



# IJC – two decades in the service of free press and democracy

IJC recently marked 20 years of activity. It's a good occasion to review its main achievements in this period.

At the end of 2014, traditionally, the Press Club from Chisinau, the IJC and the Committee for Press Freedom awarded journalists within the XXth edition of the "Journalists of the Year" awards gala. The "Journalists of the Year" awards gala and the Press Freedom Days, that take place each year in May have become the visit card of the IJC.

Historically, the IJC started as a project of the Open World Program. Later, it became an independent organization, and currently it has the status of private institution. But regardless of its organizational forms, the IJC has always been in the service of the journalistic community. Its main mission has been to contribute to strengthening free press in Moldova, by means of educating journalists and citizens, media advocacy campaigns, research and, in no small measure, promotion of professional standards and strict norms of ethics in the journalistic community.

"The Independent Journalism Center appeared at a time when many of us didn't exactly know what independent journalism is. Nor did we know where to learn it. The IJC offered a lot of opportunities to learn real journalism, from the rich library in the basement, to numerous professional development courses in Moldova and abroad, to debates on the quality of journalism," says **Alina Radu, director of the Ziarul de Garda newspaper.**

Referring to that time, **Angela Sarbu, one of the Center's founders,** said: "We wanted the Independent Journalism Center to become a place where the journalists who do their job well or those willing to learn professional standards could find support. I hope that in those 20 years we managed to help journalists when they needed it – whether by legal aid, scholarships or schooling." The idea stroke root and the IJC soon became not only the preferred meeting place for the journalistic community, but also a promoter of a new model of politically neutral press.

One of the first IJC services was training. By its means, journalists all over the country, including Gagauzia and the Transnistrian region, joined efforts around some common professional problems. Training topics varied depending on the requests and needs of mass media at different times. The IJC carried out legal training and online journalism programs, organized



summer schools, discussion clubs on the most current issues concerning the media, trained mixed teams of journalists, where journalists from both banks of River Nistru worked on the same topics and learned to collaborate, being guided by the same professional norms. Also, the IJC has always been very close to the local press.

**Tudor Iascenco, editor-in-chief of the Cuvantul newspaper,** confirms: "In all positive changes that occurred over the past two decades in Moldovan mass media, the Independent Journalism Center played one of the main roles, including direct participation in the creation and development of the Association of Independent Press (AIP), training and education of journalists, promotion of professional ethics, protection of the rights of this community and of the freedom of speech, improvement of the legislation on mass media and access to information. In saying it, I am judging from the history of the "Cuvantul" regional weekly newspaper and of other AIP publications, which overcame all difficulties and strengthened their positions on the media market largely due to the disinterested support of the IJC."

At a time when abuses against journalists were an issue, the IJC opened a legal aid service. The professional competence that the IJC lawyers showed over the years and the fact that this service has always been provided for free guaranteed a constant interest in it, which is still there.

In this context, **Ziarul de Garda Director Alina Radu** says: "We learned and grew together, and now we actually can't imagine what Moldovan journalism would look like without

the two decades of the IJC works. And since journalism is a living organism that is constantly changing, I wish the IJC to keep in pace with changes and to continue professionally developing the media. Also, on behalf of Ziarul de Garda – thank you for the legal support provided in the ten years of constant lawsuits.”

For two decades, the IJC has been educating and gathering an entire network of media experts. **Ion Bunduchi, executive director of the Electronic Press Association (APEL)**, is one of those who always maintained close collaboration with the IJC, being the co-author of the IJC researches and partner in the implementation of some joint projects. We asked him how he sees the IJC in the context of the civil society in Moldova. “I believe that the main achievement of the IJC in these two decades has been its unreserved advocacy for democratic journalism in our country,” the expert says, and he also supports it with the following arguments: “I am thinking here about the “Mass Media...” magazine (which is more than all our allegedly scientific works, because they – scientific articles/ doctor’s theses, etc. – have been largely based on the data in the magazine); the School of Advanced Journalism (normal journalism, like in all good world); the free legal aid for mass media; the “Golden Apple” awards, of which I said and keep saying: Dear journalists, don’t let the state give you awards, because it doesn’t know what you’re doing – let your community do it, since it is the one who knows what you’re doing and how you’re doing it; the credible studies and researches in the field – relevant for those interested inside and outside; etc.”

In his turn, **AIP Executive Director Petru Macovei** sees the IJC as a strategic partner. “The best things that we did for the journalistic community over the years are the ones that we did together. I believe that our organizations – the IJC and the AIP – represent the necessary expertise in the NGO sector in order to improve the work of media NGOs,” he says. In his opinion, “the IJC is an absolutely necessary structure for the professional development of Moldovan media and, in no small measure, it is being achieved through the School of Advanced Journalism, which is a newer project that in a short time proved to be very useful, being an opportunity for professional journalism in our country.”

At its 20th anniversary, the Independent Journalism Center has a remarkable past. But it also has grand plans ahead. “We have done a lot, but we still have work to do, because, despite some changes, Moldova is still a country where journalists face lots of challenges. We will keep supporting journalists in the fight for their rights and in creation of normal conditions for the press,” Angela Sarbu says.

*Photo gallery: from the IJC archives*



# Media not having access to the Parliament's sessions is not the journalists', but the society's problem

I am nostalgic about the time when Dumitru Diacov was President of the Parliament. Not that I admire the current honourable president of the Democratic Party, but because, at the time, limiting journalists' access to the Parliament sessions was unconceivable. We were free to walk everywhere in the building, we would enter any office and we had everything we needed in the session room. Our written press colleagues were provided a press gallery in the centre of the back room, while camera operators and photographers were not only free to walk on the last line of the amphitheatre, but were also allowed to walk the main stairs in the room to take frontal shots.

When communists acceded to power, the rules changed and more SIS (intelligence) and SPP (state protection and guard service) agents were brought. However, things degenerated after April 7, 2009, when the legislative had to hold its sessions at the Republic's Palace. There were as many intelligence agents as accredited journalists. The press was shown to some sort of a pen surrounded by ropes. Camera operators and photographers could arrive in front of the room only by one, and only under the supervision of the watchful men in blue caps.

What followed was members of parliament returned to their renewed building made journalists feel like black citizens of South Africa during apartheid. We no longer had the right to get into the building through the main entrance, but through the back door of an addition designed after the reconstruction of the building. Moreover, the session room is, from now on, only for the „white persons”, i.e. for members of parliament.

Journalists are offered to reflect the legislative activity crowded in a room with two tables and a few chairs, watching the plenary sessions on two monitors. To hinder journalists' free access in the room, the Parliament spent huge public money to install video cameras and hire personnel to ensure broadcasting to the „media's pen”.

The broadcasting director hired by Corman is so skilled in choosing the cameras to broadcast from, that there were situations when the media found out post-factum about communists having left the session room right at the beginning of the session as a protest, and having not participated in the parliament's debates and voting. Isn't this a classical sample of manipulation, censure and lie?

Our Parliament tries to provide us an ideal image, without verbal and physical fights, scuffles, scandals or protests. In the event of something like this, journalists are provided no image and/or sound. They are not free any more to enter the building to ask MPs questions, statements or replies, as they used to be. The „speakers” are brought in the same narrow pen, where, meanwhile, some of our colleagues record their reports, others report live or talk on the phone. This North-Korean style is how the “democratic” government of a country with European aspirations believes it should interact with the media and with the society, it serves and whose money it spends.

In the last 20 years, the number of MPs has not changed – they are still 101. Why then in the past, there was place for both MPs and the media, but after the reconstruction of the building, when the session room was enlarged, there was no more place for the media? Spending public money to harm the national interest seems to me criminal and reprehensible. When Vlad Filat, the prime minister at the time, presented the journalists the initial project, there was a separate press gallery. But, His/her Highness the MP claims his/her right not to be disturbed. He/she does not like to be recorded while sleeping, or playing Angry Birds on the tablet or smartphone, reading newspapers, telling jokes or texting somebody. Even if we believed MPs are not ill-minded and they really cannot work when accredited journalists “assault” the room, the best and right way to solve this would not be to isolate the media, but to design the room taking into account the actual needs and the principle of public interest supremacy.

The comfort of 101 individuals cannot prevail over the right of more than 3 million citizens to know how laws are made in this country. One of the fundamental democratic principles – access to information is walked over by those who parade with European values. As professional journalists, we are outraged they humiliate us like this, making us unable to obtain our own the videos, information and interviews we need, and forcing us to kiss the government’s foot.

Media not having access to the Parliament’s sessions is not the journalists’, but the society’s problem. The taxpayers are entitled to be duly informed on the activity of those they voted and pay. They have the right to know who and how adopts the laws that change their lives, and such right is now refused.

*Dorin SCOBIOALA*



# Transparency and resistance of media owners

In 2013, the Independent Journalism Center proposed a draft law aimed to impose a higher degree of transparency in audiovisual media ownership. The project didn't pass the first reading, which is, in our opinion, ambivalent.

Firstly, we believe there is a poor understanding of the media ownership transparency concept per se and of its democratic value. Actually, as it is outlined in our country, the purpose of this desideratum, which is in fact legitimate and innocent, is to uncover the true owner and decision maker of the editorial policy of several TV stations with nationwide coverage, instead of speculating with the concept of transparency and media pluralism.

## **Good faith - a prerequisite in finding out the truth**

The draft law designed to amend the Audiovisual Code with a view to ensuring transparency of radio broadcasters' ownership focuses on two intervention stages, which are, in our opinion, interdependent in terms of legal requirement effectiveness. The first intervention occurs at a stage preceding the licensing process, namely when submitting the application file for the competition on granting a broadcasting license, when the Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual could reject the file for failure to provide information on the applicant's ownership structure.

And the second intervention, which has a permanent nature, refers to the obligation of broadcasters to ensure ownership and funding transparency through annual publication of information about property and funding. Both transparency obligations provide hypothetically access to comprehensive information on radio broadcasters' owners, while the veracity of the information provided is a real challenge.

There are a couple of requirements for a healthy functioning of the Audiovisual Code: decisional autonomy of the CCA, decisional transparency of the CCA, involving participation of third parties in

decision making including by providing information on the owners of a broadcasting license applicant or radio broadcaster and against which CCA should initiate, if necessary, investigations of their own or with the support of other authorities and good faith of all involved actors.

As to the existing broadcasters, they are obliged to report, on an annual basis, the identity of owners and financing sources. The effectiveness of this provision depends, in a decisive way, on the control and sanction mechanism held by the CCA under the law in force.

The current legislation lacks a control and sanction mechanism necessary to ensure the effectiveness of this provision. The CCA has no specific responsibilities and resources to exercise control, sometimes even ex officio, and no effective sanctions to respond promptly to an infringement. What effect might have a fine up to 5400 MDL on a monopolist rooted in offshore zones when he, after being imposed graduated sanctions for 3 years, managed to manipulate enough to achieve an immediate political target? And this problem requires resetting the whole existing sanction mechanism in broadcasting, which, by the way, was compromised more than once.

Perhaps the draft law raises skill-related difficulties in addressing the subject of media ownership transparency among the officials involved into the legislative process... The technical difficulties are accompanied by the political ones, creating controversies that go beyond the legislative area. This leads to a situation where a proposal, instead of being improved by the authorities, is trivialized or blocked. We would like to conclude by making a call for good faith, and we wait for changes for good after the parliamentary elections end.

*Doina COSTIN*

# Testing deontology or, the press and the electoral fight

Is there room for professional deontology during the elections? The Moldovan Journalists Code of ethics contains only two articles that refer directly to the electoral period:

Article 5.5 The profession of journalist is incompatible with any position in the government, legislative or judicial bodies, as well as the political affiliation.

Art. 5.7. Should a journalist be registered as an electoral competitor, such journalist must require to be relieved from duties during the electoral campaign.

But the fact that there is no recommendation on media behavior during electoral campaign is not due to the reason that the law accepts that “fight without rules”. For a journalist, writing about a politician or a political party during elections or inter-election period is the same thing; there is no difference, or at least there should not be any.

## The electoral and deontological sins of Moldovan media

However, things are different. Ethical violations that are noticed today are rather related to the editorial policy and practice of the newspapers and can be resumed as follows:

1. Lack of equidistance. In the Moldovan media it's “take it or leave it”, i.e., there is no place for analyzing policy options. In most cases one can definitely say, depending on the name of the newspaper, which party will be promoted and which party will be criticized therein, or, another habit of the Moldovan press, which party will be simply ignored.
2. False equidistance, which is mostly specific for televisions. TV channels imitate equidistance within their talk shows by selecting particular invitees, thus making it easy to foresee the conclusions they will reach or will suggest to the audience.
3. Lack of analysis of electoral documents. It is known that the political platform of a party constitutes (or

at least it should comprise) the offer under which they get votes. In the European countries, the media's electoral communication consists in the examination and analysis of political platforms. What Moldovan press is currently doing is disseminating impressions and opinions about representatives of various politics, propagating through the media the electoral campaign itself. And I wonder, what is the public use of so many broadcasting hours or so many acres of wasted printing paper?

4. The right of reply and consulting opinions. Most of the times, the media forgets about these principles and completely ignores them in their critical articles.
5. Substituting the information on the electoral campaign with electoral advertising, present not only as visual inserts, but also as political advertorials, business reports and interviews, written, incidentally, by journalists from the editorial office, which is against Article 5.4, because any advertisement, even political advertisement, may be seen as commercial product.
6. The clear and visible separation of the advertising and information material, under Art. 2.10 of the Ethics Code and the separation of opinion articles, according to Article 2.9.

All together, these violations constitute an even more serious breach of ethics in respect of the “public utility” principle and reflect, in fact, the essence of media. By ignoring the principle of public utility, media violates one of the basic readers' rights – the right to quality information.

## European practices

**In Belgium**, for instance, besides the basic principles of the code of ethics in respect to the truth and separating facts and opinions, as well as Article 13 providing non-involvement of journalists in propaganda activities, there is a specific and detailed text about electoral campaigns, with 4 basic rules:

- Decisions related to covering the elections must be taken by the editorial staff through the journalistic criteria; All the political trends shall be considered, even the new or extremist ones, following their relevance for journalism; Media is required not to give the floor during live programs to parties or movements identified as racist or non-democratic; If journalists become candidates in the elections, they should avoid any conflict of interest and editorial managers should take steps to avoid them.

**In Ireland** newspapers and magazines are not required to be impartial in covering election campaigns (for example, a newspaper may support a particular political party). As a rule, newspapers are obliged to observe the principles of the Code of good practice, including truth and accuracy, the distinction between facts and comments. On the other hand, the law requires broadcasters to be impartial in covering elections. They cannot support any political party and are subject to control of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, which is a statutory body.

**In the Netherlands**, Code of Ethics does not provide for any special rule on election campaigns. However, politicians are entitled to submit complaints to the Press Council under the Paris Principles. And in this case the politician may request an accelerated process. In practice, this means that a decision is issued only a week after a complaint is received. That principle is applied to both the general and local elections.

#### **In conclusion**

Elections are something stressful for the society and for the media. They have logic and their own way of manifestation. The temptation to overlook ethical norms is very high. But the media's primary duty is fair and accurate information, which must prevail over political struggle and the revenues ensured by election advertising. The sustainability of media depends on its ability to come clear after the elections, while playing an important role in promoting democratic principles and exercising their function as "watchdog of society".

*Ludmila ANDRONIC*



# Like economy, like economic press

I received the proposal to write an article about the economic journalism in Moldova and the problems it faces in the very day when the site [www.mold-street.com](http://www.mold-street.com), for which I write, was blocked.

The reason for this was not an increased interest towards a sensational article about a certain transaction or someone's successful business story. The news that broke the record for the number of visits and shares was about the new register of historic monuments in Chisinau. The great interest was caused by the title of the article, in which was mentioned a famous capital club included in this register.

## No visits - no advertising

I was very pleased by the fact that the news attracted such a great number of visits. After all, on the frequency of visits depends the amount of the advertising placed on a site. It is true that the number of visits may be slightly "inflated" by contracting the "services" of some special professionals. But is it's the solution? I do not think so. After all, the advertisers are not stupid. I was very upset by the fact that the number of visits does not increase also when we address serious subjects, such as the tax increases, public money wastage, embargoes, etc. It turns out that the potential advertising providers don't care about the content of the materials placed on the, but only about the number of visits.

More precisely, the content is important but only when it contains some negative information about them, such as a fraud or a decline in business. And here a dilemma arises. Especially for the journalists working in the media holdings, because we have two or three of these that get the most profitable advertising contracts. This can be illustrated on the example of an advertising contract entered with one of the telephone operators. The publication of an article representing the company in a bad light raises the chances of losing the advertising contract up to 99.9% and the journalist, who made such information public, is likely to remain out of work.

Pressures come from other companies as well, including the state-owned ones. Some information on the Air Moldova CEO wage was used by the administration to break the contract with the newspaper "Adevarul". The harassment by courts is even worse.

## What to write, if there is no economy

By conducting a simple analysis of the media market, we could say that we have all the components of an economic press close to the international standards: we have a specialized TV channel, economic newspapers in Russian and Romanian, press agencies, websites, journalists' associations and even bloggers. But what do we still need?

The main missing element seems to be a real market economy: with stock exchanges, capital market, thriving business, impressive deals, success stories, rankings, etc. Without all this, what should we write about? About the fact that a minister participated in a series of negotiations on signing of an assistance agreement, some country gave us another \$ 100 000, and the Government, during the last seven years, changed the VAT rate for eight times?

The economic press needs also good experts and reviewers able to provide plausible explanations of certain phenomena. For example, it is practically impossible to get a comment from a commercial bank specialist on the exchange rate fluctuations in the market.

## We need investors

But what the economic press needs the most is the investors. It needs business people who are willing to risk their money in order to support the press development. The presence of a western holding applying standards for the ones who create and consume information, would be very welcomed. And these standards shall include not only rules of conduct for journalists but also rules on who to play on the advertising market.

It is undisputed that the problems faced by the press will not disappear and the political and economic pressures will continue. Again, I go back to the news because of which the site was blocked, or rather not to the news, but to the quality of the audience that was so interested in it. Because, if we had an audience with greater demands, a more educated public who would be able to filter the channels they watch, the sites they visits, the subscriptions they make, and all the horrors and terrible news broadcast by local and international TV channels, then maybe the Moldovan media, including the economic one, would be different.

*Ion PREASCA*

# “The mission of culture magazines is to contribute to Moldova’s Europeanization”



*Interview with Vitalie Ciobanu, writer and editor-in-chief of the Contrafort magazine*

**- In October Contrafort had a celebration - 20th anniversary of its founding. The magazine is read on both banks of the Prut River; there are readers who are looking for you not only in Moldova, but also in Romania, and wherever else Romanian is spoken, due to the online version. Why then, despite quality, culture publications are not profitable? What are their main problems, in your opinion?**

-The main problem of arts and culture magazines is the lack of funding. They, it is known, cannot survive alone, as they are not profitable. Culture magazines are not “profitable” anywhere in the world. In strictly pragmatic terms of the market, offer and demand, they shouldn’t even exist. If they sought profitability, they would have to betray their mission, alter their essence, lower the criterion of value they are guided by, publish scandals, obscene stories, gossip, rumors and whatever else there might be. They would no longer be publications of culture, but would become tabloids – there will always be plenty of consumers for this kind of “merchandise”.

The State bodies of Moldova are too little involved into supporting written culture. Only for the past two years the Ministry of Culture has been somewhat more active; it has shown interest for the arts and culture publications and has

given out some grants. We, the Contrafort magazine, have also been helped, and we appreciate this support, especially in the context of the last year’s crisis at the Romanian Cultural Institute, which used to subsidize a number of arts and culture magazines in Bessarabia. Our relations with partners in Bucharest are gradually returning to normal, too.

**-What editorial policy should arts and culture publications have, and how do you manage that at Contrafort?**

- Value and critical spirit are the basic pillars of a serious editorial policy. And, at least at Contrafort, there is synchronization with contemporary Romanian literature and with the best reviewing patterns of the West. We have worked a lot to maintain these high standards. And we grew our authors. In addition to our long-time workers, writers known on both banks of the Prut River, we have discovered and encouraged many young promising authors. We have often accepted texts for publication after subjecting them to strict editing, only because we felt that these young authors have potential, only because we saw they are talented, hard-working, serious, studious and receptive to our messages and suggestions.

**- Contrafort does not survive from advertising or political partnerships. How does it manage to stay afloat in these difficult times for the print media?**

- Like I said before, life at such a magazine is not all milk and honey. It requires making sacrifice, searching for sponsors, preferably not involved in dubious internal games. Here is something I wish political actors in Moldova could understand: culture cannot be “of a party”, like in the times of communists; culture is national. Intellectuals and artistic people are pleading for universal humanistic values. In the civilized world these things have been an axiom for a long time. That is why there are State programs to support culture, as well as private sources, foundations, patrons of the arts that provide grants, scholarships, subsidies for creators. We don’t have a law of sponsorship in Moldova, which might encourage private investment in culture. A magazine with a circulation of 1,000 copies, which is being read by the intellectual elite, cannot attract advertising other than from the sphere of culture, publishing companies, for example. Now, if we launched a television, there would be

an abundance of offers! In the conditions of material and spiritual poverty in Moldova, our partners abroad are still our main allies.

**- You said in an article that “a sign of our time in this part of the world is falsification, distortion of long-established notions with well defined symbolical and emotional value”. How should we understand it?**

- In the commentary you are quoting from, which I wrote for Radio Free Europe, I am supporting this statement with concrete examples. In it, I am referring to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, annexation of Crimea and the general danger of Putin's policy for Europe and humanity in general. In the propaganda war that Russia fights against the rest of the world, they are distorting, misrepresenting the fundamental notions of democracy, such as plebiscite, the peoples' right to self-determination, political pluralism, etc. These are values that Putin's regime invokes in order to discredit them, presenting an abject invasion as “freedoms” that the West must respect so as not to be hypocritical. This type of manipulation and intoxication is successful among non-informed and poorly educated people. Russian imperialism relies exactly on that – naiveté and incapacity of masses to distinguish between the good and the bad, truth and lies; that is why it launches smoke agents, increases confusion in order to raise the most primitive and low human instincts and reflexes. As I said, the role of intellectuals and the civil society and the mission of arts and culture magazines that are betting on reflection and discernment is to fight against these monsters of propaganda.

**- Can the media in general and arts publications in particular be responsible for the level of culture, thinking, behavior of today's society?**

- They are definitely responsible, as they can contribute to correct information and development as well as to misinforming and fooling the public. It is valid especially for mass media. Arts and culture magazines are aiming at a higher level of thinking and personality formation. They can also have erroneous visions and can fall into the promotion of orthodoxy, Pan-Slavism, so-called ancestral values (poorly understood) to the detriment of our Europeanization and openness to the world. I shall remind you that the bloodshed in former Yugoslavia in 1990s was justified and stimulated to a significant extent by a manifest of the Belgrade Academy, which served as an inspiration to Milosevic and other sanguinary Serbian leaders. That is not to speak of the intellectuals that justified Nazism and Communism, or “Moldovenism” in the case of Bessarabia. The intellectuals' sin is greater than that of ordinary people,

since they have greater influence on their peers. Just because they are doing harm intentionally – they know who they're serving! – intellectuals are judged more severely... Broadly speaking, the mission of arts and culture magazines, their very reason for existence is to educate the electorate of democratic parties. Now democratic parties have to understand it. Unfortunately, it doesn't really happen.

**- How well do local mass media cover the arts?**

- Rather poorly. Arts and culture are marginal topics in Moldovan mass media. The culture sections are reserved to pop stars, usually inconsistent, whose easy “rise” makes lots of young people daydream. Now we, too, have shows like “Moldova's got talent”, but their effect is pathetic: these shows rather show the contrary – Moldova has no talent. Or, I should say that our talents must be searched for and selected not by means of such tasteless shows, but by means of hard work of professionals, by encouraging creativity, intellectual competition, starting with kindergartens and schools. Of course, arts and culture programs in our country don't make “ratings”; book presentations on television disappeared, while other programs, focusing on theater, fine arts, or music, we have never even had. We barely see a frugal “artistic” report, as you say, at the end of a newscast – thanks to Mrs. Silvia Hodorocea on the Moldova 1 channel. Europeanization is unthinkable without the contribution of intellectuals. Building a European-type civilization requires a deep process of education, culture and change of mentalities.

**- Why do we have so few arts publications in Moldova? How can we change that?**

- We have few qualified people to do it. For example, we, editors of Contrafort, Vasile Garnet and I, are doing everything: editing, graphical concept, distribution, public relations, and fundraising, as they say now, which means searching for sources of funding. It is all very difficult and requires terrible efforts, energy and time, so you are no longer physically able to write your own books as a writer and author of fiction. Then, as I said earlier, the State's institutions are not interested in supporting culture magazines – we have made a start, but it is very little compared to our needs. Culture brings great satisfaction, but it is not a business, so we survive rather than live. People don't read. They sit in front of computers. Just look at how Romanian is spoken on streets, what pearls are coming from our young people. It is an insult, a national shame! And it happens after 23 years of independence. Who are we actually writing and making these magazines for?... You are asking how we can change the situation. By means

of democratic, stable and consequent evolution. And by means of efforts made by every citizen, who must escape lethargy and laziness of thinking.

**- Who are the readers of arts publications? Are there consumers of arts and culture media in Moldova?**

- They are primarily representatives of artistic communities and creation unions. Our peers. Then come students of specialized institutions, and maybe some refined lyceum students. We have a much more numerous public in Romania than in Moldova, but distribution difficulties do not let us be more present there, as we used to be in the earlier years of Contrafort. Of course, we have a web version of the magazine, but we don't feel yet that it has a strong influence. And a website should be managed by professionals, who must be paid, while we have no money for that. The problem of culture magazines and culture in general is also related to living standards. A robust middle class is also a consumer of culture products. In Moldova, though, there is no middle class: the majority of people are just surviving, while the reach ones, oligarchs, don't need culture. They are "content" with their Mercedes, luxurious summer houses and exotic holidays. Why would they be interested in a film by Fellini, a concert of music by Bach, or Contrafort?

**- Does doing journalism in addition to literature benefit a writer?**

- Yes and no. The benefit is that it makes a writer more visible, better known. And in the situation of Moldova it also provides a source of existence, money to pay monthly bills, although the pay in print media is small; only television employees are better off, but you can count them of your fingers... At the same time, journalism is devastating for

artistic creation. At least I feel it on myself. Of course, it can provide you with topics, characters, psychological portraits, situations from life, but it also deforms your thinking, alters your language and vocabulary. Literary creation involves an exercise of meditation, dreaming, contemplation, maximum concentration on the meaning and nuances you want to express. As a journalist, you can't afford such subtleties. You have no time and, more important, you are expected to do something different.

**- In 2013, you were recognized as one of the best European writers, a title offered by American literary critics for a novel that was about to be published. What records did 2014 bring to you?**

- You are referring to the "Best European Fiction 2013" anthology, published in the USA by Dalkey Archive Press, which established the tradition of launching annual "Best European Fiction" anthologies with the goal of promoting writers from the old continent on the immense market of North America. I feel honored to have been selected for this prestigious project, coordinated by Aleksandar Hemon, especially since the final list of authors is compiled by a committee of important American literary critics, who work with thousands of texts from all European countries.

This year I have published a novelette in the Sud-Est cultural magazine in Chisinau, titled "Engleza pentru cei care pleacă", and I continued other prose projects I had started on earlier. I hope that at least one of them materializes in 2015 in a book published by an important publishing company in Romania. Also, a book of my essays, "Scribul în grădina fermecată", has been published by the ARC publishing company in Chisinau. I wish to be more productive in 2015 under the literary aspect.

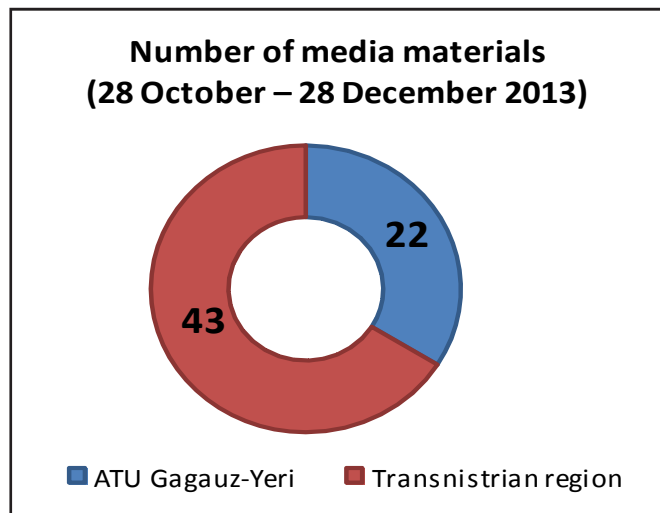
*Media Azi*  
28 November 2014

# Media Coverage of Minorities and Socially Vulnerable People in Transnistria and Gagauz-Yeri

Journalists from Transnistria and Gagauz-Yeri report on minorities and vulnerable people, looking beyond mere statistics and scarce facts. This is one of the encouraging findings of the second report on the monitoring of 10 media institutions in Gagauz-Yeri <sup>[1]</sup> and Transnistria <sup>[2]</sup> carried out during September 1 - October 31, 2014. The first such report was published in 2013.

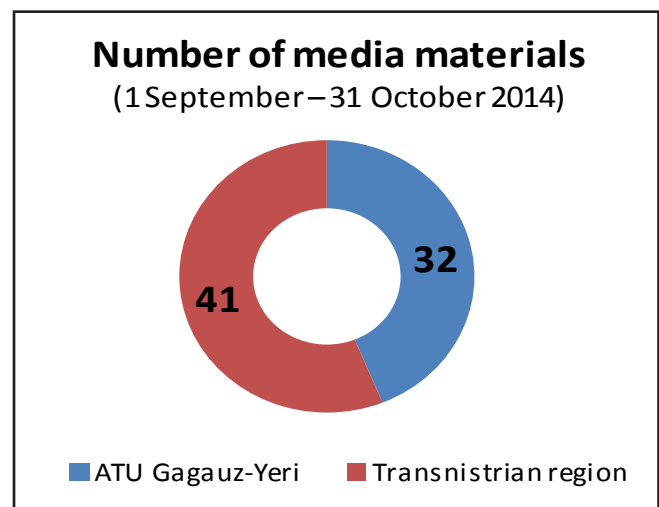
For two months, the selected media institutions have been closely observed by the operators, who monitored the accuracy of reporting on topics related to sexual and ethnic minorities, refugees, people with psychosocial and/or physical disabilities, HIV positive people and people living with tuberculosis.

People with disabilities and ethnic minorities were the target groups with the greatest media coverage (51% for the first and 35% for the latter). People living with tuberculosis were the subject of media coverage in only 11% of publications, while HIV-positive persons - in 3% of total publications.

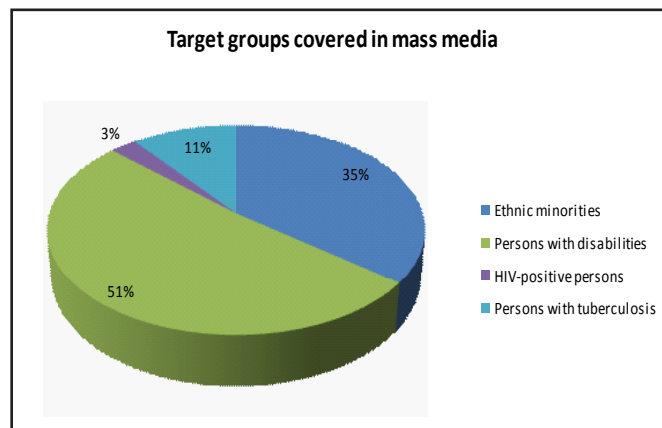


In terms of numbers, the second study showed a higher number of media reports about the monitored topics in both regions; most relevant reports were published by the media from Transnistria.

Of all monitored topics, the only one that has not been covered by the media in both regions was that of sexual minorities; the same trend was observed in the previous report, when just one piece reporting about the divorce of a gay couple was published, and the news itself had been taken over from foreign media.



As for the genre, minorities and socially vulnerable people were mentioned most in news items (49%) and journalistic reports (46%). In October and November, the number of reports and hence the number of topics covered in greater detail increased by 8%. Investigative reports, analytical materials, case studies



[1] Media monitored in Gagauz-Yeri: TV Gagauzia, Radio Gagauzia, Gagauz.info Web Portal, Vesti Gagauzii and Znamea newspapers.

[2] Media monitored in Transnistria: Pervyi Pridnestrovskii TV Channel, TCB TV Channel, Radio 1 Channel, Novosti Pridnestrovia Web Portal and Pridnestrovie Newspaper.

- the genres that allow for a comprehensive discussion of the topic, identification of loopholes in the law or barriers for legal enforcement, verification of the use of the funds earmarked for

the monitored target groups, the actual level of protecting the rights and freedoms of socially vulnerable people and minorities - are still used to a lesser extent. There are exceptions to the rule though, namely a report aired on Gagauzia TV about one day in a family of blind people and a series of analytical reports by Gagauz Info about access ramps for people with special needs, the community integration of the blind, and the ensuring of access to education and employment to visually impaired people.

In terms of sources, the monitoring showed an increase in the number of sources used for covering topics concerning minorities or people with disabilities. On average, the authors used two to three sources per publication, while during monitoring in 2013 the average was two sources.

This report, as well as the previous one, showed that, as a rule, media coverage relevant for the study does not top the priority list and does not make it to the front page of newspapers or to the top items in the TV and radio news digests. In printed press, articles about minorities and socially vulnerable persons were published most often on pages 2-4, while on the radio and TV they were placed in the second half of the news digests.

In most cases, the reports were based on public information provided by public institutions or organizations working in the areas covered by the monitoring report. The information presented to the audience was clear and came from reliable sources. The journalists presented the information provided

to them in an informative, neutral and objective manner and refrained from sharing their subjective opinion on the subject. Unlike during the previous monitoring round, the media used a more comprehensive approach, giving voice to the people concerned, giving room for the views, ideas, aspirations and potential they have, just as other people do. Besides, the journalists from both regions used - with several small exceptions - neutral nondiscriminatory terminology to make reference to the people from socially vulnerable groups and to the people from minority groups. The number of publications where the authors used discriminatory language has decreased almost four times; however, the habit of referring to the disabled as invalids still persists.

Although, overall, the monitoring report showed a jump in the quality and depth of covering topics concerning minorities and people with disabilities, there is still room for improvement. The authors of the report urge, on one hand, the management of the monitored media institutions to revise their editorial policies, so that topics about minorities and socially vulnerable people become topics of general interest that should be documented comprehensively, and journalists, on the other hand, to be more rigorous in presenting information, as well as in using appropriate terminology when working on topics concerning minorities and socially vulnerable groups.

The full report is available online at [www.media-azi.md](http://www.media-azi.md) ( <http://goo.gl/QwXy69> ).

*Ina PRISACARU-ZGLAVUTA*

# The Election Campaign Review

By European standards, the media have the obligation to cover electoral campaigns in a fair, balanced and impartial manner. These elections coverage principles refer to the overall program services of broadcasters in a certain period of time rather than to each individual program. The reason is that all broadcasters must report in an equidistant manner and give room to different political views throughout the election campaign (Recommendation No. R (99) 15 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Measures Concerning Media Coverage of Election Campaigns).

According to the monitoring reports of the Electronic Press Association, most TV channels in Moldova slipped while covering the campaign for the parliamentary elections of 30 November 2014. The problems discussed in this review have been observed during the monitoring of 12 TV channels for a two-month period. The monitoring covered two types of materials: a) election news items that were part of news digests; b) electoral programs (one per each TV channel); c) paid political advertising; and d) election debates.

## Violation of the Code of Professional Conduct

Media monitoring during the election campaign revealed a disproportionate number of violations of professional requirements while reporting conflict-prone events, which implies reporting of all aspects that are relevant for the subject matter. Data show that in at least 1/3 of the cases (34%), the journalists failed to comply with this rule. Moreover, it was found that the share of unprofessional news aired at two of the 12 TV channels was greater than that of news reported in line with the sources rule (Media Monitoring during the Campaign for 2014 Parliamentary Elections. Final Report).

In terms of impartiality, it was in fact disregarded by four TV channels (including two channels with national coverage), where biased news amounted to 20-40 percent. Cumulatively, this rule of professional ethics was violated in 15% of the cases, which is, at first sight, not as serious as in the case of conflict-prone reports. Such an approach is wrong, nevertheless, since we must strive at reaching 0% of biased reports and 0% of conflict-prone reports from a single source.

## Political Bias

The overall picture of election coverage by local media in terms of fairness, equidistance and impartiality reveals time after time persistent shortcomings in all three areas.

Eight of the 12 monitored TV channels, through electoral news items that were part of daily news digests, clearly favored and/or disfavored certain politicians and election contenders. They were favored or disfavored both by the amount of attention during election programs and the context in which they were shown.

If we look at the news aired during the election campaign (only as part of the main news digest of the day), we note that Prime TV, Publika TV, Channel 2 and Channel 3 clearly favored an election contender (Democrats), at a hardly imaginable frequency and with a hardly imaginable intensity, after all these years of the civil society's struggle against political bias in local media. The most relevant figures are the ones showing the share of the duration of real-time appearances of the contenders during news digests: 64% at Publika TV, 67% at Prime TV and 70% at Channel 2 and Channel 3. Respectively, Accent TV favored in the same manner another election contender (Patria Party) by giving them 'only' 40 percent of the duration of real-time interventions, TV7 - 32% (Liberal Democrats), N4 - 30% (Liberal Democrats) and Jurnal TV - 22% (Liberal Reformers).

Meanwhile, in the 2014 parliamentary election campaign the vicious practice of the previous years continued: election contenders were favored and disfavored by placing some of them exclusively or predominantly in a positive context and others – mostly in a negative context. Thus, most TV channels failed on purpose to keep their public commitment (made in the statements about their editorial policy during the election campaign), namely to inform voters in an adequate manner.

## Electoral Debates

Channel 2 and Channel 3, two of the five TV channels with national coverage, according to the list published by the Coordinating Council for Broadcasting, did not hold election debates, thus violating both the Election Code (Article 641, paragraph 3) that obliges them to do so, and the statements on their editorial policy during the election campaign, approved by Coordinating Council for Broadcasting, by which they committed to hold two debates each, during November 1-15, 2014.

Two TV channels with national coverage (Prime TV and Publika TV) aired election debates at inappropriate times (6.17, 6.20, 6.52, 10.15, 11.15, 12.15) thus limiting to the maximum

the number of potential watchers. Although they have not violated the law, those TV channels did not use debates in an appropriate manner, to properly inform the public.

Although the statements on editorial policy during the campaign for parliamentary elections on November 30, 2014 developed by Prime TV, Publika TV, Channel 2 and Channel 3 were identical, the first two held more debates than initially intended, while the last two failed to meet their commitments.

#### **The Performance of the National Public Broadcaster**

During the 2014 election campaign the National Public TV Channel Moldova 1 mostly acted in an appropriate way. Four years earlier it happened the first time and there were some reservations about its performance; this year, the national public broadcaster not only 'relapsed', but also was on top by a number of indicators: the number of electoral education news, the share of unbiased news, the relatively balanced treatment of the contenders, etc. In this regard, Moldova 1 left behind its old habits, characteristic of the entire period when the Communist Party was in power (2001-2009), when it used to support the ruling party and dispraise the opposition.

Although progress is evident, Moldova 1 lagged behind in terms of holding electoral debates. The moderators of electoral debates were, most often, impartial toward the guests; however, there also were cases of disfavoring election contenders. The manner of expression, the clearly biased approach to the topics discussed, the wording of the questions, the replies and comments of the moderators of the debates fall into the category of misconduct and violate point 43 of the Central Election Commission's Regulation: "producers and moderators of election debate programs shall be impartial, shall ask

questions in a clear manner, shall avoid tendentious or biased approaches".

#### **Election Advertising**

Election monitoring in terms of airing paid campaign advertising, except for the few minor infringements by some TV channels, brings us back to the discussion about the need to regulate political advertising during other periods than during election campaigns. Some parties and some politicians have promoted election advertising messages both in the media and on billboards long before the actual start of the election campaign. In such a situation, electoral contenders have not been on equal terms; hence, a revision of electoral legislation is needed, to make sure that all players not only know the rules of the game, but also know when it starts and when it ends.

#### **Conclusion**

The monitoring of the media campaign for parliamentary elections of 30 November 2014 showed that the Moldovan broadcasters needs 'reinforcements' when it comes to legal relations. From 2009 onwards, they gradually shifted from a rather restrictive legal framework to less strict provisions, on the assumption that the broadcasters, in a society undergoing democratization, will tend to self-regulate their behavior. It was a wrong assumption. Moreover, some media did what they pleased in 2014, knowing well that there was no risk of punishment and they could get away with nothing more but a public warning or insignificant fine. These ridiculous penalties are nothing if compared to the benefits from deliberate violation of legal provisions and of the rules of professional ethics. Meanwhile, a number of initiatives made it to legislators and we shall live and see if there enough will to remedy the situation.

*Vasile STATE*



# The evolution of perceptions about media (Republic of Moldova, 2010-2014)

During one single cycle of governance, the media from the Republic of Moldova and along with it, the manner of using and processing the provided information, have undergone significant changes. Today, the agenda is rather detached from the news bulletins broadcast on Prime TV, Pro TV, Publika TV and Jurnal TV (the latter two televisions appeared a few years ago, specialized initially only on news), each focused on different audience segments. In the following article you will find some benchmarks on this “transition”, but also some other phenomena such as the online information impact, the association of different information sources with politics and disappearance of the pluralism of opinions within one particular source.

The confidence in the media is probably one of the indicators with the most constant evolution in the period 2010-2014. Two key moments are worth mentioning here:

- **March 2011:** the highest level of trust in the media (69%), which can be explained by the “capitalization of confidence” phenomenon. This is a natural phenomenon accompanying the first months of

the new governance in the country. During that period, most institutions, political parties and politicians registered significant increases in terms of credibility.

- **October 2014:** the lowest level of trust in the media (48%), caused by the election period when the proximity of the media to the different political forces became apparent as to the population, as well as to some agencies that provided monitoring reports.

Broadly speaking, those who consistently had more confidence in the media were persons with higher education, employed, living in small towns from the country. The low confidence was most often associated with the residents of municipalities and consistently lower among people belonging to various ethnic groups (Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauzians, and Bulgarians etc.).

Since a study on the mass media phenomenon has not been yet conducted, we had to “collect” information from several polls and try to analyze the situation of each separate type of media (television, print, radio, Internet). The most important source of information in

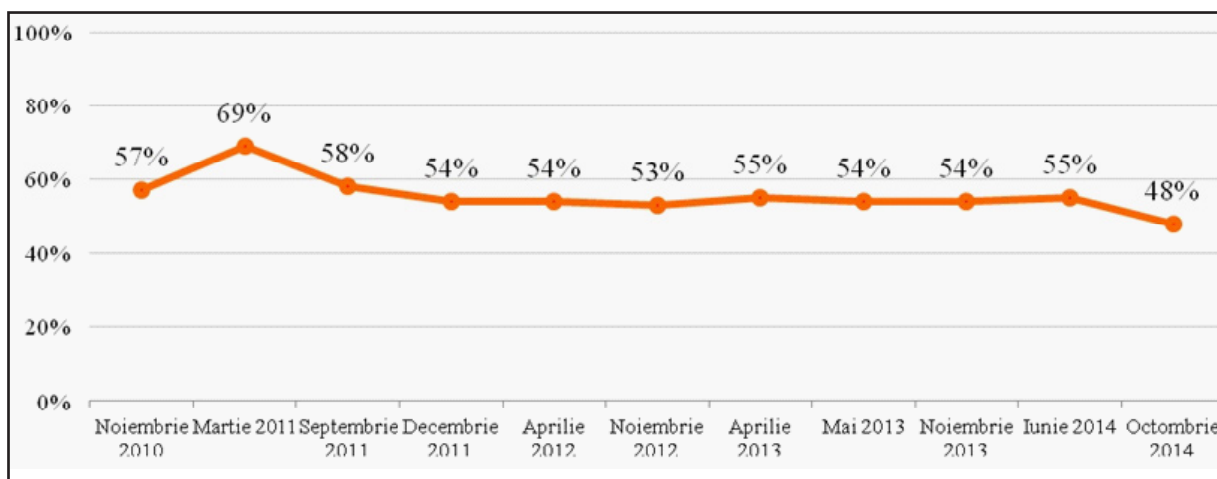


Chart 1. Trust in the media reflected in the surveys IMAS polls (2010-2014)

2010 was considered to be the Television (74%), followed by the Internet (10%), Radio (7%) and written press (2%). At the end of 2014, the ranking remained the same but the percentages suffered significant changes: Television (66%), followed by internet (23%) Radio (5%) and print media (2%). In just a few years, we have witnessed a major change in the role of the online environment as a source of information; in 2013-2014, was registered a continued growth in the popularity of the Internet as an information source that was 18%. The election campaign period and its specific character made us witness a new growth (up to 23%) which proved that a part of the electoral battle was deployed in a not so traditional environment.

This “mutation” is explained by several factors:

- The steady decrease in credibility of the information presented on TV: even though in 2010, 74% of the respondents said that the TV is the main source of information (including political one), only 55% considered it as the most credible as well (lower figure in 2014– 52%). Moreover, the degree of satisfaction vis-à-vis the level of information on topics of interest is rather low (September 2014). 22% of respondents are satisfied and very satisfied with the provision of information regarding the political life, 20% - information relating to the Government activity, 20% - information about the country economic situation, 18% - information about the country security level, 11% - information about the way in which the money received from external donors are spent, 10% - information on the public money spending.

- The increasingly clear political bias of some TV channels: NIT, Publika TV, Jurnal TV etc. The survey participants' opinions coincided with the data presented in the monitoring reports, in the context of an increasingly apparent proximity of the media, in terms of ownership and content, to certain political forces. In a survey conducted in 2013, 28% of the respondents were firmly convinced that the media institutions (TV, radio, print) are politically controlled, while 32% tended to believe in the same reasoning but were not sufficiently sure. Less than 20% believed in the media institutions' independence. In one of the qualitative research conducted during the 2014 election campaign, one of the participants said with pride and satisfaction that: “finally, it became clear what TV channel is ours”.

- Increase in the number of Internet users:

Yesterday	November 2010	October 2014
	18.1%	34.3%
In the last 7 days	9.1%	16.4%
In the last 4 weeks	4.0%	4.5%
In the last 12 months	2.1%	2.2%
More than 12 months ago	1.3%	11.5%
Never	61.0%	29.4%
Does not know	1.5%	0.2%
Does not respond	3.0%	1.4%

- And, certainly, the increased attention to blogs containing socio-political information: in April 2013, 4% of the respondents declared to visit/access them daily (5-7 times per week), other 5% - several times a week, and 8% - few times a month. Considering that before 2010, impact of blogs was barely 2%-4%, this growth can be considered a breakthrough.

The radio and the print media have failed to maintain their already small degree of influence in regard to the publication of information on current events. This can be seen when comparing the ratings of the major publications included in the report, in 2010 and in late 2011:

Publication	2010		2011	
	Readers for «Yesterday»	Readers for «The last 7 days»	Readers for «Yesterday»	Readers for «The last 7 days»
Komsomoliskaia Pravda	4.3%	11.9%	2.2%	11.4%
Timpul	1.7%	6.6%	0.8%	7.0%
Jurnal de Chişinău	1.7%	5.7%	0.8%	5.9%
Argumenti i Fikti	2.0%	7.8%	1.2%	8.2%
Local media	3.0%	10.5%	1.8%	8.9%

The “gold rating” period of the Moldovan media (when the level of credibility was 69%) ended rather quickly. It was due to the change of the political vector in 2010, by the emergence of some new news TV stations as well as by the rapid diversification of the online information sources. Many people believed in what they heard

and saw in the newscasts, while many TV channels enthusiastically created reports on the intense and effervescent political life, whose degree of transparency was incomparable to that provided before 2009 by Moldova 1 and NIT. It is no coincidence, by the end of 2011, 1st among citizens' satisfaction ranked the freedom of expression – 8% being very satisfied and 40% satisfied.



During these years, we have witnessed a change into the media consumption pattern: the Moldovan consumer of information becomes an active one, communicates increasingly active through the social networks, begins to create his own information consumption form throughout the day and in the evening, when he gets

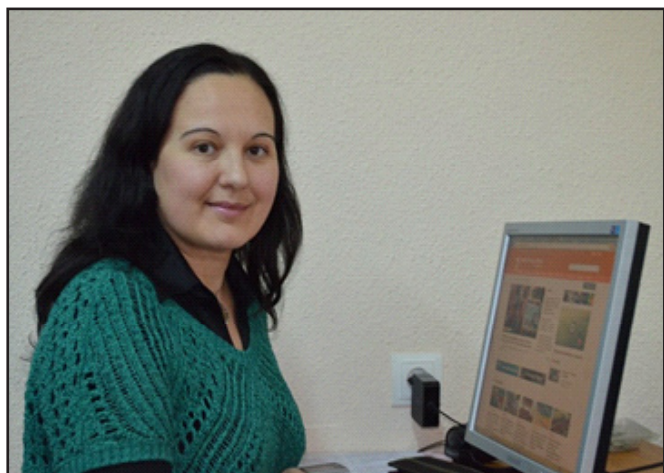
home, starts searching new forms such as the debates, analytical programs and looking for sources disproving or confirming the information that he had received.

After a short period of suspicion, the patronage and the partisanship lying behind some TV channels are perceived also by the common citizen and then extended to radio and the printed media. In 2013, nearly two-thirds of the respondents were of the opinion that the Moldovan media is controlled by certain politicians. The decrease in the audience and credibility of some TV news programs was an immediate consequence. People note that they are, more and more often, forced to browse through several channels in order to find all the opinions existing upon one particular issue. The plurality of views within the same source of information is slowly disappearing, and, alongside, the online environment becomes an easy alternative, with a variety of opportunities. Thanks to the widespread dissemination of the Internet (including in rural areas), the larger volume and the highest degree of credibility in the information available on the Internet go hand in hand, gaining, as a source of information, more than 10% in less than 4 years.

Taken as a whole, the media from Moldova is more a hope than a reliable source of information. A hope that the persons involved in media are the only ones who can stay on the side of the population in an environment where politicians are increasingly moving away from the real lives of the ordinary citizens.

*Doru PETRUTI*

# “The Journalists Who Consent to Be Pawns in Political Games Just Betray Their Profession”



*Interview with ALINA TURCANU, TV editor at Radio Free Europe, member of the Press Council, former editor of newspaper Adevarul (Truth) in Moldova*

***What is your opinion about media behavior in the current election campaign?***

Ugly, if we look at the general picture. The current campaign is the litmus test that shows how much independence and freedom there actually is in Moldovan media. There is just a handful of media that do their job honestly, informing the audience in an objective manner and reflecting equidistantly all electoral activity. Most, however, sell contenders, manipulate the public opinion, polish the image of certain parties and politicians, fling dirt at others, sustain lies and truncate reality. Some media are actually the political battle machines of their owners – a kind of party branches controlled by them – or become docile tools handled by the 'money bags' striving at becoming MP's. It is enough to watch briefly one TV channel or another to figure out whose it is or who supports it financially. I do not refer to political / electoral advertising that is properly marked and totally acceptable. I mean the skewed views presented to the audience through news digests and talk-shows. It is a proof of the lack of respect for the audience that are treated like fools who would not be able to understand that they are being lied to. The journalists who consent to be pawns in political games just betray their profession. Most do not even struggle with their sense of

conscience and many do not even understand that they are being used, while some, I guess, really believe that they are doing a good thing by singing hosannas to their beloved party. Have you heard of many journalists who had expressed publicly their outrage at being requested to canvass by their bosses?

***In your opinion, is the code of ethics for journalists an efficient tool to regulate this behavior? How much respect do journalists in Moldova actually have for this code?***

The code of ethics is nothing like the penal code, and the Press Council is nothing like a court of law. It's a self-regulation mechanism for the media; good-faith media institutions and journalists should voluntarily abide by the rules of common sense in what they do rather than do so for fear of possible sanctions. The code of ethics does not include special provisions regulating the behavior of the media during election campaigns; the rules it contains are valid at all times. Some journalists and media institutions just disregard them, especially during elections, being driven perhaps by the principle “à la guerre comme à la guerre”. In general, however, the attitude of the media that care about their reputation is different, which is easily observed from the way they respond to complaints about them received by the Press Council. Most prefer to resolve disputes amicably, to provide the right of reply, to repair mistakes, to apologize and take into account the recommendations of the Press Council so that the same situation does not repeat. However, nobody likes to admit publicly that he has done something wrong. There are media outlets that could not care less about the code of ethics though; they react aggressively to the notifications of the Press Council. Well, that's their level of understanding.

***What is the main problem faced by the Moldovan media at the moment?***

It's hard to identify a key one, as there are many, and all are interconnected and derive from one another. Let me give you examples of just several sets of issues. They are: lack of transparency of media ownership and political interference in the editorial activity, which turned some

media, particularly private television channels with national coverage, into brainwashing machines subordinate to the personal and group interests of the owners. Another serious problem is the degradation of the quality of journalism in Moldova, the superficiality, amateurism, ignorance and lack of professionalism. Lately, there have been launched a myriad of news websites that reek of errors and stupidity! I wonder what kind of professionals are trained at our journalism departments, if many graduates cannot, at least, express their thoughts correctly in Romanian and lack basic literacy skills? We also have many problems when it comes to the economic independence of the media, many survive only thanks to grants from foreign donors that support them to help them maintain editorial independence. We lack solidarity, we cannot boast of public exposures and press campaigns that have resulted in ministers' leaving offices or corrupted officials' and thieves' prosecution. It is not because we lack potential, but rather because we are not united enough to go all the way. Many prefer to act as mercenaries rather than journalists, or to be compliant, get paid and be pleased with the degree of freedom of speech allowed by their bosses.

***The media is often blamed for manipulating public opinion. Why do they resort to manipulation? As a journalist, have you ever witnessed it?***

The media never manipulates public opinion at their own will, just for the sake of manipulation. The media manipulating public opinion is just a tool, most often they follow the orders of those who control them, whose interests lie in influencing the thinking and behavior of people. The goal of these puppeteers is to turn people into easy-to-handle puppets, they do not need people who are able to think for themselves and come to their own conclusions. A good example of serious manipulation of public opinion is the depiction by most media in Russia of what is happening in Eastern Ukraine through the lens provided by the leadership in Moscow. Still, there are cases of manipulating public opinion in our country, too. Personally, I have witnessed it only as a media consumer, I have never resorted to such dirty tricks as a journalist.

***How can a publication in Moldova survive in conditions of "auroral storms" - financial crisis, political interference, vested interests etc.?***

It's a tough question. I do not know any magic recipe for success; I would have used it if I knew it and would have shared gladly with my colleagues. Adevarul, the newspaper at which I was editor in chief for three and a half years, had resisted political pressure; our employers from Romania had not limited in any way our freedom of speech and had not interfered with our editorial policy; however, financial

troubles did bring us down. I am not trying here to avoid the blame for this failure, but I want to specify that I was in charge of the editorial part only at the newspaper and had nothing to do with finance. My experience with Adevarul Moldova has taught me that producing something of good quality, practicing true journalism, having editorial independence and a very good team of journalists are not enough to survive in the market. You must be able to sell what you produce, to function as a business. Adevarul was conceived as a Romanian business in Moldova; however, something went wrong because of management mistakes, the difficulties related to attracting advertising by Romanian language media, insufficient promotion. Besides, we cannot ignore the global trend of gradual replacement of the printed media. However, I still believe in its future; it will most likely become a niche product rather than a mass product. To tackle unequal competition with TV and online media, newspapers must offer something else – not yesterday's news, but investigations, analyses, interviews, reports, stories. One solution would be to offer additional products and services that would financially support the newspaper.

***You have built a competitive media team in the market, but... it did not last long. Why do teams of journalists fray so easily in Moldova?***

I should clarify that it wasn't me who had built the team; my colleagues from Romania started the Adevarul Moldova project. Still, I dare to think that it is partly my merit that the team was competitive in the market for almost four years. There was some kind of chemistry between us, as there is in love relationships, probably, and it helped us act in perfect sync, complete each other, function as a whole without losing the individuality of each of us. I have said it many times: I'm proud of my colleagues at the newspaper, they are all excellent professionals, honest, upright and honorable journalists, and they have never yielded to dishonorable compromises. We all worked with much passion and dedication, we did not think of our work as just a job. Indeed, some people left over time and others replaced them: it's a natural process. However, I could not say that our team frayed easily, as other teams of journalists in Moldova do. Even in times when there were wage arrears, when the newspaper was undergoing insolvency, when we were short of staff, we kept the newspaper going, hoping that a solution would be found and there would be a way to get yet another issue printed. A solution was found eventually, it seems, but it was one with many variables and I did not count much in the equation. I anticipated 'surprises' and I resigned. Then other colleagues followed my lead. Since there were rumors about Adevarul being under the control of a certain politician, I announced then, in early September, that we chose to no longer be part of the Adevarul brand. I need to clarify that we had no confirmation of the rumors, but we did

not want our names to be associated in any way with certain names until proven that the rumors had no substance.

***What lessons did you learn from your experience as editor in chief of Adevarul Moldova?***

Overall, the experience at Adevarul was great, despite the bitter aftertaste. One lesson is that one should not put too much heart in her work, so that it would be easier to overcome eventual failures, losses, disappointments. I do not know if I will remember this lesson in my future work. When one does not put her heart in what she does, is there satisfaction from a job well done, can she be credible or proud of herself?

***Now you are at a new beginning. Could you share something about the plans you are working on?***

Now I'm part of Radio Free Europe Team, as editor of a new project, a TV show that will be aired from November 3 on the public TV channel Moldova 1. The show is called Pur si Simplu (Plain and Simple) and we plan to talk in simple terms, so that anyone can understand, without any bitterness

and bias, about our life as it is, with good and bad things, about the things we that worry us, the people are proud of etc. I accepted the Free Europe Radio's offer gladly, as it is one of the few media that shares the same values, where I feel I can work as I want to; it is a media outlet with tradition, it is truly free and independent, recognized and respected for the quality of journalistic performance. I am going to continue my collaboration with the Center for Investigative Journalism, with RISE Moldova. I am also a member of the Press Council, so I have a lot to do.

***In conclusion, how optimistic are you about the future of local media?***

I think we've talked enough about shortcomings. It's not all gloomy in our press; good things happen, too. There are many good journalists, whom I respect and who try hard to do their job honestly, even in poor economic conditions, even at the media controlled by politicians. It does not happen often, but still there are investigations, reports, programs that surprise me and make me jealous (in a good way) and make me wish that it had been me who produced them.

***Media Azi  
31 October 2014***

# Guidelines for Understanding and Reporting Statistics

*A source for journalists and communicators – assuming that anybody still needs it in this world of ratings and visualizations*

“A valuable set of teaching aids to support the training of future journalists and communication specialists”: it is the Romanian Statistical Review’s description of the set of statistical information presented for teaching purposes, which includes three pieces: “Communications statistics”, “Statistical data interpretation in journalism” and “Guidelines for understanding and reporting about statistics. Resource for journalists and communicators”. The publications were edited in Chisinau.

The Romanian Statistical Review says that ‘the two manuals are accompanied by a helpful practical tool comprising a wealth of examples and case studies, entitled “Guidelines for Understanding and Reporting about Statistics”. Resource for journalists and communicators.

“If statistics means collection, presentation, analysis and interpretation of numerical data and is a science through which we learn, think and perceive reality in figures, it is closely connected with the other two areas in which reflection, reading, writing and relating are just as necessary: journalism and communication”, say the authors of the Guidelines for Understanding and Reporting about Statistics. Resource for journalists and communicators, published in Chisinau.

“Going hand in hand, statistics, communication and journalism can bring major benefits to the human community. They can help people understand and get aware of what is happening around them, and thus encourage them to take concrete action. They can stimulate authorities to

perform at the same level as the authorities in the countries we want to get closer to. Or they can simply help everyone to know and to learn more, to better find one’s way through the maze of the contemporary world, to act consciously, to develop and live a productive life”, say the authors of this Guidelines for Understanding and Reporting about Statistics. Resource for journalists and communicators.

The Guidelines include

- **Statistical language: scientific and yet easily comprehensible**

The science of statistics has borrowed precision and certainty from mathematics and, like any other science, has a specific language. When presented in the media, statistical data are sometimes too much, sometimes they are incomprehensible or is related using specific terms that tell nothing to the audience.

The task of the professionals - both statisticians and journalists - is to find the middle ground and give them all what they need, so that their texts and messages are useful for everybody.

- **Common errors: from mistakes to accuracy**

In fact, there are several types of media. Each can give a different answer and we need to find the rationale behind reporting a certain fact. To make a statement, article or speech more dramatic, some often use the most extreme number from a set of possible values, which is an exaggerated value – a possible, but unlikely one. Still, this is just one of the many errors made by the media.



- **Writing and reporting figures in journalism and communication: cumulating figures**

Just as words, figures and statistics have different meanings in different contexts, especially when written differently. There is a set of best practices in journalism, which help professionals to streamline the reporting of figures and make order in the way they understand them.

Even when it comes to the simple matter of reporting percentages, there are more than one ways one can write them: percent or %. The rule is to streamline the way we report percentages in a text. Similarly, there should be single style for writing figures in a text, so that they can be compared with little effort.

- **Percentages and risks: understanding deviations in relative and absolute terms**

Knowing about relative and absolute deviations shows, for instance, how great a risk is and how it can affect us. Before people react to a percentage, they need to realize what it really says, and therefore it needs to be placed in context. Both journalists and communicators need to act responsibly and strive at preventing panic and damage when disseminating information.

- **Humanization of statistics: figures are actually about people**

The most effective are the figures that are compared, those placed in a specific context, those used sparsely and, most of all, those that show the people behind them. Some official used to say that governments reporting statistics have no children, while people do, and we will see further in this text the relevance of this observation. Behind

numbers, there is a real world represented by them: the children who go to bed hungry every night have names; the women who die in childbirth from preventable causes have families who mourn them; the farmers receiving or not receiving sufficient subsidies work in a certain region and have employees for whom they are responsible.

- **Illustrating statistics: from graphics to infographics and videographics**

Pictures, photos and images may fill with life anything, even dry and accurate figures. Currently, with the rise of online communications, charts are replaced by infographics and videographics. Infographics show information visually: they explain clearly something complicated, they are appealing, fast and can be shared on social media. And they fit entire reports.

- **Ethical aspects of using statistical data**

Access to statistical data implies an ethical approach: both journalists and communicators must comply with basic ethical principles lying on three pillars: integrity, competence and confidentiality.

“This publication connects statistics, journalism and communication to provide the necessary tools that benefit the three professions: statisticians, journalists and communicators. These Guidelines include advice, best practices, observations and genuine experiences that may help media and communications professionals to report statistics in an accurate effective manner. The guidelines are intended both for those who have started their professional careers sitting in front of typewriters/computers and those who can do it well only with the help of gadgets”.

*Igor GUZUN*



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**Contributors:**

*Dorin SCOBIOALA, Doina COSTIN, Ludmila ANDRONIC,  
Ion PREASCA, Vitalie CIOBANU, Ina PRISACARU-ZGLAVUTA,  
Vasile STATE, Doru PETRUTI, Alina TURCANU, Igor GUZUN*

**Editor:**

Tatiana CORAI

**Translation:**

Nicoleta CULAVA

**Coordinator:**

Victoria TATARU

**Inside photos:**

IJC Archive

**Layout:**

Marcel MARGINEANU

Please send your opinions, suggestions, and contributions to the following address

**The Independent Journalism Center**

53 Sciusev Street,  
2012 Chisinau, Republic of Moldova  
Tel: (+373 22) 213652, 227539  
Fax: (+373 22) 226681

e-mail: [coordonator@ijc.md](mailto:coordonator@ijc.md)

<http://www.media-azi.md>

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