role is to pass the ball to the mercenaries dubbed “political analysts”. Usually, these are employed in different editorial offices as journalists, editors, producers or show moderators.

“Prowlers” and “lice” have their part to play

There is one more category (but not the least) of [shoeblocks](#) who eat from the parties’ hand - the vassal bloggers. The parties call them “prowlers”. They make online manipulation possible. Their mission is to spread gossips, to create expectations, commotion on the Internet. Sometimes they are sent some documents to post on their blogs, as if obtaining them is the result of their work. Bloggers “maintenance” does not cost much. Some of them are satisfied with a tablet, others with a phone, with a scholarship to study abroad or a voucher for a trip to the sea. We can’t talk about principles here.

The forth category are nicked the “lice” - because there is a lot of them. Usually they are the members of the youth organizations of the parties. Their role is to contest every negative statement about the party, published on the Internet. These people infiltrate into friends lists of public persons on social networks, keep watch over and report about the information posted and when a post is about

the party, they react and defend it. Their reactions are most of the times rough and vulgar. They want the leaders to hear about their feat, if possible, because their remuneration and, maybe, the progress up the ladder, from “lice” to “prowlers”, depends on it.

In critical circumstances, in order to send a strong message, with an immediate impact and effect, the parties turn to so-called “VIP- analysts”. These are surnamed “international political analysts” and they can be from USA, Russia or Romania. Some of them, compromised in other countries, have been “imported” to Moldova, warts and all. They were showered, make up applied on their faces and put in front of the cameras. Their messages aim at manipulating the elite. Those who remained abroad, are seldom called in, not because of the costs (though it can be a reason), but avoid compromising their image involving them in insignificant and daily routine topics. That is why it is very difficult (if you do not keep an eye on political changes) to separate the ones from abroad who address Moldova’s realities on their own account.

Solutions

Generally, the Moldovan journalism and media have been usurped. The population is almost exclusively given false information, and the journalists who remained loyal to their principles either work “for export” (in the best case) or changed their profession, or live in poverty. There could be a solution. The problem is that in Moldova, a journalist can be everyone with an identity card that says “press”. This type of document is not issued by a competent authority - I do not mean a state institution. God forbid! In Germany, for example, a journalist’s identity card is issued by the journalists’ trade union. The same union is entitled to withdraw the identity card if the journalist gave up his professional freedom. We do not have such a trade union. Actually, we do. More than one. I do not mean formal institutions. This way anyone can be a journalist.

There is a solution for media institutions, as well: the press patronage should undertake the principles which underlie true journalism. Only in this case, we will be able to say that we have an honest media business, to say that in Moldova the media is a business, too, which sells, because the audience brings advertising, money. But the business cannot and is not allowed to eliminate journalism ethics. Only when the patronage identifies itself with the politics and comes to dictate according to the interests of a specific group, we deal with the usurpation of journalism.

Vitalie CALUGAREANU

Communication in Moldovan Public Institutions - a Complex, but Little Known Profession

What happens behind the curtains in our public institutions is very little known. Very often, in order to not create panic among the people or to cover their own blunders, the state institutions send messages with a general content, without details, containing diplomatic quotations, which leave journalists, civil society and last but not the least, the population dissatisfied. Frequent are cases when public institutions directors make unprepared statements, uncoordinated with communication experts, because they are convinced they know what to say better than press service employees do. The lack of message cohesion leads to reduction of population confidence in the public institutions and to panic among the people, who are already in a dramatic situation. This is why the communicator's role is undisputable.

Communication should be professional, not improvised

Unfortunately, there is a large gap between theory and practice. Though the legislation is based on western models, the state institutions messages are not always of good quality. Often, not even their colleagues trust the communicators' professionalism - officials from different departments or even the Minister, write press releases, launch promotion campaigns or organize broadcast participation on their own, without consulting the communication expert.

Communicators' difficulties

In the Republic of Moldova, the communicators are perceived, on one hand, as image-makers of the institutions they work in, and on the other hand, as representatives of governing parties because the positions of Government members are divided based on political criteria. For instance, until recently, a ministry had as director of the Press service, the head of communication of the party the minister was in. Moreover, the working conditions of many communicators are deplorable. Most of them do not have elementary conditions to do their work – lack of, or obsolete and insufficient technical equipment. They work overtime or in weekends without being paid extra hours. In addition to all of that, people have small salaries fact that leads to a continuous migration towards better-paid fields. Thus, we are assisting a deprofessionalisation of the public function and it raises concerns.

Government communication in the area

Other governments face similar problems. These problems are discussed and solutions are sought within a professional public sector communicators' forum - SEECOM, created three years ago in Budva (Montenegro). It brings together communicators from Governments of 13 countries from South-East Europe, including the Republic of Moldova. It was proved that our country has good examples of communication with the public as well - in the last few years all ministries have created their own communication platforms on social networks, where they can inform about events organized and collect comments.

The example of Western countries

In Western European countries a legal framework has been developed which regulates the communicator's role, encourages communication importance and direct participation of people. Moldova can do that, as well. For instance, in Italy, territorial offices were opened. In France, the communication of authorities with population improved, as well. Local structures communicate with each other and make decisions immediately without expecting messages from the central administration. In Canada there is a Forum of communicators from government institution, which offers them both professional and personal support. The Forum encourages good practices and preparation of young generation of communicators.

Conclusions

A brief situation analysis, leads us to interesting conclusions. The profession of communicator, especially of the communicator in a public institution is a complex one and needs extended knowledge, a strong ability of synthesis, analytical thinking, special ability to quickly and efficiently respond to certain events, team work, a lot of patience and especially impeccable ethics. Citizens lost their confidence in most of institutions, especially in state institutions. This is why, in the following years, it is very important, that those who work as public officials and those who offer them visibility and credibility (the communicators), intensively work together in order to substantially change the public institutions role, activity and image in the people's eyes.

Elena MOLDOVEANU

Tell Me Who Is Your Boss and I Will Tell You Who You Are!

A few weeks ago, while in Bucharest, I had the opportunity to skim several studies on the present and the future of the local printed media written by some famous authors that are familiar with this phenomenon - Petrisor Obaie, Liviu Alexa, Alex Mihaileanu, and after reading them I came to the following conclusion: even if the realities differ a lot (Romania is a full member of the European Union and the Republic of Moldova continues "to beat its head against one wall or another"), when it comes to the present and the future of the local media the similarities are striking. Why? For we all hatched from the communism egg and today many people are still living in the nets of past. But in this review, we will try to say (not hearsay, but speak based on the experiences achieved during 18 years, since "**Observatorul de Nord**" appeared) something about those who, in one way or another, influence the process of conception, birth, spread and - God forbid! - death of a newspaper: **the owner, the journalist, the authorities** (in many cases) and **the reader**.

The ideal **OWNER** should be the one who brings the money, but who does not influence the creative process. In our press, however, the opposite often happens - the one registered in documents as "master" believes that journalists should generate money, and his ultimate goal is then to bless them and boast in front of his business colleagues about being a kind of Berlusconi of Soroca (Orhei, Floresti, Balti, Comrat...). I have known a "boss" from Soroca who did not know the alphabet and did not have basic knowledge, but who always set himself up in... columnist and opinion maker. The materials written by him and read, let's say, by actors Anatol Durbala or Petru Oistric could become true masterpieces of humor. Of course, his worthless newspaper went off in a few months, but this time was enough to pollute the not so clean information space. Or, if to open a pharmacy the owner needs a bunch of certificates and permissions, to become the owner of a newspaper someone needs some money, some people who can write and as many people as possible to deceive and manipulate.

The **JOURNALIST** should, (although he often cannot or does not want) be the backbone of a newspaper. A good journalist can influence the employer, if the latter goes off the rails and does not mind his own business. Unfortunately, in Moldova is often the opposite; therefore we have every right to paraphrase the well-known folk wisdom - "tell me who your employer is and I'll tell you who you are." On the other hand, the quality of journalists who recently graduate the respective departments, is

not quite brilliant, and that is being kind. I personally sought a reporter during eight years (!), from dozens and dozens of students come to practice, and only after so long I "found" just two reporters that whom I am not ashamed of in front of others - Tatiana Zabolica and Vadim Sterbate. What does this deficit tells us about? The fact that a good journalist is "nature creation" or God creation rather than good university graduate, who can do wonders if taught by brilliant teachers.

The **AUTHORITIES** may not, normally, have media outlets, but are obliged therewith to ensure transparency in their activity. For many people, complying with these rules is almost impossible. Official of all ranks are used to be boasted and worshiped, the and find it difficult to give up the toy named "newspaper". The recent remark about the privatization of press is not a coincidence, since the privatization is de jure - not de facto. Not for any other reason, but in the districts where the heads were more cunning, the newspapers have only changed the form, not the content. Otherwise, it would be best if local papers, not all together, but those with higher circulation and distribution area, edited a kind of Official Gazette of the district, where they would publish all the decisions made by the council, but many presidents feel less like spreading official material - they need image polishing and praise every day, 24/7.

The **READER** is perhaps the most important link in this chain, but the size and especially the quality of readers is continuously decreasing. It is enough to do a review of newspaper editions to see the decreasing trend and that readers prefer other sources of information than newspapers. An analysis done by our editorial staff shows that the share of young and middle-aged readers who subscribe to or buy a newspaper is insignificant: only 10-15 percent of the working population reads newspapers, the lion's share of subscriptions, for example, accruing to retirees. No subscription means no possibility for a newspaper to exist.

IN CONCLUSION: the owners of newspapers and the journalists must urgently solve two very important tasks: first - to focus on the quality of the materials published and on the veracity of the information provided to the reader and second - to keep up with life and to "westernize" as urgent as possible their media. This is a prerequisite to survive in a century of great technical and informational changes.

Victor COBASNEANU

The Press – Catalyst of The Government Reshuffles?

Recently, Ziarul de Garda published an article about the fortunes, companies and interests of Vitalie Iurcu, former director of Moldtelecom, who is now Deputy Minister of Economy. Vitalie Iurcu, who headed a state enterprise only 5 years, managed to become impressively rich. At the moment he lives in a luxury house, drives a Porche Cayenne and owns several expensive land lots in Chisinau, but through intermediaries, is involved in the business of several companies.

We remind that before the publication of this article, the reporter of ZdG, Victor Mosneag, worked a lot, even in terms of the Code of Conduct. Primarily, he sent a request for information to Moldtelecom, long time ago, in April, after the Easter holidays, requesting for public information, especially about money spent by Moldtelecom state enterprise. The answer that came later was sober like a strict fasting day. We were told that we cannot obtain copies of some official documents of Moldtelecom.

I reread one Article 4 of the Law on Access to Information, which provides for that: "Everybody is entitled to seek, to receive and to make known the official information" and we continued to work. The article "Five years at Moldtelecom = luxury house and car, land lots of millions and a nephew who makes all the money" published on September 10, according to readers opinions was a very good one. Tens of thousands of online readers, thousands of shares on social networking sites, thousands of readers of the printed version of Ziarul de Garda, as well as readers of lots of other media from the Republic of Moldova took-over the subject from www.zdg.md. The comments rained heavily and virtually all confirmed importance of subject, as well as the quality of the article, the good reasoning of the facts.

How the Deputy Minister reacted to this article? How the Minister to whom he reports reacted? And the Government that broke this Minister down? The NAC? The NIC? A common reaction: a joint silence of ignoring the press disclosures.

On September 12, 2015, two days after publication of this article the entire Government resigned. Voluntarily. Not the Moldovan

Government, but the Egyptian one. What do these Governments have in common? One thing - they were criticized in the press for corruption. In Egypt, the press pressure on corrupt officials is more functional.

On September 15, 2015, due to the media print, one more Government fell. This time, the Prime Minister of Australia, a state with high indices of the quality of life, had to resign due to the media criticism. No, the Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbot, did not resign because of a stolen billion. The last wave of critics was rightfully hilarious, the Prime Minister was held up to ridicule because during a visit to Tasmania, at a farm, Tony Abbot took an onion and ate it with peel. Internet users considered it is a gesture of populism and ignorance. During his last press conference, Abbot said: "If you want better coverage, be a better government!"

A few months ago, on July 26, 2015, Baron Joh Sewel, British politician, university lecturer, member of the House of Lords, had to resign after a newspaper published some images of his private life - he consumes drugs. He immediately resigned. His political career, which successfully started in 1974, ended in an instant. Two days after his resignation, the British edition of The Guardian published the article "Press pressure works: Sewel resigns amid a newspaper feeding frenzy". In the Republic of Moldova, a country with a high level of corruption, and a high level of control over the press, the journalistic investigations and revealing corrupt persons are a luxury. However, the press weekly publishes enquiries of reporters who prove with figures and facts cases of corruption in the Government, ministries, agencies, mayor's offices, courts, prosecutor's offices, police stations.

The reaction of the Government, the Parliament, the General Prosecutor's Office, the NAC, the NIC is very weak and is limited only to two aspects: they either pretend to react, or jointly decide to keep silent.

Alina RADU

Saying Goodbye to Culture Magazines

We are on the last place among European countries regarding public expenses in the culture field. Statistics show us the real situation: in the Republic of Moldova the budget for culture represents 0.08 % of GDP, i.e. less than one tenth of one percentage, while per capita expenses for culture from the state budget amounts to less than 8 euros per year. In such economic, social and political atmosphere, the products of written culture have no chance to keep afloat. Every print is very expensive, especially after the explosion of prices caused by inflation and numerous political crises. On the other hand, people's incomes are ridiculous. It is logical to say that in a depopulated, depressed, decultured country it is impossible to have cultural journals. However, despite everything, we still have cultural publications. We can buy them, we can subscribe to them, some of them are free, they breathe, circulate, exist!

As it is widely known, the first places in the Republic of Moldova culture press belong to magazines like "Contrafort" and "Sud-Est Cultural". These represent a center of gravity for our cultural live. Both established after the Soviet Union collapse – "Sud-Estul Cultural" in 1990 and "Contrafort" in 1994 - these publications are very important for the Republic of Moldova post-communist culture. The intellectual emancipation movement in our country, the Basarabian society Europeanization, had these magazines as landmarks, publications issued regularly due to the support provided by the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR) from Bucharest.

In 2012, the Romanian Cultural Institute was transferred from the Presidency authority to the Romanian Senate, fact that made the former president of ICR, Horia Roman Patapievici, announce the collective resignation of his team. In the same year of 2012, when Andrei Marga was elected president of ICR, the funding of six cultural publications from Moldova like "Contrafort", "Sud-Est Cultural", "Semn", "Destin Romanesc", "Clipa" and "Limba Română" was discontinued. This is why, in 2013 on the territory between Nistru and Prut, cultural journals were not issued anymore, except for "Literatura și Artă",

supported by the Department for Romanians Everywhere under the Romanian Government.

"The Republic of Moldova literary life, in my opinion, is wilting. Especially in the last year, since the cultural journals funded by ICR are not issued anymore. Their support has been abusively discontinued without a logical explanation from Marga administration - the one with so many scandalous and blunt initiatives, that disturbed the literary world on both banks of Prut river", Vasile Girneț, "Contrafort" director was writing in 2013, answering the questions of an inquiry on the Republic of Moldova cultural press. One of the most important and long - lasting cultural journals from the Republic of Moldova, "Limba Romana", will soon mark its 25 years of existence. It is an opportunity to celebrate, but the members of the editorial team are very sad, because they did not receive their salaries for more than two years.

In 2005, "Punkt" journal appeared. The independent publication broke all the records in the number of readers. It had a circulation of 4000 copies. "But we were forced to stop issuing the journal, due to financial problems. Since 2014 the journal is not issued. We plan to apply to the Creative Europe Program of the European Union and we hope to obtain funding for "Punkt", starting next year", states Angela Brașoveanu, the publication director.

Unfortunately, some of the Moldovan cultural journals cannot be revived anymore. Journals like "Semn", "Clipa", "Stare de urgență" were killed. These publications gathered around them the artistic production and the critical spirit of the generation 2000. Finally, a painful confession: not even yours truly has a place in the Moldovan cultural press. The page dedicated to culture from Jurnal de Chisinau was closed (Oh, the financial crisis!). The author of the words above was dismissed. There is nothing more to add.

Irina NECHIT

“Places. People. Stories” or... a *Different* Book

In an era of copy-paste or google journalism, the report book of Liliana Nicolae “Places. People. Stories” comes to somehow rehabilitate what is called classical journalism. The author tries, even if indirectly, to tell us that the authentic journalism is not the one done by telephone, Internet or by collecting statements via Facebook. The genuine journalism means being among people, talking to them face-to-face, listening to them, telling them stories and sometimes crying next to them. In other words, the real journalism by no means ends at the door of the Parliament, Presidency or headquarters of political parties.

Liliana Nicolae offers us a book with...stories. They are 45 in number, written with care in the last ten years. Most of them were published in Dilema Veche (The Old Dilemma), Elle magazine or adapted in writing based on the audio version broadcast by Radio Romania Actualitati. Even if they are 45 in number, they can be compared with chapters of a single novel. The reports flow one from the other and blend in a single story. A story of Romania. From the very start...

Cited from the author’s note: “Reports from the book surprise places and people in a constantly changing and full of discrepancies Romania. A country that is growing slowly, with huge efforts. A country sometimes cheerful, sometimes sad. With ordinary people but with special stories. Sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrible”.

What does a report mean?

By her reports, Liliana Nicolae simply records the things and people around us. Things and people that some of us, or most of us would overlook. Her reports simply discover the sensational in simple, often trivial, but painful real things. I risk to be judged by all people, but the reports of Liliana Nicolae come to confirm us that we do not have a single Romania, but many

„romanas”, where each character lives his story in a “country” of himself.

The author makes a radiography of the genuine Romanian society, not of the one of Cotroceni or Senate, from the DSP or NLP’s door. But of a society without NAD or RIS, without Gigi Becali or Victor Ponta. Of a society without (much) politics, but with many people, ordinary people that live their own joys and problems.

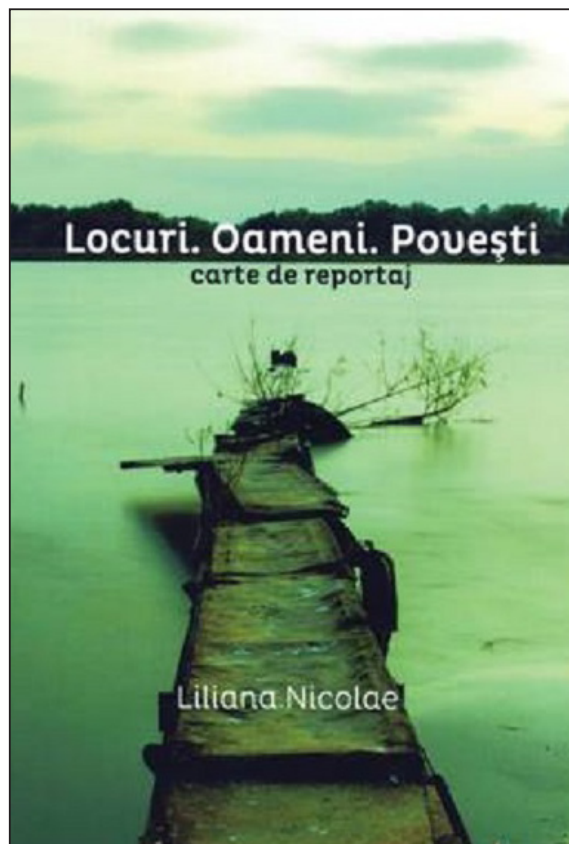
“Places. People. Stories” is the one I would like to write by myself. Thus, as someone was saying, the most interesting books are those you feel sorry for not writing them yourself, after you read them.

A country without makeup... with beautiful people and real stories

“Places. People. Stories” is a book located at the border between imaginary and reality, which makes you (re)live both the actors and author’s feelings.

And this magic of Liliana Nicolae has really worked. Thus, she made me keep the route step along with Mrs Pagu with her 86 years old, to explore the Delta without being there at least once, to steer the ship of

Jean Trofimov, to cry next to the doctor Paul Marinescu and his “16 seropositive children”, to become optimistic again after Paul Ciobanel’s lesson, to walk over Sighisoara Citadel next to the drummer Dorin Stanciu, to pray by signs next to father Constantin Onu, to learn about the most spectacular theft of works of art from Romania, to let myself persuaded by the “lawyer Silvia Stoicu Marinescu” and “Mrs. Gabriela Vieru” about the fact that the old age is just a period of life and is as beautiful as the other periods, or ...die (imaginary!) next to “Mr. Cimpeanu”.



It is a complex book, which comprises history, action, love, life, death, youthfulness, old age, God and people. Many people next to their real stories. It is a book about a Romania without makeup, just like it is.

If I had to make a top of the most 5 beautiful books I ever read, Liliana Nicolae's book would certainly be among them. Because "Places. People. Stories" is not a book, it is a story, in fact, stories written in a very simple and beautiful manner, even if sometimes the classical stories do not have a happy end.

Stories that inspire us

The actions of Liliana Nicolae's reports cover the entire territory of Romania. They draw villages and towns like Sihisoara, Chisinau, Cuca Macaii, Rimnicu Vilcea or Bucharest. The author is not afraid to approach the "taboo" subjects about which the most "mass-media" institutions would not risk to write, because they do not "sell" (would the press managers say): AIDS patients, victims of collectivization in Communism period; homeless; champions, in fact, worldwide championships at

parade; drummers of the citadel; or persons with Down syndrome. She, the author, seeks people in the European capital, Brussels, which in the heart of the Europe can be find only..." in grilled minced meat rolls and beer pubs".

I think that Liliana Nicolae resuscitated the report and made it sellable again... at least for me and for other tens, hundreds and thousands readers.

And, yes, before I forget... the author's manner of writing. Just a few words: it captures you and you risk losing the sense of time once you take the book in your hands.

"Places. People. Stories" is a book that inspires. It determined me to make sport. To run. In the mornings. Just like Mrs. Pagu. But... not now. In Spring. Until that moment, I recommend you a beautiful book, which you can read and story to big and little children, until the weather gets warmer...

... and silence.

Victor GOTISAN

Pictures from the launch of Liliana Nicolae's book "Places. People. Stories" ("Locuri. Oameni. Povești") at a bookstore Centru in Chisinau.



Study: Measuring Perceptions of Sociopolitical News by The Media Audience in The Republic of Moldova

Based on two researches (national opinion poll and focus groups), produced by the Chisinau Institute of Marketing and Polls IMAS-INC, experts Tamara Caraus (Moldova) and Ivan Godarsky (Slovakia) analyzed what media sources are preferred by Moldovan citizens, the perception of the degree of information and manipulation and the preferences of domestic media versus foreign media. The study “Measuring perceptions of sociopolitical news by the media audience in The Republic of Moldova” was launched by the IJC in December 2015. The extract we are publishing below reproduces the authors’ conclusions and recommendations.

CONCLUSION

Corroboration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The qualitative data reflect only the opinions of the participants at the focus groups and cannot be directly extrapolated to the entire population of the Republic of Moldova; however, the data can be interpreted as trends that require confirmation by a quantitative study. Thus, the corroboration of data obtained from focus group discussions with data obtained from the national survey is necessary for a legitimate interpretation of the opinions of participants as representative of the population as a whole. This comparison shows that most of the findings in the qualitative research are confirmed by quantitative data; however, there are several inconsistencies concerning mainly the contradiction between the critical perception of media and critical mindset displayed by the participants in the focus groups and the survey respondents’ considerable trust (46.3 %) in one type of media (TV). The examination of these inconsistencies highlights new, interesting findings about the patterns of media consumption in the Republic of Moldova.

Confirmation of qualitative data by quantitative research

- Both for the participants at focus groups and for the participants in the national survey, television is the most important source of socio-political information followed by online media/Internet/websites.
- In both studies, different sources of information have their specific publics: Television is preferred especially by people of over 45 while working youth with higher educations in urban areas inform themselves online.
- In both studies these media types were consulted on a daily basis as socio-political sources. In all, 61% of respondents in the national survey spent 1–2 hours per day for this purpose, and 14% spent 3 hours or more per day. The participants at focus groups agreed that they consulted several sources in order to get a more correct view of what is really happening. The proportion of respondents who spent less than an hour was similar to the proportion of the focus group participants who said they consulted mainly one source they trusted. Obviously, this symmetry might not be valid in all situations, and the possibility that 3 or more hours could be allocated for consulting a single source of socio-political information the media consumer trusts cannot be excluded.
- Both the respondents in the national survey and the participants in the focus groups expressed confusion regarding the origin of mass media institutions. For the participants in focus groups, “foreign media” had different meanings. For some of them, foreign media is media from other countries while for others, foreign is mass media either local or geographically more distant that reports reality in the Republic of Moldova subjectively. According to the national survey, many respondents believed that even TV channels in the Republic of Moldova with large audiences are foreign or are cooperating with a foreign media institution.
- The quantitative data confirm and validate the qualitative data in terms of the perception of information level: 10% of participants in the survey considered themselves very informed, and 40% in the perceived information category were quite satisfied. The feeling that people had regarding their degree of information varied and depended on the respondents’ level of education and urbanization: People with higher education and a higher level of urbanization considered themselves to be very informed (17%) or quite well informed (53%) compared to people with a lower level of education and urbanization. In the focus groups as well, the participants with higher levels of education and urban-

ization expressed a critical attitude as media consumers and a higher degree of media literacy than people from rural areas with lower levels of education.

- The corroboration of qualitative by quantitative data confirms that the preferences of the participants at focus groups regarding local media and foreign media are representative trends for the entire population of the Republic of Moldova. Citizens take information mainly from Moldovan mass media followed by sources from Russian media (36 %) and Romanian media (14%). EU and US media were followed by only a few participants in the focus group discussions and by 2% of respondents in the survey.
- The role and functions of the media were similarly perceived by the participants in the survey and in the focus groups. Thus, the prime role of the media is to present all events that are taking place, to be a watchdog, to educate and to explain the world around us. The proportion of the persons considering that mass media does not perform these role and functions properly was higher among participants in the focus groups.

Inconsistencies between qualitative and quantitative data

The main inconsistency between the data provided by the quantitative research and the data provided by the qualitative research concerns the trust in the Russian media expressed by 46.3% of respondents to the survey and the critical mindset and the ability to detect propaganda in mass media messages expressed by the majority of focus group participants. These inconsistencies are rather apparent and an analysis reveals and confirms a rather coherent pattern of media consumption in Moldova. Two aspects have to be clarified in this context.

Firstly, the inconsistency, if one exists, is also an inconsistency in the results of the survey. In all, 70% of the respondents stated that media manipulates or uses propaganda (41% Yes; 29% Sometimes), a figure that includes at least some of the 46.3% who expressed trust in Russian media. Additionally, a more specific contradiction is revealed when comparing the country assessments in terms of media manipulation. From this angle, Russian media appear to be the second most manipulative as declared by 60% of respondents (interestingly, the most manipulative was considered to be Moldovan media which, however, contain various news programs in Russian or produced in Russia). Secondly, the very fact of noticing a certain contradiction is conditioned by an assumption of the analyst/interpreter that one cannot concomitantly have a critical mindset and trust the Russian media. The fact that in recent years and following the dramatic developments of 2014—the political crisis in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, the Western sanctions imposed on

Russia, and the armed conflict in Ukraine's east—Russian media make more use of manipulation and propaganda is a fact described and analysed by media experts and researchers (see the introduction to this report). Under these conditions, a critical mindset and an awareness of propaganda seem less compatible with trust in Russian media which is why an analysis of this inconsistency is necessary.

Therefore, what are the explanations for this (apparent) inconsistency? First, it shows the specificity of the focus group discussion as a method. The participants in focus group sessions interacted in a way that is crucial for this type of research. As mentioned before, the participants frequently used expressions such as “As my colleague said,” “as he affirmed,” “I agree with,” “The same here,” “Me too/I also,” and other similar expressions. Most of these affirmations concerned the way in which a critical attitude towards media was expressed. The participants implicitly expressed a general acceptance and a tacit consensus that it is good to be critical of mass media, to display a critical attitude in the perception of media content and to have skills to critically analyze media. Obviously, some participants in the focus groups were more critical than others, so they played a dominant role in shaping the discussion (for the conditions for creating a critical media consumer in the Republic of Moldova, see the following analysis). This interaction provided a new level of media consumption for 100 minutes (the duration of a focus group discussion) that does not necessarily correspond to the real picture of the participants as media consumers. Indeed, one central theme in the current criticism of focus group research is that participants say one thing and do another. This problem is not unique to focus groups and also arises in survey research; however, the interaction of participants during the focus group session is important as a research finding because it reveals the participants' perception of the “ideal” behavior of a media consumer, that is, a critical media consumer.

Secondly, being a critical media consumer in the Republic of Moldova (but probably not only in Moldova) is a rather demanding activity, so the conditions for creating a critical attitude towards mass media have to be specified. One condition can be called a structural one: A critical mindset and attitude are, at least partially, shaped and determined by the structure and landscape of Moldovan mass media. Since the beginnings of media in Moldova, that is, since the creation of the Republic of Moldova as a state, it was structurally impossible for unified national mass media to create a single community. Divided between Romanian-oriented and Moldovan-oriented mass media in the 1990s and with the significant presence of Russian media in the landscape, mass media in Moldova offered a plurality of messages and points of view but as a general picture and not as a feature of the same media outlet. The possibility of choosing one type of mass media or another had the potential to generate the critical awareness that a media source offers only the

partial truth. So, citizens looking for a more correct picture of reality had to scrutinize a plurality of media outlets. The structural impossibility of having the truth from one media source has increased with the Internet/online media. Thus, it could be said that critical Moldovan media consumers learned to evaluate media messages based on their own experiences and skills. They learned how to discover the parts of the story that are not being told and how to recognize bias, spin or misinformation.

Concomitantly, demands to be critical come from mass media and journalists themselves. As the participants in the focus groups observed, often journalists from a media outlet/TV channel critique the work of journalists from another media outlet, claiming that they manipulate by promoting the interests of one politician or another. This makes the work of a critical media consumer rather demanding and time consuming. Both qualitative and quantitative data show that some respondents/participants spend 2–3 hours daily scrutinizing the whole media landscape in order to find out what is really happening from the bits of truth provided by different sources. Nevertheless, 4.7% of respondents to the survey felt misinformed and 43% considered themselves poorly informed in spite of the plurality of media sources. In addition, some of the participants in the focus groups affirmed that the diversity of media and plurality of (media) voices created a sensation of anomy (and even cacophony). Furthermore, not all media consumers are able to spend the time and effort needed for achieving and exercising critical thinking in consuming mass media, including socio-political news. Even the more critically oriented consumers are caught between a critical mindset and the temptation to embrace the belief that one media outlet is telling the challenging and conveyable truth.

Thirdly, a critical attitude towards media can be rather subjective and selective as the perception of US mass media by the focus group participants shows. According to the results of the survey, mass media from US is followed daily by 2% of the population; the proportion of the participants at focus groups following the US media was similar. This did not, however, stop participants from stating that US media manipulates, the only difference being the fact that US media manipulates at a more advanced and refined level than Moldovan and Russian media which manipulate more simply/primitively. Also, the perception of some participants at the focus groups that the US/CNN news attempted to manipulate while the Russian news on the same topic was more convincing reveals that the ability/capacity to detect manipulation and propaganda is selective. One claims that there is propaganda in the mass media she/he does not prefer/like/accept but without seeing the manipulative elements in the media she/he prefers or trusts. Therefore, this is not only a critical attitude expressed by media consumers but also a critique of the ideological opponent. Thus, the part of the Moldovan audience that detects elements of manipulation and propaganda in mass

media but nevertheless trusts Russian media is not completely free from the current antagonism nurtured by the anti-Western propaganda from the Russian media that has accompanied the crisis in Ukraine since its onset in late 2013. The Russian mass media, in addition to its critique and moral condemnation of the “Euroatlantic” countries, criticises as well the Western mass media for using manipulation and propaganda. So, the apparent incompatibility between a critical mindset and awareness of propaganda on one hand and trust in Russian mass media on the other is dissolved but at the price of reducing a critical attitude toward media to a subjective, selective and, why not, a manipulative tool in itself.

This does not mean that a genuine critical attitude and critical thinking do not exist in the Moldovan media audience. As the focus group discussions show, there are media consumers who always prefer the relentless pursuit of evidence and unyielding arguments to a comforting and easy truth.

Russia-originated messages vs US-originated messages in the Moldovan media content

The corroboration of qualitative and quantitative data confirm the findings of the focus group research concerning the perception of Russia-originated messages versus US-originated messages in Moldovan media content. Thus, these findings can be legitimately considered as trends representative of the entire population of Moldova.

According to the results of the survey, mass media from the US is followed by 2% of the population daily, while the media from Russia- by 36%. The proportion of the participants in the focus groups that followed US media was similar. Thus, a comparison of the perception of Russia-originated messages and US-originated messages in Moldovan media is rather difficult or even impossible. Direct messages from US media are not very present in Moldova compared with those originated in Russian media which is the dominant foreign media (Russian mass media is followed daily by 36% of respondents, second after local Moldovan media followed daily by 68%; in the third place is mass media from Romania followed daily by 14 % of respondents). The explanation of the dominance of the Russian message is obvious and rather well known, and the survey respondents and participants in the focus groups confirmed it once more. The Russian speaking population in Moldova chooses Russian media—both Russian media programs produced in Moldova and Russian media broadcasted/published in Russia—because of language accessibility. The Romanian speaking audience chooses Russian media for several different reasons, i.e., because of the traditions and habits in their families, because it confirms their position and world view, because of the (alleged) professionalism of Russian journalists and others.

Furthermore, a determining factor for the influence of Russian media is its omnipresence and availability to the Moldovan audience. Neither the survey nor the focus group discussions included a question about why the audience does not choose US media more frequently; therefore, the explanation of this fact is only indirect as deduced from respondents/participants reasoning and criteria for choosing a source of information. Thus, US media is still less accessible in terms of language both for the Russian and Romanian speaking audiences, although English is becoming more accessible for younger generations. Another obstacle is the rather modest visibility and presence of US media for Moldovan consumers: the only US channel included in the offers of cable TV providers is CNN. Obviously, US media is available for Internet users in Moldova; however, for the time being, this fact has not increased the number of followers of US media among Moldovan media consumers.

The comparison of the direct presence of Russian-originated and US-originated messages in Moldovan media content was therefore substituted with a comparison of perceptions of a US-originated news item and a Russian one on the same topic by the participants in focus groups. Also, five questions from the national survey required the respondents to compare the role of the US and the role of Russia in world politics. The answers of respondents to these questions and the analysis of the news by the participants in focus groups were similar and confirmed/validated each other. Asked what in their opinion is Russia's role in maintaining stability in the world, 40.4% of respondents considered that Russia is a factor in stability and guarantor of peace, 20% considered that it is a destabilizing factor, 25.8% considered that it is neither a guarantor of stability nor a destabilizing factor, and 13.2% did not know the role of Russia. In comparison, asked about the US role, only 13.0% of the respondents considered that the US is a factor of stability/guarantor of peace, 33.4% considered that the US is a destabilizing factor, 28.3% believe that it is neither a guarantor of stability nor a destabilizing factor, while 25.2% were not able to evaluate the role of the US. As we can see, the proportion of those who see in Russia as a factor in global stability is close to the number of respondents who trust Russian media (46.3%). This number is also proportional with the number of participants in the focus group who found the Russian news more convincing than CNN news.

Although the majority of survey respondents and focus group participants affirmed that they do not access/consult US-originated sources of information, the fact that they were willing to comment and express their views on US media is not without significance. As the perceptions of the focus group participants show, most consider that US media manipulates although in a more advanced way (thus admitting a superiority of the US, although a negative one, in comparison with Russia). The audience projects features and opinions on US media that they were

not able to form by directly following it. As the analysis of qualitative data shows, for a considerable part of the Moldovan audience, the US-originated media message is perceived through the Russian media. When a considerable group of participants/respondents considers that the US media manipulates without being able to actually follow it, then instead of manifesting critical thinking as media consumers they reveal an ideological position coherent with the anti-West propaganda developed in recent years by Russian media.

In conclusion, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative research reveal both positive and negative aspects of the perception of the news by the Moldovan audience. The positive aspects concern the following:

- the critical attitude and critical mindset of the audience in approaching mass media messages;
- the capacity of a part of the audience to get information from a plurality of sources and to compare the information obtained;
- the ability of the audience to identify and detect manipulation and propaganda in mass media.

The list of negative aspects is longer; the most obvious aspects that need to be addressed concern the following:

- the incapacity of some media consumers to differentiate the origins of media, foreign or local;
- the considerable number of persons who consider themselves disinformed or poorly informed in spite of the plurality of sources in the Moldovan media landscape;
- the selective and subjective use of a critical attitude in perceiving media messages;
- the unequal access to mass media from the EU, US and Russia;
- the trust of a considerable part of the audience in Russian mass media which diminishes their critical attitude in perceiving media messages.

In general, two main themes are prominent in this study of the Moldovan media audience: on the one hand, the perception of manipulation and propaganda not only as obsolete relics of the Cold War but as current realities in mass media and on the other hand, the critical attitude toward media expressed by some of the audience. If the main weapon of media consumers against manipulation and propaganda is critical thinking, then for a genuine critical attitude toward mass media that could empower the individual both as a media consumer and as a citizen, the conditions of equal access to a plurality of original, unmediated media messages has to be created and maintained. This is a common task for media institutions, civil society, public authorities and media regulators that should take into account the recommendations that follow from the findings of this research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Media regulators

- Authorities should ensure (both in legislation and in practice) the political and operational independence of the broadcast media regulators in line with the OSCE, EU and Council of Europe's recommendations¹.
- Media regulators should monitor *ex officio* broadcasters' compliance with legislation and contractual licensing conditions, and in cases of non-compliance they should apply appropriate sanctions. Sanctions should be clearly defined and commensurate with the gravity of the violation committed. The establishment of systematic media monitoring based on a credible methodology would assist the regulators to identify legal violations (including hate speech and propaganda) and to take prompt and adequate corrective action.
- Consideration could be given to strengthening the protection of national airways against propaganda for war and hatred that breaches the law. At the same time, if applied, restrictions on the freedom of expression should not be disproportional in scope and should not be arbitrary or politically motivated to limit the expression of alternative positions.
- The existence of an independent, vibrant and competitive media landscape is a key factor for providing a variety of news and views in different languages coming from different countries but with priority given to high-quality programs produced in national languages. A national media enjoying a high level of trust and popularity would serve as a good tool against any kind of media propaganda.
- The ongoing monopolization of the media market by state or powerful groups has deprived the audience of an effective variety of sources of information and has thereby weakened the guarantees of pluralism. Such undue concentration of media ownership should be prevented through appropriate measures. Instruments could be applied to improve competition, to motivate the old players to get rid of excess concentration, and to encourage new players to invest.
- Given the overall lack of high-quality reporting, consideration should be given to supporting activities aimed at raising professional standards, including adherence to internationally recognized ethical codes and standards for balanced

and objective reporting and news presentation. This should include support for already existing media outlets (both local and foreign) that provide high-quality reporting and seek alternative information.

Public service broadcasting

- In this respect, the existence of truly independent public service broad-casters that would develop impartial editorial practices is essential. It is therefore important for the authorities to strengthen and respect the mandate of the public service broadcaster so it reflects the public interest and is based on sustainability, independence, editorial freedom and non-interference by authorities or political parties.
- The reporting by these broadcasters should be balanced, diverse and factual including when covering foreign policies and topics in line with strong professional standards and good international practice.

Media professionalism

- The media should refuse all blatant or veiled expressions of intolerance and should consider thoughtfully if the publication of such expressions is not conducive to defamation or ridicule based on sex, race, color, language, faith and religion, affiliation with a national or ethnic minority or ethnic group, social differences or political or other opinions.
- The media should avoid broadcasting a message based on unverified information or rumors with an intention to create a scandal or for propaganda purposes. If it decides that such a message is somehow important despite the fact that it can't be verified, it should broadcast it with a warning saying that the message has not been verified. An important criterion is to separate facts from commentary.
- Journalists, editors, producers and proprietors should spare no effort to make any information disseminated correspond with the truth and with reality. The facts should be stated without any distortion and in their respective context. If a flawed message is published, it should be followed by an immediate apology.
- The media should not manipulate pictures or audio so that the choice of words or other means of expression changes the tone, shifts the stress or deliberately alters the meaning or value of the message. The media should ensure that every news item contains only facts corresponding to reality and whose veracity will be verified by independent sources quoted therein.

[1] See the Council of Europe's recommendation on the independence and functions of regulatory authorities for broadcasting sector at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media/doc/cm/rec%282000%29023&expmem_EN.asp.

Media and Internet literacy

- Consideration could be given to further enhancing existing platforms and to creating new ones for discussion, training, studies and self-reflection on the media, including in the regions, to enhance the current level of the profession of journalism and to explain the unhealthy aspects of journalism such as propaganda.
- Access to various educational resources such as books, databases, methodologies, research magazines as well as a chance to exchange experiences through international media networks and journalistic associations would also help in achieving these efforts.
- Strengthening educational programs on media and Internet literacy including investments in and support for media studies at the high school level would facilitate an informed population. This would help journalists, managers and students to increase their professional capacities and would also improve the current level of media literacy.

International media content

- Local as well as local branches of international media outlets should be encouraged to provide high-quality reporting also in non-official and state languages in order to be more accessible to viewers and listeners.
- Consideration should be given to promoting a direct exchange of high-quality media content among broadcasters within certain closer frameworks based on mutual links such as history, language or territorial proximity, for example with the Eastern Partnership countries, with Romania or with Ukraine.
- Current international networks and platforms such as the Europe an Broadcasting Union (EBU) or the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) should play a more active role in providing a forum for discussion of practical solutions to legal problems regarding the interpretations and application of media regulation as well as promoting and developing the concept of public service media and their values such as universality, independence, excellence, diversity, accountability and innovation as referred to in the EBU Declaration on the Core Values of the Public Service Media².

[2] See the EBU statutes at: https://www3.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/About/Governance/Statutes%202013_EN.pdf

Monitoring Report: “Evaluation of Hate Speech in Online Media”

The Independent Journalism Center has launched the second monitoring report “Evaluation of hate speech in online media,” produced within the “Press can’t hate” campaign. In the period of October 1-31, 2015, the monitoring covered 15 Moldovan portals (including some from the Gagauz autonomy and the Transnistrian region), which published 213 relevant journalistic materials, in contrast with 180 materials published in the previous monitoring period (May 1-31, 2015).

We are publishing the conclusions and recommendations of the report for online media outlets, which might lessen the amount of hate speech.

CONCLUSIONS

For the most part, journalists complied with professional ethics in writing and editing news stories about the groups monitored. There were, however, instances on some portals (moldova.org, gagauzmedia.md, stirilocale.md, jurnal.md) when the language used in stories contained the stereotypical words and expressions invalid, jailbird and blind.

With few exceptions, headlines were informative and corresponded to the text. There were only two cases (publika.md, protv.md) when headlines slipped toward sensationalism and were manipulative.

Messages that can be classified as hate speech were present in October in readers’ comments, but they were many fewer than in May. Overall, the quality of comment moderation has improved.

Disrespectful and insulting language was directed at Russians in comments on the news in October.

The group most vulnerable to hate speech in Moldovan online space remains Russian nationals. There is no hostile feeling toward them in general, but negative attitudes appear whenever the media cover a conflict involving Russians or when the information presented is somehow connected with politics.

Despite the large number of news stories about Muslim refugees seeking asylum in Europe that provoked various reactions, including hostility, from EU citizens, the portals monitored posted no negative or hostile expressions regarding this category of people in either texts or comments. The few websites that posted

such stories took care to comply with professional ethics, including in moderating comments.

Progress in moderation has been made since May on deschide.md as it changed the method for commenting to logging in through Facebook. While the previous report found comments instigating hatred, in October such comments were absent on deschide.md. The outlet has a list of about 500 licentious words and letter combinations in Romanian, Russian and English, the presence of which automatically blocks a comment. Between May and October, the outlet added to that list. The administration recognized that the number of comments had decreased since the previous report due to these actions by the technical team¹.

The gravest violations were found on moldova.org which did not moderate comments on its news, so obscene words, insults and hate speech did appear on the website.

Publika.md and unimedia.md were still deficient in moderating comments with insults, obscene words and hate speech, although compared with the previous monitoring report there were fewer such comments. The significant reduction in the number of problematic comments could be a direct consequence of the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations in the previous report on evaluating hate speech in online media as well as of the training for moderators offered by the IJC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Outlets should be more careful in writing and editing journalistic content referring to groups that are vulnerable to hate speech. Reporters and editors should know the words and expressions that specialists consider discriminatory and not use them in their texts.

Persons responsible for the content in every outlet should know and take into consideration the provisions of the Journalist’s Code of Ethics and the recommendations from the Guide for style with ethical norms for journalists when they write news or moderate readers’ comments.

[1] Information obtained through an interview with the administration of deschide.md.

It is necessary to periodically train journalists responsible for the administration of online content to help them identify hate speech in readers' comments.

Following the example of media outlets in other countries, Moldovan websites with a large amount of news and comments should have persons especially employed to moderate comments and to maintain civilized discussions among readers.

The owners/editors of information portals should continue their efforts to improve the quality of moderating readers' comments because website owners are responsible for the content of comments and can be responsible both for their publication and for the failure to moderate messages with hate speech, insults or defamation.

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