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June 2013



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Peasants' problems are covered by the media only after being discussed by politicians

Moldova experienced an unprecedented drought in 2012. Following the example of authorities, the media suddenly became worried around mid-August that the country and its people will suffer due to bad weather conditions. Before then, the subject was covered tangentially only by some media outlets.

In this article we are going to analyze how the media reported on the phenomenon, especially since Moldova is considered an agricultural country. Our study covered news items and articles published or broadcast every Tuesday over the period of June and August. We monitored the main newscasts of the three most important television stations (*Moldova 1*, *Prime TV* and *Pro TV Chisinau*), top three radio stations (*Radio Moldova*, *Radio Europa Liberă* and *Vocea Basarabiei*), three national newspapers (*Adevărul Moldova*, *Moldova Suverană* and *Panorama*) and a regional weekly (*Cuvântul*, which appears on Fridays), as well as two news portals (*unimedia.md* and *omg.md*).

A first analysis shows how, with very few exceptions, politics sets the media agenda in Chisinau. Most of the materials on this topic were published or broadcast only after a party or an organization close to a political formation expressed their opinion, often at a press conference. The journalists' inclination for convenience goes so far that they will publish a simple shorthand report, without adopting an additional neutral voice, much less the response of the accused party. "Champions" in this regard are the journalists of *Omega* and *Moldova Suverană*, closely followed by those from *Vocea Basarabiei* and *unimedia.md*. The latter are not so much partisans, as they are affected by the copy-paste phenomenon or are simply comfortable. But let us take it one by one.

The shortcomings of print and online media

The *omg.md* portal does not hesitate to be the mouthpiece of the Communist Party. On 10th July 2012, when the latter called the minister of Agriculture, Vasile Bumacov, to hearings, the portal's journalists published five news items, all accusing the government. Neither before, nor after the effects of the drought were so catastrophic.

In five cases the *Omega* journalists expressed their views in informative materials, contrary to all rules of work ethics. An example in this regard is the story "The minister of Agriculture confirms that the price of bread will grow". The journalist

quoted the official, who had spoken about the growth of the price on wheat and stated that the cost of wheat is only 30% of the bread price. This quote was broadcast by nearly all media outlets. *Omega* was the only one to conclude that the price would grow, or, as the reporter said after closing the Minister's quote, "...thus recognizing that we should expect more expensive bread."

Omg.md is by far the leader in the unprofessional treatment of subjects. In a total of seven cases its reporters presented only the opinion of the MPs representing the Communist Party, although the meeting they were reporting about was attended by the second party as well, the one accused of all evils.

Like those of *Omega*, the journalists of *Moldova Suverană* use poor language and often resort to labeling. According to this publication, the culprit of extreme weather conditions is the "criminal incompetence of the Government." Also, *Moldova Suverană* presents to the public party statements without marking them as political advertising (??).

One source = one news item

The abovementioned meeting generated a torrent of news about the drought in Moldova, both at public and private stations, the latter being preoccupied mostly with how the hot weather was tackled by the girls in bikinis on the banks of ponds rather than what peasants do on the fields.

Such outlets as *Vocea Basarabiei*, *Radio Moldova*, *Moldova 1* or *Unimedia* informed the public about the effects of the disaster only after sheep breeders, beekeepers and farmers growing sugar beet organized press conferences in Chisinau. In most cases, the farmers' wishes and requests for urgent action from authorities were the only sources cited by the media.

Reality is what we show you

The public TV station adopted a slightly better approach in terms of diversity of sources. But its journalists, too, were stingy in their materials. Most of the materials broadcast by *Moldova 1* stated only what farmers thought about the VAT increase, what the minister said about irrigation or what scientists said about possible increases in food prices.

However, unlike in previous monitoring surveys, the tone of the materials broadcast by *Moldova 1* was neutral and the coverage was balanced. Also, the public station did not stop at findings and consequences, but also tried to find solutions, reporting about the irrigation systems twice.

Of all the TV stations, *Prime TV* dedicated the most airtime to the phenomenon and made the most of the original reports at the scene. Even if the drought was a secondary subject, the station informed the public that the extreme temperatures caused the fish to suffocate in the water or the vines to dry in the fields.

In terms of balancing sources, *Prime TV* journalists used a new incomprehensible technique. In three of the controversial materials, in which decision-makers were asked for a reaction, reporters resorted to paraphrasing without giving the sound bite. However, all journalists know that the most credible reports include recorded statements.

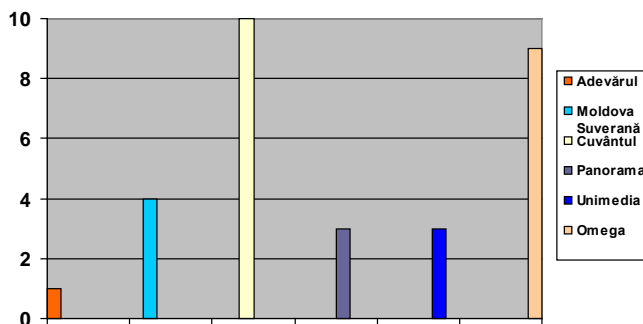
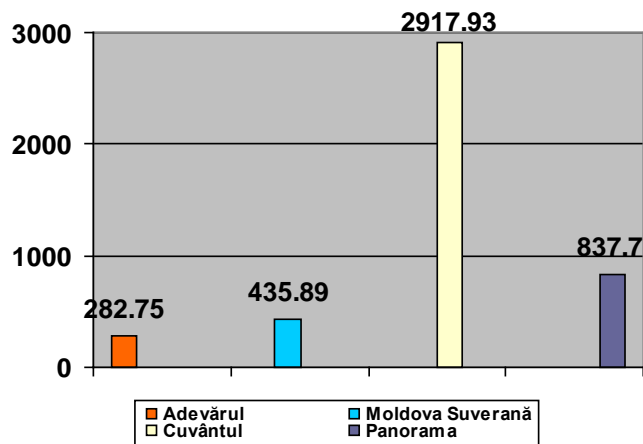
Pro TV and *Adevărul* had a neutral approach, but they did not really engage in reporting on this phenomenon.

Radio Moldova, which has a network of local correspondents, informed the public about the drought only after a session of the Communist Party, after a press conference and after a general protest of farmers. On 31st July, all peasants' problems suddenly became important, and more than a half the newscast was dedicated to them. This situation proved the station's cynical attitude towards its largely rural public.

Conclusion

A total of 61 materials, 30 in print and online media and 31 in broadcasting, were produced during the monitoring period. In nearly half (14 out of 30) the materials published in newspapers and online the drought was of secondary importance, and in three cases the subject was merely mentioned. The regional weekly *Cuvântul* allocated the most space to this subject – 2917.83 cm², or ten articles. The daily *Adevărul* was on the opposite end of the ranking; it published only one comment on the topic and a reference in an informative account, totaling 282.75 cm². Among the online publications, *omg.md* had the most stories on the topic (9).

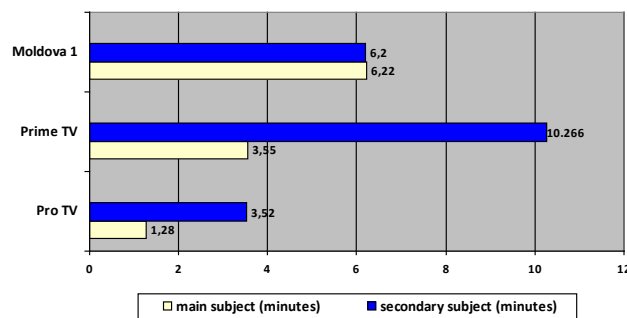
Figure 1 and 2: Space (in cm²) provided for the drought coverage and the number of materials published during the monitoring period

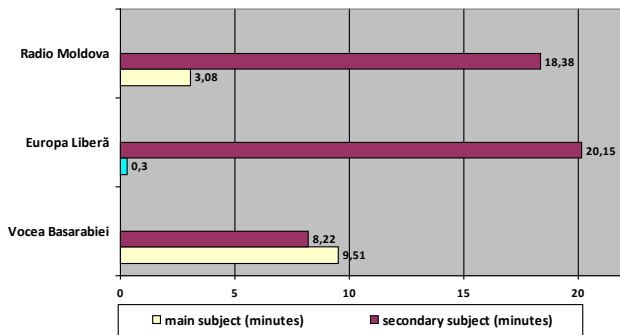


Three outlets – *Unimedia*, *Moldova Suverană* and *Omega* – used only one source per story each. *Panorama* had, on average, 1.66 sources, and *Cuvântul* – 2.5 sources.

In the broadcasting media, the most materials were aired by *Radio Moldova* (8), *Moldova 1* (7), *Prime TV* (6) and *Vocea Basarabiei* (6). In terms of duration, the most airtime was given to the topic by *Radio Moldova* (23.46 minutes). Among televisions, *Prime TV* was the top in this regard, with 14.21 minutes.

Figure 7 and 8: Duration of materials broadcast on radio and television, according to the focus





Only a third of the broadcasting media reports referred to the drought directly, and only half of the articles published in print and online media had the consequences of the disaster as their main subject. In other cases, the drought was a secondary topic.

For a mainly agrarian country we should have more analyses, interviews and debates on this subject, which should also contain solutions to the problem.

Except for the newspapers *Panorama* and *Cuvântul* and the radio station *Europa Liberă*, which had analyses as well, most outlets only produced news. In our opinion, the small share of analytical materials and interviews reveal the non-involvement of journalists.

Unfortunately, many media outlets use a single source to cover the events. In most cases, reporters are comfortable and fail to develop the subject that they find in a press release, conference or Parliament session, only covering statements.

Valentina BASIUL

What is the use of domestic media production?

Problem background

The strategy of covering the national territory with broadcasting services (2011-2015), elaborated and approved by the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC) [1], stipulates that by the end of 2011 a decision shall be adopted, regulating the proportion of domestic, owned and European production. And although Moldova has a deeply rooted practice of writing one thing and doing something else, in February 2012 the BCC published on its official website a draft decision providing that *“the share of domestic products (except cinematographic products) in weekly broadcasting shall constitute no less than 30%”* and that *“the broadcasters whose weekly broadcasting contains less than 30% of domestic production shall present to the BCC for approval, before 01.05.2012, general concepts of program services.”* [2] At the same time, the BCC submitted the abovementioned draft to the specialized institutions of civil society, such as the National Association of Employers in Broadcasting of Moldova (NAEBM), the Press Council, the Independent Journalism Centre, the Electronic Press Association from Moldova, the Public Association “Apollo”. At the time, only “Apollo” reacted presenting a number of suggestions. The other institutions, including the broadcasters directly affected by the draft decision, had no objections. So, on 28th December 2012, in a public meeting the BCC adopted Decision 185 *“on the share of domestic programs in broadcasting services”*. Among other matters, the Decision stipulates as follows: *“From 01.04.2013, the share of domestic programs in the program services of the broadcasters that fall under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova shall constitute no less than 30% of their weekly broadcasting amounts, and at least half of it shall be broadcast during prime time in the state language. Commercials, promo and teleshopping shall not be considered when calculating the share of domestic programs”,* and *“The television and radio stations whose amount of domestic programs is less than 30% of weekly broadcasting shall present to the BCC for approval, before 01.03.2013, new general concepts of program services.”* [3] The decision was published in the Official Monitor no. 6-9 of 11.01.2013 and... very soon it sparked controversy. Some TV and radio stations accused the BCC of abuse of authority, while the NAEBM addressed the specialized parliamentary commission, claiming the new provisions will cause the bankruptcy of many broadcasters. The parliamentary commission debated this issue and sent a letter to the BCC, signaling the illegality of the decision. At the same time, the representatives of the NAEBM challenged the decision of the BCC in court. We remind audiences that

the NAEBM was founded in 2010 by 14 broadcasters (seven radio stations – Megapolis FM, Europa Plus, Retro FM, Radio 7, Pro FM, Radio 21; and 7 TV stations – TNT, N4, TVC 21, Pro TV, Accent TV, TV 7), all from the capital, and that upon its establishment, the founders declared that *“the organization is apolitical and intends to contribute to the development of mass media in the Republic of Moldova.”* [4]

The appeal to court has generated controversy in society. In a special *Jurnal TV* program, the chairman of the BCC said that the regulatory authority *“will not back down”* and that *“the stations’ owners will have to comply with the decision”*. The Liberal Party MP Valeriu Saharneanu in the same TV program said, *“To be a parasite, to do nothing and to live on someone else’s product – to them it’s convenient; now let them risk once again. Maybe they’ll find someone they can bribe in court and be pardoned for a while. Those who make domestic products are punished, forced to invest a lot, while those who gather the main fruit – advertising – have a couple of employees and some TV shows about funny animals.”* In that context, the “Apollo” president Vasile Nastase welcomed the BCC position of maintaining the broadcasters’ obligation to air 30% of domestic product, and he emphasized: *“We speak about normality, while they speak about something different; and these people that have fabulous incomes from rebroadcasts pollute our audiovisual environment and have an absolutely negative influence on our national consciousness.”* A member of the BCC, Vitalie Tabunscic, expressed his astonishment: *“I really can’t understand how one can challenge this decision. Here we reach a ridiculous situation of not complying with the commitments that we ourselves signed.”* The BCC member meant the commitments that broadcasters made upon obtaining broadcasting licenses. [5] One day before the obligation of providing 30% of domestic media products in weekly broadcasting entered into force, the parliamentary commission organized a meeting where they invited members of the BCC, broadcasters and broadcasting experts. At the meeting, the NAEBM chairman Dan Lozovan said: *“Private televisions pay a percentage into the budget. At the same time, we have a public television, Teleradio Moldova, which gets money from the budget and from advertising, and it is its obligation to develop the domestic product and to promote the Romanian language.”* The commission chairman, Chiril Lucinschi, addressed the BCC members with the opinion that: *“You must understand that television is not a production company. I’m sorry that you, those from the BCC, did not discuss it. We must think about the tax codes and tax incentives that can be granted to*

those who are interested in producing domestic works. What have you done in this regard? You did nothing, you don't even know, but it is essential that you know how television works." In his turn, the BCC chairman, Marian Pocaznoi, reiterated the regulator's position: "The majority of the Moldovan TV stations rebroadcast products from the Russian Federation and Romania, while the broadcasters that want to invest into the industry face unfair competition." In this context, the chairman of "Apollo" was convinced that: "Broadcasters are backed by the people that have direct interests in the industry, that do not understand its importance for the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova and keep parasitizing and obtaining undue incomes combined with parliamentary activity." [6] The media in Chisinau repeatedly wrote that the chairman of the parliamentary commission on mass media is the owner of some broadcasters that rebroadcast programs from Russia and that for this exact reason he resists the reform.

The Court of Appeal suspended the decision of the BCC, so, until the final verdict, the broadcasters that fail to provide at least 30% of their weekly broadcasting with domestic product and with product in the Romanian language cannot be sanctioned. The reaction of the BCC chairman was as follows: "I believe that the principle of separation of powers has been violated. It creates a precedent in the market; when the BCC imposes restrictions or conditions targeting the development of broadcasting, we find ourselves with a decision of the Court of Appeal suspending our decision. Given our experience, the suspension may take years." At that time, the press said that: "the decision belongs to 3 judges: Tamara Pelin, Boris Bîrcă and Mihail Ciugureanu. The latter two became renown after their involvement in some scandals." [7] The Court of Appeal issued the decision just on the eve of the BCC meeting of 2 May 2013, when the latter was to analyze the report on the monitoring of 12 television stations between 5th and 12th April in terms of compliance with the share of domestic production. So, the BCC had to postpone the monitoring analysis to a later meeting, and to examine the compliance with the share of domestic production based not on the decision of 28th December 2012, but on the televisions' own commitments taken by means of the general concepts of programs. [8]

Whether by chance or not, the court hearing between the BCC and the TV stations that challenged the decision requiring 30% of compulsory domestic product took place on the same day as when the specialized parliamentary commission debated the issue with the participation of broadcasters and civil society representatives. The plaintiff, however, failed to appear in court. Some experts considered that a deliberate attempt to delay the trial after the Court of Appeal suspended the execution of the BCC decision for the duration of litigation.

The representatives of the Union of Professional Artists organized a flash mob as reaction to the decision of the Court

of Appeal, where they expressed dissatisfaction with the suspension of the BCC decision: "And because singers find that the judges' decision is false, they sang falsetto as well. The artists claim that the domestic product is neglected in Moldova, and for this reason they have no incentive to create. The representatives of the Union of Professional Artists asked senior authorities to get involved in this situation." [9]

A problem that is a pseudo-problem

The 30% problem is a false problem, which caused much ado about nothing. And this is most regrettable. It consumes energy, nerves, time and money - money for reinventing the bicycle.

What happened actually? Broadcasters were asked, for some reason by a special decision, to comply with the commitments they made before obtaining broadcasting licenses. Their own commitments! Because, for example, the BCC monitoring of 5-11 April 2013 found the following situation at the monitored TV stations: *Prime* instead of 53% of domestic product, as it committed to have, had 16.68%; *Canal 3* had 29.45% of domestic product instead of 31.08%; *2 Plus* managed 29.45% instead of 36.03%; *RTR Moldova* declared 38% of domestic product and ensured 25.72%; *Pro TV Chisinau* committed to have 33% and had 24.63%. [10] This situation was and is characteristic of the majority of broadcasters. And the relations between the BCC and broadcasters, especially some of them, for long years has resembled a hide-and-seek game – one party pretends to have hidden and the other seeking it.

A separate decision of the BCC was not necessary. What was needed was the supervision of broadcasters' activity without likes or dislikes. Constant supervision. And that's it. According to the national broadcasting legislation, supervision is a right, a responsibility and an obligation of the BCC. However, since the appearance of the regulatory authority, this responsibility has been exercised sporadically, anemically and, the saddest thing, often selectively. The first "fruit" of such supervision were the restraints for *Antena C* and *Euro TV*. It was the lack of adequate supervision or the broadcasting legislation being ignored that caused the agitation with the 30%.

The current Broadcasting Code was adopted in 2006, and the first strategy intended for covering the national territory with broadcasting programs, a year later. Among other things, the strategy defined several important notions in order to ensure adequate supervision of the content of program services, including:

Programs of local interest – news and programs of any type, produced and broadcast by a local broadcaster or a local network based on domestic information.

Programs of regional interest – news and programs of any type, produced and broadcast by a regional broadcaster or a

regional network based on regional information.

Programs of national interest – news and programs of any type, produced and broadcast by a national broadcaster or a national network based on national information.

Minimum standard of information by means of program services – the mandatory amount of programs of local/regional and national interest in own program services, established by the BCC, variable in time and offered by a certain number of types of broadcasters. [11]

These definitions were a clear mechanism for the BCC in establishing the quotas upon granting broadcasting licenses, and subsequently, via monitoring, upon calculation of quotas of programs of domestic/regional/national interest, so as to reach Objective 3 of the Strategy: **To ensure citizens' access to a minimum standard of information by means of program services offered by the existing domestic, regional and national broadcasters.**

But how did the BCC really act? The Strategy for 2011-2015, which makes a review of the implementation of the first Strategy, says: *"This objective (i.e. Objective 3 – A/N) has been achieved. Thus, 11 studios have been established ("Primul Canal Muzical-Distractiv de Alternativă", "ALT TV", "Inter TV", "Accent TV", "AICI TV", "RU-TV Moldova", "TV Călărași", "Nis TV", "VTV-Ungheni", "Busuioc TV", "NOROC") with no terrestrial TV channels and whose program services are distributed via cable networks. The number of studios broadcasting via satellite has considerably increased, including Publika TV and Jurnal TV – the informational channels rebroadcast by practically all cable networks of the country. Over the last year, the number of radio stations and local TV studios has also increased significantly. Only at the contest of 21 April 2011 broadcasting licenses were granted to 6 local radio stations, and the Radio Mingir station extended its broadcasting area, covering now the city of Hincești."* Does anyone understand anything at all of what it means? It seems that not even those who approved the Strategy, but so it says and so it has been published in the Official Monitor. The further, the more difficult. Let's see how Objective 6 (**Protection of linguistic, cultural and national heritage**) has been achieved. Here is the exact wording: *"The BCC supervises the percentage of the stations' own production and domestic production of information and analysis aired by broadcasters which, according to the Broadcasting Code, since 1 January 2010 constitutes at least 80% in the official language. For this purpose, in 2008, the BCC elaborated and approved according to a decision the form of the General Concept of a Program Service – a document specifying the share of the stations' own programs, domestic programs and European works, which facilitates both the procedure of expert assessment of the broadcasters' program services and the accounting of these quotas. Nevertheless, the BCC faces increased difficulties in the realization of this objective because of the deficiencies in the Broadcasting Code."*

Especially in Article 11 paragraph 2 referring to the "own and domestic production" and "own production". The extract has been taken out of the Strategy for 2011-2015. It is a known situation: the BCC complains of having no instruments and mechanisms while actually having them! The issue is that the form of the General Concept says nothing about *"programs of domestic/regional/national interest"*, but these notions had been defined since as far back as 2007 in an official document, the first Strategy, for the exact purpose of overcoming the vagueness of some definitions provided by the legislation. And if the situation is this, some rhetorical questions can be asked: Does the BCC know what its own strategies say? And if not, why not? And if yes, what is the good in that? The line of questions can get to *"What is the need of legislation, strategies and regulation authorities anyway?"* It is a paradox, but the answer is given by our harsh Moldovan reality: because we endlessly mime the development of broadcast according to democratic principles. For these reasons I said that there was no need in a separate decision forcing broadcasters to comply with their own commitments. On the one hand, the decision is unnecessary – it doubles the regulatory framework that has existed since 2006-2007, and on the other hand, the stipulations of the decision are extremely easy to fulfill. And some broadcasters, especially among televisions, have proven it. For instance, you "take out" (that is so as not to say "steal") from the Internet someone else's images, as many as you want, "season" them with texts of local relevance, and "sell" it all as a "useful" product to the public and as a "domestic" product to the BCC. Can the BCC somehow respond to such a manner of implementation of its decision?! Of course not. Because even after about six years since it had been defined, it still lacks the phrases *"programs of domestic/regional/national interest"* that would eliminate the temptation of doing speculation or miming actions according to the BCC requirements. One more "recipe" of complying with the BCC decision is to produce a newscast with the longest topics and repeat it until you get one half of the 30% in prime time and the other half – even at night. A third recipe: you produce 30% for a station and broadcast it on all the stations that belong to you. And you are clean before the BCC. The viewers are not so important. Or not important at all. You cannot be sanctioned. So the problem with the 30% is a pseudo problem. But there is such agitation among MPs, the BCC members, broadcasters, media NGOs and judges! So much time and nerves wasted! And so many spears broken, so many salaries paid regularly just to "blow up" this pseudo problem!

A problem that is not a pseudo-problem

The true problem is that of information and informing citizens through media outlets. It has direct tangencies with the media industry, which is specific and seeks not only profit, but also the satisfaction of the citizens' needs in information. The media industry has become one of the most profitable

areas of economy only in the societies that have an optimum interaction between the three pillars supporting mass media development: corporate business (providers of advertising), the State (regulator) and the society (the public that has time and money). For the mass media economy, the profit can be maximized only by maximizing the audience. The American researcher of Canadian origin Dallas Smythe was among the first to say, as far back as in 1977, that the “goods” of mass media are the audience, formed by the content offered to it. D. Smythe connects mass media, the audience and the advertisers into an indispensable triad. Mass media economy is part of the market economy not only and not so much for making specific ideological product and “planting” it into the conscience of the audience, but more so as to form mass audiences and specific audiences and offer them to advertisers. The process by which the audience is attributed the characteristics of the goods produced for sale only integrates the media industry into the market economy. It is the “production” of mass audiences and not the reproduction of ideology that is the main task of the media in market economy. [12] Robert Picard, one of the most notable American researchers who is especially concerned with the analysis of interrelations within the classical triangle “mass media – audience – advertisers” has formulated the essence of the media market, introducing the notion of double media market – that of goods and services. [13] On the goods market mass media offer content, i.e. information, opinions and entertainment, and on the services market – advertisers’ access to the audience that it had formed. Thus, R. Picard set the basis of the most important concept that lies at the foundation of the modern media economy. According to it, the media industry, which is atypical, makes a double product and operates on a double market. On the goods market the media product is offered in the form of newspapers, journals, books, radio and TV shows, cable TV channels, video products, etc. The content as goods is intended for the audience that also represents the consumer of mass media. The pluralism and diversity of media outlets promise double benefits: sources of information for consumers and advertising. It is a market of content and it competes with contents. On the services market, mass media offer advertisers access to their audiences. Mass media as industry needs a complex approach, considering their social and economic functions. Economists believe that mass media oriented towards the mass audience is an indispensable mechanism of market economy that operates in the area of realization and consumption. Political scientists consider that mass media is a key institution that forms the modern person’s ideological and conceptual positions about the world. In fact, however, separate approaches cannot explain the specificity of the media industry as a social subsystem operating simultaneously on the double market of goods and services. The most important goods produced by the media industry are the audiences that are “offered” to advertisers – in market economies, or to politicians – in authoritarian regimes.

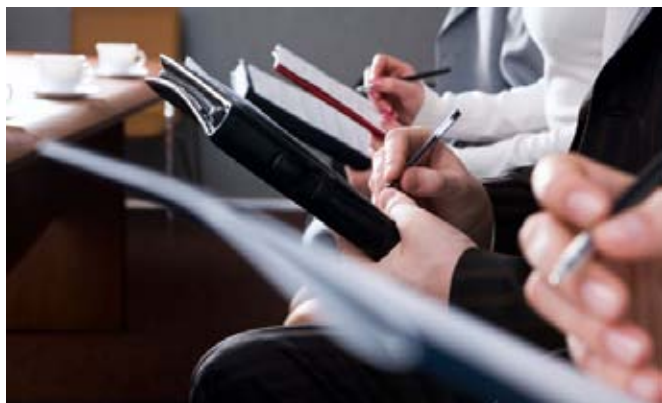
It is all theory. How many journalists, media managers and broadcasting regulators abide by this theory that gave good fruit wherever it was followed?!

At a TV show debating the pseudo problem of the 30%, the host, among other questions, asked these two: “Why does the BCC insist on us having products of poor quality, but domestic, while we could have foreign products of high quality?” and “Why can’t a high-ranked TV show in Russian extend its coverage at the expense of some low-rated shows in Romanian?” These questions are too good for us to not want to answer them.

Why do we need domestic programs? We could answer by asking other questions, such as: Why would we need the television that this host represents if, let’s say, CNN is of *better quality*? Why would we not have, instead of an infinite number of TV channels, a single one of the best quality – CNN or BBC, or some other? What dullness would fall on us! In fact, how and who determines what is a program of *quality*? To answer this question – a little theory. In any case, a program of quality needs to contain information of quality, i.e. information that is relevant and valuable for its beneficiary. The relevance of information is determined by the answers to the following questions: What? Where? When? Who? How? Why? In what context? So what? And the value of information comes, first of all, from what we call “global concept of proximity”: time, space, socio-professional, socio-cultural and politico-ideological proximity. We shall address here only one type of proximity – the space proximity, which is also being called *deaths per kilometer*, meaning that 1,000 deaths per 10,000 kilometers are less important than 100 deaths per 1,000 kilometers, and even less important than 1 death per 1 kilometer away from us. The trueness of this principle can be easily verified. Let’s remember what affects us more: news about thousands of victims of floods in Australia or the death of a single person that is our neighbor? In other words, radio listeners and TV viewers are concerned by what affects them, what is close to them, regardless of the reason. And now, let’s imagine that we are offered on the screen the CNN, which, we agree, most often outshines our televisions, either national, regional or local, with its media products. Would the quality product offered by the CNN be relevant and valuable for us? It is a rhetorical question. So, *quality* means not only, and maybe not so much, perfectly shot and wrapped-up products. Of what use would it be for me the impeccable CNN news stories if they failed to tell me about new prices for water supply in my community starting the following month?! In other words, *quality* CNN news would make me ask myself every time: “So what?” Therefore, *quality* CNN news would not be of quality for me.

On the other hand, how can we tell what is of quality and what is not? Let's make a parallel: say the roads in Chisinau are bad. Yes, they are bad, because we've seen the roads in Germany. But for Uncle John, whose village has no more than 10 square meters of asphalt in front of the town hall, the roads in the capital are excellent. So, everything is relative. As it is with *quality* TV programs. When we see other programs than the ones where hosts don't stammer, the background is perfect, the lights are well-set and the shooting is done with 5 digital cameras – we say they are *bad*. But what we forget about is at least two essential elements: a) if there is no variety of programs, we cannot see what *quality* is. In a way, bad programs are necessary to determine the good ones; and b) the quality of the information provided by the programs, regardless of the host stammering or the cameraman being clumsy. Overall, the area of information has a different kind of mathematics working. We are used to 2 apples when divided between 2 people being 1 apple each. But if we divide 2 ideas between 2 people? It could be zero, if the ideas are not of interest to them, or it could be 2, if the ideas are accepted; it could even be 1, if one of the two rejects the idea. This is how the mathematics of information works. And it says: quality information is that which touches our fields of expectations triggered by instinct, intellect and emotions. The best situation is when all expectations are met simultaneously. When we turn the television set on to watch some news, we might, for instance, want to see the entire informational picture of the world we live in within a short time. And this picture will not be complete if it lacks at least one link of what we call local, regional, national and international news. It is in our nature. We want to know what happens in our own backyard, in the neighbor's backyard, then in that of the country and the world. It is reason enough that no foreign television, however good, would suit us. It is reason enough for televisions, wherever they may be, to have domestic media products as well.

As to the host's second question, it has many answers. One of them is that for a certain part of viewers, and it is true, the Russian language is no longer a language of communication,



Source: <http://www.elevationnetworks.org>

but a foreign language. Therefore, television narrows its audience while it should strive for *selling* to advertisers as large audiences as possible. Another answer is that the extension of coverage time for a high-rated program could be exactly the thing that could affect the rating. A good variant, in my opinion, would be to have all kinds of programs and all kinds of televisions. To have what we call *diversity and pluralism*. And let's make an intellectual effort and fully understand the simple truth that without domestic media products we cannot meet the viewers' informational needs. The domestic product is not a goal in itself. Amartya Kumar Sen, Nobel Prize laureate in economy (1978), believes that there is a direct connection between information and wellbeing, that without information there are no rights, and a functional democracy cannot exist without rights. [14] Certainly, she referred to the information that is relevant for citizens. Such an understanding of the situation would delegitimize any decisions resembling the one on 30%.

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Ion BUNDUCHI

analytical magazine

Open data in Moldova: useful, but hard to find

Over the past decade, governments of countries with democratic traditions and beyond those, in the name of transparency, “poured” onto the Internet, onto official websites, hundreds of thousands or perhaps millions of packages of public government data. The large amounts of more or less useful data baffled journalists. It is not easy to browse and then identify a subject of public interest in the vastness of open public data.

For about three years, both media theorists and practitioners have been using the term “data journalism” to describe the journalistic techniques of analysis and filtering large sets of public data in order to produce journalistic materials. “Data journalism” (it is difficult for me to find a good translation into Romanian; some people translate it as “journalism based on data” – A/N) is a challenge for journalists. They need to learn how to use specialized software in processing data sets, including open data visualization software (info graphs, mapping, etc.). And it is not an easy task for those used to the traditional techniques of gathering information (events, press releases, written requests for information, etc.).

In 2011, Moldova joined the global movement “Access to public government data” by launching the www.date.gov.md portal which aims to become a single information desk of open data held by governmental institutions. For about five years, ministries, central authorities and other public authorities and institutions have been using their web pages to open and distribute public data, thus saving the citizens, especially journalists, the burden of requesting, through official letters, statistical or other information which by definition must be public.

The report *Assessment of the process of opening public government data in 2012*, prepared by the Independent Journalism Centre (IJC) with the financial support of the Soros Foundation-Moldova as part of the Good Governance Program shows that Moldova has drawbacks in terms of opening data, and the portal date.gov.md has yet to become a single information desk.

In producing the report, we interviewed journalists and civil society representatives in order to determine the extent to which the data that have so far been released by authorities are accessible and useful to media professionals. Most of the respondents are experienced journalists, including those who have experience in producing analyses and journalistic

investigations, and activists for human rights, transparency in decision-making, etc.

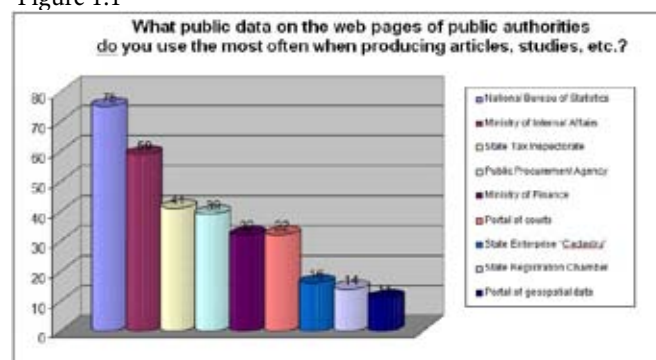
The functionality of official web pages

Journalists and activists were asked what public data on the web pages of public authorities they access most often when preparing articles, studies, etc. Respondents were invited to select from a list of eight databases, online registers, data sets etc. In addition, they could indicate if they use in their work other sets of data on official websites.

The survey results show that 75% of journalists and activists most often use in their work information from the statistical database ([Statbank](http://statbank.md)) of the National Bureau of Statistics, while 59% – data on crime, crime analyses, etc. from the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (see Figure 1.1). The third in the top is the State Tax Inspectorate, with 41% using public information about contributors, followed by the Public Procurement Agency, with 39% using public data on public/assigned tenders. 32% of respondents write articles, studies, etc. by using the database of public spending on the website of the Ministry of Finance and the portal courts.justice.md. The State Enterprise “Cadastru” (i.e. Land Registry), with statistical information on the registration of real estate (16%), State Registration Chamber, with its own statistical information (14%), and the geospatial data portal geoportal.md (11%) are at the bottom of the ranking.

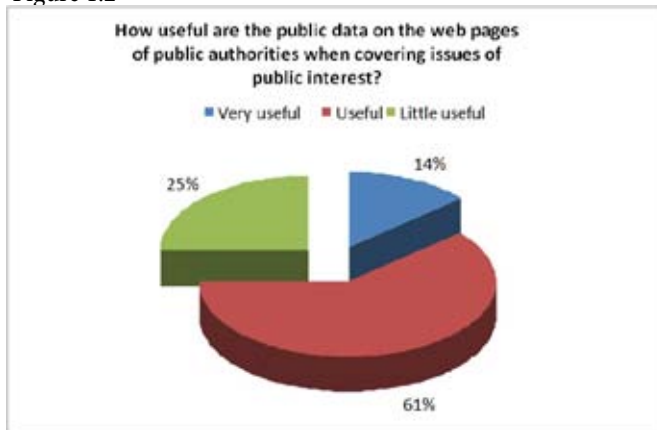
Some respondents mentioned that when they write articles or studies they also use the public data from the web pages of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Economy, National Anti-Corruption Center, Chisinau and Balti City Halls.

Figure 1.1



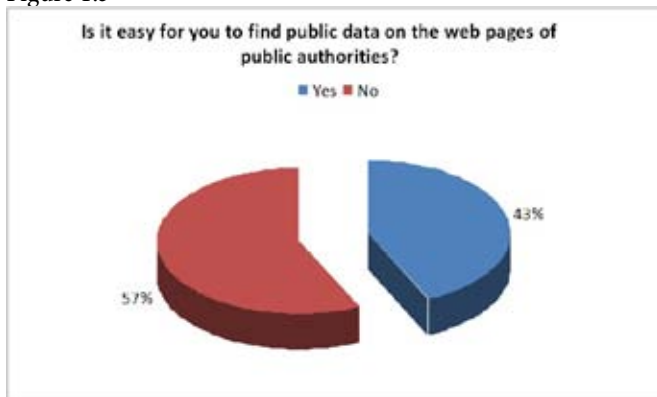
Another purpose of interviewing journalists and civil society representatives was to establish the usefulness of official information published on the websites of public authorities. Being asked how useful they find the public data on the web pages of public authorities when covering issues of public interest, 14% said they were very useful, 61% – useful and only 25% – not so useful (see Figure 1.2). The survey, therefore, reveals that public authorities and institutions mostly manage to publish on their official websites datasets containing relevant and useful information for journalists and activists.

Figure 1.2



Although 75% of respondents believe that the data published on official websites are *very useful* or *useful*, 57% say they do not find public data on the websites of the public authorities easily (see Figure 1.3). Journalists and activists believe that some official websites have a sophisticated organization and find the search for public information difficult. To simplify visitor access to public data, it is recommended that they be published in a single section, which could be named, for example, “public data” or “public information” or “open data”. In addition, in the case of complex databases or registries, it is necessary to publish a user’s guide with tips on how to use the database step by step, the so-called tutorials or video tutorials.

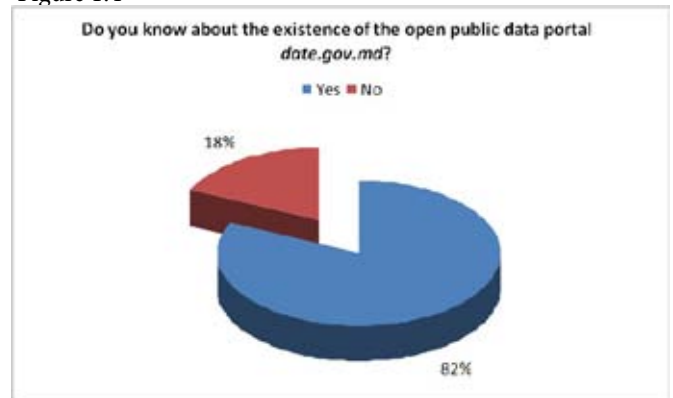
Figure 1.3



The functionality of *date.gov.md*

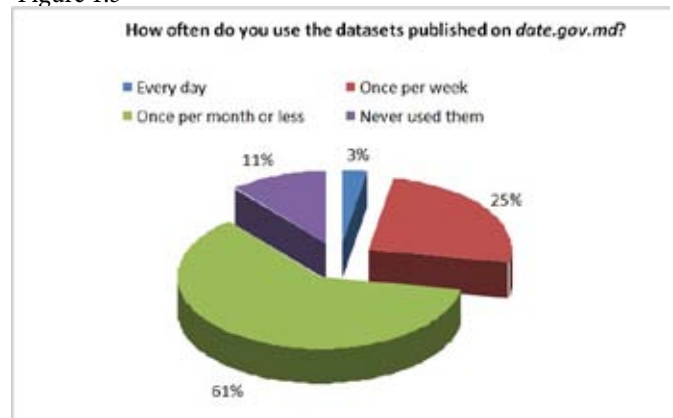
Most of the interviewed journalists and civil society representatives (82%) said they were aware of the existence of the portal *date.gov.md* (see Figure 1.4). The Electronic Governance Centre (EGC) actively promoted the website through social networks, electronic newsletters and video clips broadcast on television, seminars and trainings etc., which provided reputation to the portal.

Figure 1.4



Neither journalists nor civil society representatives use regularly the datasets published on *date.gov.md*. Only 28% of respondents said that they consult the information on the portal daily or weekly. Most respondents (61%) say they access the portal once a month or more rarely, while 11% have never accessed the datasets on *date.gov.md* (see Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5



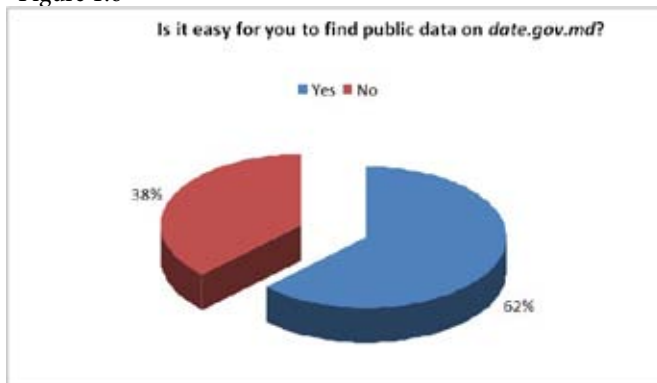
Over 35% of the respondents who used *date.gov.md* at least once say that they could not find easily public data on the portal (see Figure 1.6). At first glance, the website is easy to use: *date.gov.md* has a search engine based on keywords and an advanced search engine based on the institution, relevant

period, recommended dataset and keyword. The user can also sort the datasets published by each institution according to the posting date, rating and downloads. Journalists and civil society representatives face the following problems when accessing the open data published on *date.gov.md*: impossibility to sort the datasets by type of document (for example, activity report, statistics etc.), year of reference and areas of activity of the institution; lack of a single format for publishing open data; lack of systematized data on previous years. Some respondents noted that *date.gov.md* does not have a user's guide with tips on how to use the portal step by step, especially the advanced search engine.

Journalists and activists believe that *date.gov.md* has not yet managed to become a single information desk of open data held by public institutions. The reason is that most ministries and central authorities continue to publish open datasets on their websites, as they used to do for years, and do not also publish them on *date.gov.md*. A number of respondents said that they find easier and a larger number of datasets on the websites of institutions than on the open data portal.

To facilitate access to the data on the portal, it is recommended that the data published by ministries and central authorities can be sorted by type of published information (e.g., activity report, statistics etc.), year of the information (currently, the user can sort datasets by the reference period by using the advanced search engine, but not on the institution's subpage), etc. In addition, public institutions should publish systematized data that are available for each category of public data for past years in a single format.

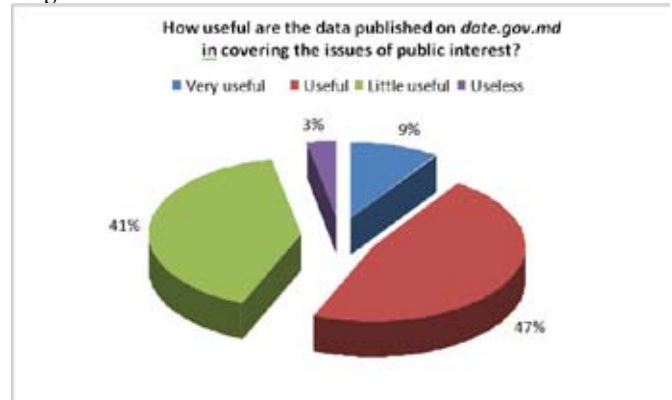
Figure 1.6



Being asked about how useful public data on *date.gov.md* are for them when covering issues of public interest, 9% of journalists and civil society representatives said they were very useful, 47% – useful, 41% – little useful, and 3% – useless (see Figure 1.7). Therefore, respondents believe that the public information on *date.gov.md* is less useful than on the websites of ministries and public institutions (44% compared with 25%). Up to this day, despite the good intentions of the

Government to open government data, the portal has not managed to become more useful to citizens than the websites of ministries.

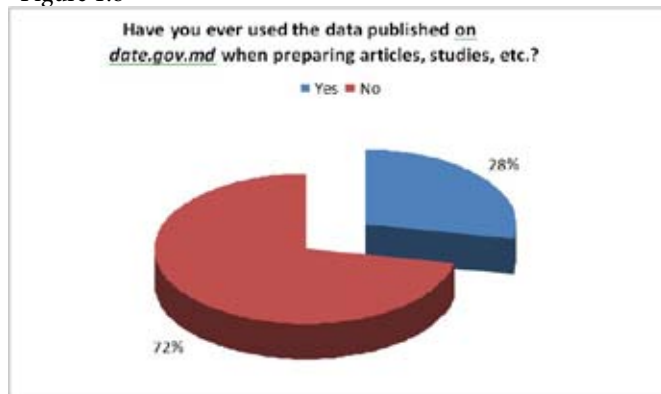
Figure 1.7



Asked if they had ever used the data published on *date.gov.md* when writing articles, studies, etc., most journalists and activists (72%) answered negatively (see Figure 1.8). The causes of this situation are as follows:

- Some ministries and public institutions (for example, the Customs Service, the Agency of Medications, etc.) open their public data on *date.gov.md* never or occasionally. The principle of a single information desk is not observed and the website becomes less useful for those interested in the work of the institutions that remain behind in terms of opening data via the portal;
- Impossibility to sort the datasets published by an institution based on the type of document, areas of the institution's activity or year of reference and lack of systematized data on previous years cause users to visit the website of the relevant ministry and not *date.gov.md*. For example, *date.gov.md* has published the datasets of the Public Procurement Agency up to the year 2011, while the Agency's website has updated data for 2012 and 2013;
- Some datasets are not complete, do not contain all relevant public government data, or the data they contain are not current;
- There is no single format for publishing data (some are in Microsoft Office Excel 2003, others in Microsoft Office Excel 2010 or Microsoft Office Word 2003 or 2010), which creates difficulties in accessing them.

Figure 1.8



occasionally use them. Why? Moldovan journalists have no practical skills of analyzing and filtering huge sets of public data, of using specialized software for processing datasets, etc. About 80% of journalists and activists claim that they need specialized training in order to effectively use public datasets in writing articles, studies, etc. And these are experienced journalists, including those with experience in producing analyses and journalistic investigations.

In conclusion, the process of opening government data of public interest in the Republic of Moldova should be synchronized with the training of journalists and activists in “data journalism”. Otherwise, it may happen that the more or less useful open data will lose their informational value because they will not be fully used by journalists and civil society representatives.

“Data journalism” in Moldova

The process of releasing government data of public interest in the Republic of Moldova could grow in the coming years thanks to the commitments made by the Government to the international community and thanks to the pressures of civil society. Today we still find some official web pages or datasets useful for addressing issues of public interest. However, we can count on the fingers of one hand the journalists who

Dumitru LAZUR

Transnistrian Mass Media – Quo Vadis?

The media and civil society in Transnistria need a long-term program of assistance that would strengthen the principles of professional journalism, focus on the development of online journalism and support the creation of non-governmental organizations promoting the freedom of expression in the region. These are some of the conclusions of the study on the needs of Transnistrian mass media that was launched by the Independent Journalism Center in June.

Outdated legislation – an obstacle for the development of Transnistrian mass media

The experts have described the general picture of the region as being characterized by outdated, Soviet-like legislation on mass media and direct involvement of authorities into the activity of editorial offices, all of which prevent media outlets from developing. According to media expert Petko Georgiev (Pro Media executive, Bulgaria), the region's media legislation has a soviet, restrictive character. A proof of this is the fact that the region's legislation imposes the need for special license for any person willing to work as a journalist, and the accreditation process is managed by the State Service for Communications, Information and Mass Media, which is an important instrument for limiting the activity of mass media. According to experts, the very existence of this institution shows the authorities' intention to influence the activity of mass media and to have control over them. Experts also underline that "although the region's legislation on mass media guarantees the freedom of expression and prohibits censorship, it imposes control mechanisms that are far from the standards of the freedom of expression that are generally accepted in democratic countries."

Also, the media legislation, which has not been revised since the soviet times, raises the problem of Transnistrian authorities' interference with the activity of editorial offices. According to the study, "the majority of media outlets are under governmental control both from the editorial and financial points of view, as they are controlled by the region's authorities or economic trusts, even if the media legislation prohibits it." Besides, the authorities' interference with the activity of mass media favors censorship, which gradually transforms into the self-censorship of publishers and editors. This idea is also confirmed by the Freedom House Report 2012, according to which "the media environment is restrictive. Almost all media outlets are owned or controlled by the State; they do not criticize the authorities. The several

independent print publications that do exist have a small circulation. Criticism in mass media attracts pressure from authorities. The authorities also use other tactics to hinder the activity of mass media, namely bureaucratic obstacles and refusal to deliver information."

This hypothesis is supported by the media expert Dumitru Lazur, who describes the region's media market as being dominated by the outlets created and funded by central and local authorities, which influence their editorial policy, either directly or indirectly. The financial independence of these media outlets is, at least today, a utopian idea. The newspapers, TV and radio stations founded by authorities should first of all be denationalized and, ideally, privatized by teams of journalists. Dumitru Lazur finds that both the authorities on the left bank of the Dniester and the region's journalists are not ready for such steps in a situation when the process of denationalization of mass media on the right bank is rather difficult, despite there being a law in this regard.

To avoid the involvement of authorities into the activity of journalists, experts recommend the development of professional online media that would serve as alternative sources of information and offer objective information to Transnistrian readers.

On the other hand, this alternative could be a problem as well, since in May 2013 Transnistrian authorities blocked citizens' access to some of the most important social forums and new media resources which allow the public to freely express their opinions. These forums are as follows: Transnistrian Social Forum (forum.pridnestrovie.com), Socio-Political Forum (forum.dnestra.com), Open Forum (openpmr.info), Transnistria and Russia Forum (pmr-rf.ru), Free Forum (forum.pridnestrovie.ru), etc.

Natalia Scurtul, a Tiraspol journalist and one of the authors of the study, says that the closure of forums only stops and freezes media development and the active participation of citizens, who have no access to the most important social forums and sources of information, although, despite all these restrictions, the media still inform the public. The blockage of forums was negatively perceived by the public as well; they qualified the gesture of the Transnistrian authorities as being anti-democratic and violating the right to the free expression of opinions. And the proof of this reaction has been the protest organized in Tiraspol on 7 July 2013, which was attended by almost 200 persons from Grigoriopol, Dubasari and Tiraspol.

In the study authors' opinion, the journalists, representatives of civil society and international organizations now need to make viable efforts on both banks of the Dniester; also, it is necessary to have long-term programs and initiatives that could gradually contribute to the elaboration of a legislation that would allow the development of mass media in the region and diminish the authorities' influence on the editorial activity and financial standing of media outlets.

Continuing education of mass media – a key factor for quality journalism

Another problem affecting the quality of Transnistrian media products is the journalists' level of professionalism. 15 out of the 17 Transnistrian journalists interviewed by experts said that they needed more professional colleagues. Referring to the quality of journalists' work with information and sources, Petko Georgiev said that the journalists of state-owned media outlets and those of independent media perceive professional journalistic standards differently.

Respondents gave the highest marks to the ability to work with sources, while the pluralism of opinions and the verification of information gathered the lowest marks. Experts explain this evident contradiction by the fact that journalists prepare some materials by working with official sources only, while alternative sources of information are ignored.

Having analyzed this problem, Luiza Doroshenko, the director of the Tiraspol Media Center, said that the Transnistrian journalists' level of professionalism "leaves much to be desired" in terms of quality. "There is a group of journalists representing print and broadcast media outlets who fail to understand the importance of continuing education in various fields. In this sense, the role of the Tiraspol Media Center and of other media NGOs of the region is to motivate these journalists and make them understand that this type of programs will help them improve their professional journalistic skills," Ms. Doroshenko said. According to her, the journalists representing State and city media outlets have limited possibilities in terms of participation in such programs, since the Transnistrian authorities' attitude towards those who participate in programs funded by international donors is not quite positive.

In terms of general and work ethics, media expert Ruslan Mihalevski, co-author of the study, said that Transnistrian journalists have no common code of ethics, and they have different opinions about the possibility of adopting such a code in the current situation in the region, which affects the final product that the media offer to the public. As for specialized journalism (investigative journalism, economic or social journalism), the interviewed journalists admitted

that in Transnistria it has a lot of deficiencies. For example, investigative journalism is nearly non-existent, as there are no well-prepared journalists in this field.

To improve Transnistrian journalists' level of professionalism, experts recommend involving them into ongoing education programs in work ethics, TV and radio editing and new media, by training civic reporters that would enable the region's public to access alternative sources of information. In this context, beginning in 2004 the IJC contributed to the support of the regions' journalists by various training programs in the field of investigative journalism, work ethics, study visits and internships in media outlets on the right bank on the Dniester, combined with producing joint materials involving the use of the theoretical knowledge obtained at training workshops. Also, between July 2012 and July 2013, the IJC implemented a program that focused on training 70 Transnistrian students in blogging, when other 20 professional journalists from both banks of the Dniester learned to produce multimedia materials.

Media expert Margarita Akhvediani, director of Group Media (Georgia), made a similar recommendation. While on a study visit in Chisinau and Tiraspol, she stressed the fact that Transnistrian journalists still need a lot of training, especially in online journalism.

The market of advertising and marketing between the hammer and the anvil

In addition to the growth of professionalism of Transnistrian mass media, it is necessary to ensure the viability of media outlets, which can be achieved by training media managers in the terms of management and marketing. Moreover, it is absolutely essential to prepare advertisers for media outlets. According to the study on the needs of Transnistrian mass media, the small advertising market of the region is strictly controlled and insufficient to support the development of mass media. Few of the media outlets have well-structured marketing or sales departments. The available sociological data in this field are very few and do not allow better content planning or an increase of sales. As trainer for a marketing and advertising training, media expert Veaceslav Perunov said that the Transnistrian advertising market is just emerging. The directors and owners of mass media should change their attitudes towards their marketing plans, which should be based on some audience studies, discussions, focus groups with the public. Subsequently, the results thus obtained should be used to produce viable marketing and promotion plans.

On the other hand, Luiza Doroshenko underlines that "the only solution for the region's media to obtain financial independence would be donor support, as the development of the advertising and marketing market would be nearly impossible to achieve due to economic problems faced by

the region and to small circulations.” In this context, Ms. Doroshenko adds that only State-owned media outlets show financial stability, while for some independent publications, such as *Dobrii Deni Dobrii Vecer (Râbnița)*, *Celovek i ego Prava* and *Profsoiuznie Vesti (Tiraspol)*, financial resources are a problem that is difficult to solve. Dumitru Lazur continues this idea, saying that the few private socio-political media outlets of Transnistria are financially independent, but they work in difficult conditions – unfair competition on the part of the media funded by authorities, small revenue from advertising, deficit of professional journalists.

Experts find that training in marketing and advertising would be a chance for the viability of the region’s mass media, if it were better used and if its need were acknowledged.

Transnistrian mass media – where to?

According to experts, fair competition on the media market and the lack of political and economic pressures from the part of authorities are preconditions for the development of mass media in the region, and, being ensured, they would contribute to the development of Transnistrian mass media. Continuing this idea, Dumitru Lazur said that private mass media in Transnistria can become viable in time if managers invest into new multimedia technologies and the development of sales agents’ skills (in order to increase revenue from advertising and related services). One of the opportunities would be the international networks supporting mass media and the freedom of expression, which would encourage Transnistrian

journalists to strive for a journalism of high quality. However, its possibility remains to be understood by the public receiving information on both banks of the Dniester.

The study on the needs of Transnistrian mass media was produced by the IJC between November 2012 and April 2013 as part of the project “Improvement of Mass Media Capacities in Moldova, including Transnistria, by Promoting Civic Participation”, supported by the program “Support of Trust-Promoting Measures”, funded by the European Union and co-funded and implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The report has been produced on the basis of experts’ analysis and of 26 interviews made in Chisinau and Tiraspol with journalists, editors, media managers and civil society representatives.

Cristina BOBÎRCĂ



Source: IJC archive

Is Moldovan Mass Media a business?

Several years ago, the question in the title would have been answered positively in any country, for the simple reason that investment into mass media was considered profitable nearly everywhere. In Moldova the situation was somewhat different, but there was always hope for the better. Unfortunately, in recent years this hope has been melting away, as the situation in the entire world is changing for the worse. New technologies, the development of the internet, the financial and economic crisis force a different approach to mass media as business, and investment into this industry has become increasingly risky. Everywhere the circulations of print publications and their staff decrease dramatically, while newspapers with long-established traditions shut down or migrate to the online environment. However, all these should be a reason for reviewing strategies, not for closing business. I still strongly believe that the media was, is and needs to remain a good business.

Internet advances

The rapid development of the information technology in the early 21st century marked a new stage in the development of journalism. The job migrates increasingly to online platforms, and it is harder and harder to imagine a print publication without an electronic version, while in many cases the electronic versions begins to replace the ones on paper. We have been witnessing, in recent years, the closure or decreasing issue of newspapers, preference being given to the less expensive online versions.

Modern technologies had an even greater impact on the work of news agencies. In a relatively short period their activity has undergone radical changes. It is now difficult to imagine, for example, that the INFOTAG agency, which this year celebrates 20 years since establishment, at the very start used only fax and couriers, while at that time only three or four institutions in Chisinau had e-mail. It was used for “highly important” correspondence, and no publishing house, president or government could even dream of such a form of communication, much less of immediate transmission of information to thousands or even millions of users of social networks. Nowadays all this is possible, but puts in a difficult situation the traditional media, which is not always able to adapt to new conditions. Under these circumstances, the question of whether newspapers in the traditional sense have a future arises often. Many will not hesitate to give a negative answer, believing that “the internet will replace everything –

newspapers, radio, and television.”

Modern consumers of information, who are completely absorbed by the internet, are probably right in their own way. Some have already stopped reading newspapers in “hard copy”, and some have no television sets in the home. But then we remember the famous dialogue from the Soviet film *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears*, when the cameraman Rodion explains that the future belongs to television. “Television will replace everything: there will be no newspapers, no radio, no theater – only television,” the character says. Despite this, over the past fifty years theaters, cinemas and newspaper thankfully did not disappear. But then the internet appeared, and it is becoming dominant in informing people.

The internet gave rise to social networks as a form of communication and information. And again we have the dispute about whether traditional journalism can exist or the internet will become the main source of information. In my opinion, the perfect answer to this question was given by the well-known Russian journalist Vladimir Pozner: “Of course not, because it is unprofessional journalism. It is a completely different thing. Journalism, which must be objective, fair, and show both sides if there are two, or even maybe three, or four, is not the same thing as blogs or Twitter, where every single person expresses only his or her opinion and does not recognize any other. It is, after all, whatever one may say, not journalism, but something from another area. I do not mind, but have no vain hopes: it will never replace journalism. It is my firm belief.”

It is difficult to add anything to the statement of the respectable journalist. The new forms of information and traditional journalism should undoubtedly exist in parallel, complementing each other. Journalists must master new technologies, and active internet users must comply with certain, if you like, rules of ethics. They also need to act responsibly when presenting information, and not only use the work of editorial offices as they see fit, completely forgetting about elementary compliance with copyright.

The internet should not get in the way of traditional journalism, but help it achieve its objectives, including the possibility to make money. Businesses, however, understand it differently, investing in online resources. In recent years, we have seen appearing dozens, if not hundreds of portals where one or two people are spreading the news written by bona fide

journalists. At the same time, Moldova has almost no daily newspapers, the development of the regional press is extremely slow, and new publications are born in pain.

A major problem faced by all print media with no exception is distribution. The State Enterprise Posta Moldovei (i.e. Moldovan Post) has a unique understanding of the market economy, setting such prices for delivery-by-subscription, which are impossibly high to publications. That is not to mention the businessmen from Moldpressa, who sell juice and products “three for a price of 10 lei” in the former Soviet Press kiosks. Press distribution is the last thing that interests them, so the markup exceeds 50 percent of the cost of publications, which turns this business into loss-making for the media. So far, all attempts to create alternative networks of media distribution have failed, particularly due to the lack of professional solidarity and commitment of the journalistic community. It is one more reason for the publications to refuse the traditional paper version in favor of the electronic one, which immediately eliminates the cost of paper, printing and distribution.

Impact on the minds

The “denationalization” of the press has also been original. Claiming good intentions, in 2006 the government-owned newspapers *Moldova Suverana* and *Nezavisimaya Moldova* were expropriated in favor of the then ruling Party of Communists, which rightly believed that a brand that has been created for decades is highly worthy. However, after the Party of Communists went into opposition, the publications found it difficult to survive. The publications’ managers, who relied on the party’s funds only, failed to actually learn to make newspapers in the market economy. The party’s financial problems caused *Nezavisimaya Moldova* to close and *Moldova Suverana* to look for sponsors in other party offices.

It can be a method of survival, too, but only for a short time. The media can develop long-term only if they become business projects. So far, they are very few on the Moldovan market. I can name only the economic review *Logos-Press*, a couple of magazines, news agencies and internet portals. Having turned pretty “yellow” for the sake of market requirements, the Moldovan supplements to the Moscow publications live comfortably, as well. The Romanian-speaking journalists, who never stopped criticizing them for that, finally got involved in a similar project with the Romanian *Adevarul*. This sort of development is also possible. If televisions are successfully developing in such a way, the print media can also do joint projects, which are quite justified in a limited market.

However, the main problem of the Moldovan media is not the limited character of the market, the internet “advancing” or the distribution of publications, but political affiliation. Faced

with the difficulties of the transition period, many outlets followed the path of the least resistance and now resemble party publications. If 15 years ago every self-respecting party had its own newspaper (*Republica*, *Pamânt și oameni*, *Mesagerul*), now, with the exception of the *Communist*, it is difficult to remember a purely party newspaper. Meanwhile, the narrow circles of the Moldovan political elite know exactly the newspapers that a certain politician finances and even how much it costs him. Thus, the excessive politicization of society and the struggle for the “impact on the minds of voters” have become a major obstacle in the development of the media.

This practice of party affiliation leads to the fact that publishers do not think about how to attract readers, but how to get funding from politicians, to better please them and to convince them of their effectiveness so as to ask for more money. As a rule, the dependence of journalists to politicians is based on the lack of financial independence. When the media operate at a loss, they become dependent on other interests. “There is no diversity without freedom and freedom without independence” – it is a fundamental truth. Unfortunately, for many media the task of obtaining profit is not excluded, but does not represent a priority, since all their financial gaps are covered by politicians.

In this regard, the situation with electronic media is even worse. To accommodate the media development trends, politicians do not quite seek to invest money in newspapers and magazines. They do it more out of habit, due to personal relationships with some publishers, or upon someone’s persistent request. However, they are willing to create online portals and finance televisions. Due to the natural limitations that arise in connection with obtaining broadcasting licenses, the redistribution of the television market has been taking place for several years now. There are currently three or four centers with clearly political overtones, which own nearly all TV stations. All attempts made by the civil society (and not only) to ensure transparency in the ownership of TV stations seem doomed to failure. Members of Parliament have no desire to contribute to it. The Parliament showed its true intentions in this respect in 2010, when it amended the Broadcasting Code so as to allow the monopolization of TV stations in the hands of a single owner.

Hence unclear media ownership, their concentration in the hands of oligarchic structures associated with the big business and political parties. In such circumstances, failure to comply with professional ethics and media hygiene, ordered materials and black PR – all these have become a common environment for the development of journalism. It turns out that you should always remember not the channel you are watching, but to whom it belongs, so as to understand why reality is interpreted one way rather than another.

Those (politicians) who did not get stations are creating them in the internet so as then to try to “get into” cable networks or air broadcasting. They may have a chance upon the introduction of digital television in 2015. This process could actually contribute to the development of television and its transformation into a more profitable business against a background of intensifying competition. However, it is unlikely to happen because the owners of the existing TV stations, whose content is based on rebroadcasting, already at this moment tend to monopolize digital broadcasting.

The owners of televisions from among politicians often dictate the editorial policy, acting on the principle “He who pays the piper calls the tune.” TV stations find themselves in a situation where they have to defend “their” politician and “denigrate” someone else’s. It became especially clear during the recent political crisis, as well as during the business conflicts related to the phenomenon that is called *raiding* in Moldova. Via television, “pirates” are trying to teach the audience to live in their own image and likeness and thus to change the long-established concepts of honor, decency and commitment to promises and to bring confusion into the customary ideas of what is good and what is bad.

Media partisanship has quite a negative effect on the quality of journalism, too. It seems that the staff of newspapers and TV stations was not ready for a dramatic increase in freedom after 2009. The emergence of several new televisions has led to a shortage of qualified journalists. Literally overnight a lot of people became journalists despite being very far from this profession. In a normal society, there is nothing wrong with an economist or an expert in the field of culture hosting the relevant programs on TV. But when a yesterday’s graduate of the Academy of Economy reports from the government or the parliament, the quality leaves much to be desired. Again, to “match the status,” such “journalists” have learned very quickly that to earn your salary you need not so much professionalism as the ability to get into the right “political track.” Thus, “self-censorship” works even in relatively independent mass media.

Besides, the closeness of editorial offices to political circles limits their possibility of influencing the situation in society. Under the Communist government a journalist’s job was more difficult, but at the same time more interesting. Despite a limited access to information, harsh publications and reports were followed by the authorities’ reaction. It was different, and at times they just tried to “silence” the journalist in question. But, as a rule, there was a response. Now, however, the press is just brushed off, since it is usually known who owns the station, who ordered the report and what the reason of the criticism is. Thus, even the best intentions go to waste. Having not yet become a business, the press ceases to be the *fourth estate*.

The danger of monopolization

Like many other countries, Moldova holds the risk of emergence of large television monopolies willing to manipulate public opinion. Examples of such practices abound all over the world. In democratic Italy, Silvio Berlusconi has held power for decades and came unscathed out of the most difficult situations, all because he concentrated in his hands the majority of the country’s TV and radio stations. The same situation of media concentration is happening now in Bulgaria and other countries. And the smaller the country, the greater the risk for its citizens to be affected by media manipulation. The famous Italian journalist Francesco Martini, who has worked in Bulgaria for many years, recently said in this regard that “Italy is the global example of the merger of politicians with the media, but the size of the Italian media market makes this issue less dangerous compared to the current situation in Bulgaria.” It is absolutely clear how important it is for Moldova.

Speaking of market mechanisms in the media and the development of this type of business, we should also address the problem of the distribution of the “advertising pie”, as well as the measurement of audience – the circulation of print publications and the television ratings. There are mainly two mechanisms behind the dependence of the media on their audiences, and both regulate the media through their funding. The first mechanism links the funding of printed material and the work of paid television or radio stations to their audiences’ readiness to purchase publications, subscribe to periodicals or to television and radio signals, etc. When demand is falling, the media need to adjust to the demands of consumers while seeking to maintain or even expand their audiences. And those media which can do it better than others, may receive certain benefits on the market of mass information services, in conditions of free competition, of course.

The second mechanism involves indirect payment for the information services provided by the media by means of advertising. In fact, in this case, advertisers pay for consumers. They are naturally interested in the highest possible effectiveness of advertising and therefore seeks to place it in the media with the largest audiences. And then again it turns out that the more consumers like the media, the greater the amount of funding the latter can attract through advertising. And while citizens do not always like advertising, especially during the films broadcast on television, they are usually understanding about it. Citizens are willing to endure advertisements in the media, because they are not willing to pay for the media services directly.

And everything in this arrangement is simple except for the question about how media audience can be measured and how to ensure the objectivity of such measurements. Here we risk getting into lengthy debates, as transparency in these issues is as little as with media ownership. Probably the best situation

in this regard is with the measurement of the amount of site visitors. Modern technologies allow controlling the number of “eyes” with the help of special counters. However, experts say that it is not all that easy – for each counter there is a hacker among local handymen.

In print media, the Moldovan Bureau for Circulations and Internet Audit (BATI) has been trying to solve the issue of “inflated circulations” over the past several years. Problems in this regard are still many, since not all publications agree to the terms of BATI, and many continue overstating their circulation or indicating the “weekly”, “monthly”, etc. circulations.

However, the creation of an audit bureau is an important step towards establishing the transparency of circulations. It is true for the media and advertisers, who are quite often tricked by “glamorous” publications with scanty circulations issued for “internal use”.

But the biggest controversy surrounds the measurement of television ratings. It is quite natural, since besides the strong “influence on minds,” televisions are able to earn money, much more than to just support themselves, as it happens in other media. And while the developed countries have been long and successfully using ratings as a primary means of winning and retaining positions in the market of information services, in our country everyone is well aware that he who ordered the formation of the rankings will receive leading positions in them. Exceptions to this rule are very rare.

Audience measurement, which in Moldova is done by the AGB Company, has many drawbacks. And it is quite

understandable, since the technology of constantly building television ratings based on measurements by special devices connected to TV sets in households is very expensive. Even in the U.S., where this technology has been used for over 20 years, it is only applied in 60 of the 250 regional markets. In Moldova, measurements are performed with a technology that is not the most modern, which is adjusted to the specific market conditions, and the representativeness of its measurements is seriously doubtful. Say what they may, but 300 people meters for the whole country is too little to obtain an objective picture. However, no one in Moldova can afford more because of the same problem of limited advertising market. For this reason “rating points” remain the only recognized “currency of the market”, since the “diary” and “telephone” polls, which are sometimes ordered by some televisions, remain “customized”. Under current conditions, the tone is set by groups of stations through the sales house, which sell advertising space on them. Thus, the transformation of the media into business projects faces a lot of pitfalls. There are still chances to save the traditional media and attract investors to them. However, it requires the good will of those who do journalism and the political will of those who dictate the rules of the game in the country. Without these, the media will become increasingly biased, living off donations of politicians and presenting information according to their whims.

Anatol GOLEA



Source: ec.europa.eu

Mass Media in Moldova

“We try to dig deeper and see further”

Alina, how does Adevarul manage to stay on the Moldovan market for the third year in a row?

When we launched in December 2010, some “friends” prophesied a short life for us and then sudden death. They had even probably thought of editorials for our media funeral. But here we are, still alive and doing well! *Adevarul* is holding on and growing, because it was designed as a serious and lasting media business, in which a lot of financial and human resources were invested, and not as a temporary project with electoral or other purposes, as it happens in our country. Our experience shows that you can do quality press in the Romanian language in Moldova, too, without political bosses or humiliating compromises for the sake of money. We hang on because we have a small, but professional team of devoted people, the support of a large family, *Adevarul Holding* from Romania, and, most importantly, our loyal readers. If no one read our newspaper or visited our website anymore, what would be the meaning of our presence on the market? We are not a charity, nor do we receive shadow financial support... We can rely only on the income from sales, subscriptions, advertising and – we must admit – from the “newspaper + book” invention.

How does Adevarul differ from other print media products?

At our first anniversary, I wrote that *Adevarul* had revolutionized the Moldovan print media market. I may have exaggerated, but only a bit. Our newspaper really differed a lot from what existed in the country at the time: from graphics (it is the first full-color newspaper in Moldova, with an original, unmistakable design) to the manner of coverage and writing. From the start we declared war to “combative” articles in which the author, instead of informing, shares his opinion (opinions have their place and purpose only on the opinions page), and to kilometer-long articles crammed into pages (“bricks to kill the reader”, as I call them). We respect our readers; therefore, we offer them texts that are clear, coherent, well structured,



Alina Țurcanu, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Adevarul* Moldova

source: personal archive

and easy to read, with large pictures and with many elements that make comprehension easier. Today’s readers are in a hurry; they often only “scan” the pages and want to understand the topic as quickly as possible. Therefore, a daily paper should offer more and better information that would not take much time.

What was the biggest challenge for you as editor?

Writing editorials. I used to be a reporter for many years, at the time when blogs and opinion-sharing on television were not fashionable. I was used to doing news, reports, investigations, interviews, analyses and debates. I wrote texts of opinion, too, but very few. I honestly believed (and still believe) that not everyone can write editorials and that not every opinion deserves to see the light of print. I still feel some insecurity when I publish a text on page six; I am afraid to seem naive, ridiculous. Maybe it isn’t normal, but still it is better than if, God forbid, I start to believe that what I do is perfect and that I am the only one who is right, while the others (with very few exceptions) are fools.

... and for the newspaper?

For a daily newspaper every day is a challenge, because every

day you have to come up with something special that was not in last night's newscasts on television. With a very small team, it is quite a challenge to find something original daily.

What epiphanies have you had from the day you came to the editorial wheel of the newspaper?

The first epiphany was that I am able to run a newspaper! I am saying this because before *Adevarul* I was not leader anywhere, nor had I done any management courses. In fact, I am lying; I was head of class back in school. Jokes aside, the fact that I have leadership qualities was a true revelation to me. But the beginning was not easy at all. When after a few months from the launch of *Adevarul* Moldova my Bucharest bosses informed me that I will continue to run the newspaper, the first reaction was "No." Sabin Orcan, who was the coordinator of the project in Moldova, "encouraged" me in a friendly way: "If you are afraid of responsibility and do not want to progress, it means that you do not belong in *Adevarul*." My ambition was roused and it worked. It is true that in the first weeks of leadership I must have maddened Ramona Ursu – the one who put the newspaper in Chisinau on its feet and then handed me the reins – with questions like, "Can we give this out at the opening?", "Don't you find this title crazy?", and so on. Another epiphany, if I may call it so, was more depressing. I realized that many people perceive you in terms of your position and that some, who you thought unable to hurt you, do it gladly...

If you were to name top three topics of the past three years, what would they be?

Proudly and without false modesty, I would put the disclosure of Vladimir Plahotniuc's double identity at the head of this top. It might be followed by several other topics, because we had quite a few good articles: about a ghost company with a single employee and headquarters in a room without a telephone, which made "legal transit" of billions of lei through Moldova; about Moldova's "Assange", the IT student who found access to the tax authorities' database; about the apartment of the head of the Chisinau Court of Appeal, Ion Pleșca, pledged to two banks for loans of 17 million lei for the benefit of a business company; about the fact that the judge-executioner in Tiraspol, who condemned the journalist Ernest Vardanyan, has Moldovan citizenship; about the "fairytale house" of the judge Nina Cernat; and many more.

What are the things that you find the hardest to do?

Waking up in the morning, because I can't go to sleep early, and fatigue due to lack of sleep, plus, on some days, the stress from the printing deadline.

How do you make yourselves interesting and important in the Moldovan press?

It is by the fact that we focus on ordinary people and their problems; we do not make a journalism of declarations, but try to dig deeper and see further. We value quality, originality, and a balanced and unbiased approach. Patriotic hysteria, manipulation, personal attacks, exaggerations, false scandals and "laundry washing" do not belong in *Adevarul*. We respect our readers and believe them to be intelligent consumers of information; we want to remain a credible source of information, as the very name obliges us to it.

Why is it worth it running the daily Adevarul Moldova?

Because you enjoy editorial independence and freedom, which are limited only by common sense and journalistic ethics. Because we have a nice team. Because *Adevarul* is an important name in the Romanian media, a brand with a history of 125 years, which makes you measure up to high standards, always learn and grow continuously. Because of the satisfaction of thumbing through the fresh newspaper in the morning and finding that it is very good, even if the night before you felt as if the apocalypse was coming again. Because, why not, being editor-in-chief of *Adevarul* looks good on the resume!

When you do the newspaper, do you think about rivals? Are they important to you? Is the competition itself important in the press?

You cannot ignore rivals, nor do I think that anyone works without looking around to see what others are doing and even trying to imagine what they could do. Healthy competition stimulates you to try to be better, to not limit yourself, to grow, to show more creativity and ingenuity. But I cannot say that I think about our rivals day and night. When we conceive the newspaper, we first of all think about our readers, but also about what we might like to read. It irritates me to see someone giving out a topic we were also working on before we do. But when I see a very good and original topic in some other paper, I feel good for colleagues.

What do you think about the phenomenon of free-of-charge press that has arrived in Chisinau? Do you see it as a challenge in a good way or a kick below the belt?

There is place under the sun for everyone. *Adevarul* Holding distributed at a time free local editions in Romania, too, while the national issue was per pay. The project did not last long and was suspended for financial reasons. The Moldovan market is not oversaturated in print press in the Romanian language, while it is full of Russian newspapers. I therefore welcome the emergence of as many newspapers in Romanian as possible. The important thing is for it all to be transparent, fair and under conditions of fair competition. Many things would become clearer if we had a law that would establish strict

rules regarding media owners and media funding. The former head of the EU Delegation to Moldova, Dirk Schuebel, said upon departing that the adoption of such legal provisions is an essential condition that Moldova must meet before signing the Association Agreement at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November. It is important to know who the generous sponsors are, how selfless is the support they give to media outlets and what their real goals are.

Is the editorial board of Adevarul Moldova like the editorial boards of other newspapers in Chisinau, in the sense that it is run by women? Is the feminization of mass media a threat?

I see nothing wrong with the fact that women run newspapers. They are more diplomatic, flexible, attentive to detail, and organized; they can resolve conflicts “peacefully”. Of course, there is the reverse of that: they are more easily influenced, faster to panic, and are sometimes driven by emotions when in fact they should show more pragmatism and cold reasoning. Our editorial board is really a sort of matriarchy – only women in leadership: director, editor-in-chief, deputy editor-in-chief, and publisher. Maybe it would be good to have a man in leadership among us, but... In Moldovan journalism women generally prevail. For some reason I do not know, in our country there is a preconception that journalism is for girls and that most study it at universities so as to be on the screen. But being a journalist is not synonymous to being a TV presenter! Maybe we should make positive discrimination and give preference to boys on admission to university?

What are the challenges faced by the media in Moldova? Are they the same as for international media?

It is a difficult question. I think one challenge is moving from quantitative to qualitative development. It is good that a lot of media outlets emerged over the recent years, but it is time to work on improving the content, too. The situation is not at all bright at the moment. We need to grow up; to get rid of copy-paste journalism, primitivism and superficiality; to not bombard the public with low-grade news and all sorts of “shocking / startling / amazing / see here / click here.” The fact that such non-news attracts the most views is not an excuse. People consume what we give them. If I were to refer to the newspapers only, I think the biggest challenge is to regain ground, to reinvent ourselves and withstand the competition with online media and with television. I am optimistic and I hope we will still be thumbing through newspapers a year, two or even ten years from now... I don't think the habit of having the morning coffee with a newspaper will disappear.

How do you find the new generation of journalists? What do you appreciate and criticize them for and ... what advice would you give them?

I think there are very good young journalists, just as there are journalists who continue to write badly in their 40s or 50s. I envy the young, with good envy, for the many different possibilities that they have now and I did not have at their age, when Moldova barely emerged from socialism. Therefore, my advice is to not miss opportunities, but also not to act on too many of them, trying to do more than they really can. I would advise them to read a lot, to treat their job with seriousness and responsibility, to love and respect the people, to be critical without being cynical, to not try to imitate anyone, to never make shameful compromise, to maintain their position and good name. I will stop here, because I must already be giving the impression of a moralist.

Thank you for the interview, and good luck to your entire team!

Sorina ȘTEFĂRȚĂ

Print media go online

Although my article is dedicated to online resources, I should probably begin with what is beyond the internet. With the print media. Its death has been discussed a lot and for a long time. Some speak of it with pleasure, some – with apprehension. Some media experts predict we'd be burying the old good paper in 2020, others say that it will leave us around the thirties. Some also break it down according to regions, claiming that in America the print media will die sooner and in Russia – later. In its eventual death there is little doubt.

For now the print media are alive. The websites of many newspapers sold in kiosks look much worse than the print versions: the browsing is confusing, the organization is unclear, and the archive search is such that it seems easier to visit a library and look through the files of publications to find the necessary article. The known, understood and safe paper is so much better. The front page carries a serious text about politics, inside – an interview with a star. Stability. And for now there are enough of those who cling to this stability.

And it all concerns not only the readers, but also the subjects of journalistic materials. Newsmakers, especially officials, are very respectful of the print word, which you cannot take back once it gets out. There have been situations when the person was truly disappointed finding out that he is interviewed for an online version. It feels to him that the interview will not be noticed, that it all goes nowhere and is not serious. After all, you cannot cut out a story from the internet and glue it into an album or put it into a folder and keep it forever. You cannot touch it, flip through pages or soil your fingers with printing ink. In Russia this entire situation is evident from how free many of the online media feel as compared with those on paper. Although now you could say *used to feel*.

However, we are talking not about Russia, but about Moldova. In Moldova, the segment of online media is growing rapidly, which is not surprising at a time when internet users make up half of the country's population – 1.6 millions. Informational



source: <http://goo.gl/aTRdYX>

online resources that claim to be reaching the maximum audience usually have both Moldovan and Russian versions. Moldova also has about a dozen Russian-language newspapers and magazines. And along with such Russian brands as *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Argumenty i F акты* (both papers have the prefix “in Moldova”) we have local print media, which are quite popular.

Kommersant, which in Russia and Ukraine appears in print, here exists only online. And it is kind

of an experiment. For *Kommersant*, the print newspaper has always been a main product and no one at first bothered about the website. It fully duplicated the paper and only relatively recently, in 2006, it was decided to develop the website, which began a life of its own.

So in Moldova it was decided to just keep the online version – no paper. It was not easy, primarily because the temptation to work in newspaper mode, i.e. to write about today's events tomorrow, is too great. But the internet means different speed and demands. The news is needed here and now, and even better before it actually happens. And also, like on paper, it is important to have truthfulness, accuracy, explanation of what is really happening and what will happen next. And here come difficulties of a different kind.

Compared to Russia, in Moldova mass media enjoy more freedom – in broadcasting, print press and the internet. Still, it does not affect the situation in the country too much. And it does not mean that politicians become more responsible under the constant attention of the press. Controversial publications in the media regarding violations of the law or suspicious tenders are not always followed by a reaction of the law enforcement.

Another feature of the Moldovan media market, which makes it little different from the rest of the former Soviet Union, is that the information resources, online or on paper, often do not even hide their political and even geopolitical partisanship. The media, with rare exceptions, are clearly divided into

pro-Russian and pro-Romanian and have the corresponding sources of funding. At the same time, these colorful and highly heterogeneous media are quite free. Unless they have inside censors that dictate how, what or whom to present.

Last year, everyone was amused by how one of the Moldovan TV stations, which has long been establishing its image of an impartial and professional media outlet, exposed itself. During a visit to Moldova of the head of the European Commission, the cameraman was filming his meeting at the airport with the then Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat, so that the Prime Minister did not get into the frame. It looked funny: as the two officers were walking hand in hand, the frame caught the European official and a half of Filat.

The freedom to write and speak has a flip side. It is especially noticeable in the Moldovan part of internet. This freedom is used for certain, often self-centered, purposes: to damage the image of business competitors, give out malicious information on politicians, or develop stories based on questionable facts.

Here is an example. Beginning in January, Moldova was stricken by a political crisis. Two parties of the governing alliance, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party, were in a fight. Their leaders, Prime Minister Vladimir Filat and Vice-Speaker of Parliament Vladimir Plahotniuc, were in a fight, too. The latter was particularly criticized in the country. So in the midst of this political crisis, a number of sources - and I should specify that these are not some one-time resources, but websites claiming to be mass media - published shocking information marked as breaking news: "In Vadul-lui-Voda they prepare fighters for Plahotniuc's protection."

They were saying that there were as many as 600 operatives, while the entire Moldovan armed forces make up about five thousand. The information was given out with a reference to social activists, and later - to anonymous telephone calls confirming it. What would be the actions of a journalist upon receiving such information? They would go on site and verify it themselves. But no one did it. Instead, everyone for a long time savored the shocking news, expressed outrage, and lamented. And then everything melted away without any disproof.

You would think the media outlets which delivered the information lost credibility. But no, they still give publishing sensationalist stories. The genre of exaggerations in the Moldovan internet is quite strongly developed. Moreover, it is now official. One of the informational online resources after the death of Boris Berezovski published a message saying that President Nicolae Timofti conferred him a posthumous distinction. The message presented details and even quotes of the President's press secretary. The news has rapidly spread around the Moldovan internet and gathered a lot of angry

comments in Facebook. And then a postscript appeared under it, saying that it is a joke, although it by no means happened on 1 April.

Exaggerated sensations were born in the Moldovan internet every time Moldova was going to be visited by some important Russian or Western official. There would be some little-known online resource that, referring to some highly secret sources, would say that the guest comes with a secret plan for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. The latest stir was raised before the last year's visit of Angela Merkel to Moldova. Each time, the news would be picked up by all the other media, including television, savored in analytical programs and disappear without trace, so as to return before the visit of some other emissary from the East or from the West.

To some it may seem like a harmless joke. But such things discredit the online media, which are not particularly trusted as it is. The explanation of this phenomenon is very simple - such things are done by those for whom online media is not a business, but a weapon. And sometimes single-use weapon at that.

Another negative aspect of freedom in the Moldovan internet is banal theft. There is a feeling that many people treat the information placed in the internet as belonging to no one. Although *Kommersant.md* has not been long on the market, we happened to produce and publish exclusive reports, which later appeared at competitors without any references. It got to the point that one Moldovan newspaper reprinted in full and posted on its website our exclusive interview, carefully removing the author's and the website's names from it.

The reasons why it is done are difficult to understand. At first it seemed that our colleagues are just shy. Whenever I met them, I drew their attention to the fact that it is theft and explained that theft is wrong. In response, I saw genuinely astonished faces. We decided to stop trying to solve issues in a friendly manner, face to face. We will go to court.

Despite the difficulties described above, I believe that the game is worth the candle and that online media can and should be done. Even though we have to feel the way. Even professionals like Vasile Gatov say that we are in transition now: the old models do not work, and about the new ones we know nothing. But it still has its charm. We have no limits. We are experimenting, and often quite successfully. We get our marks from our readers, with whom the internet allows instant feedback. Their response is the number of views and comments. These are by no means letters to the editor.

Vladimir SOLOVIOV

What I said, what else I would have said and what other people said at the launch of the book “Reporting. Editing Techniques” by Radu Ciobotea`

The reportage is the truth that people need

At the launch of the book “Reporting. Editing Techniques” by Radu Ciobotea at the Moldovan State University I shared some personal thoughts with colleagues and important people present there.

It is a book that inspires. In the week that I carried it in a bag after Gheorghe Ierizanu gave it to me, I opened the book daily and read random paragraphs. With such books I do not hurry, because once I read a book, I no longer re-read it, and for the reading to last longer, I just read a book in parts.

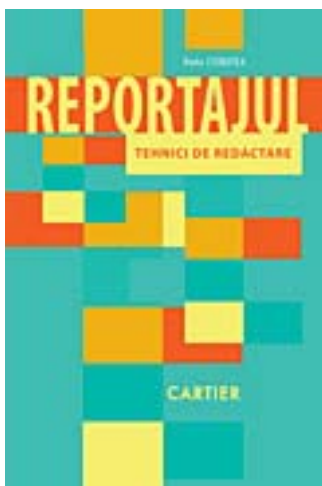
It is also a sci-fi book. In the digital era, the fingers on one hand are enough to count the media reports that now rise up to the quality and reach the depth of the texts analyzed in the book.

I made notes on my phone and wrote a few words on business cards, all from this book, so that they inspire me to tell stories about people and journalism to others. “Digital explosion ... the fever of surveys ... proliferation of blogs ... show ... the proper story ... silent documentation ... words here become unnecessary.” All these and more can be found in this “one thousand and one nights of reporting”.

In a Zen story that I recounted to those present at the book launch, an old teacher is interviewed by younger reporters, who tell him that all his life he urged people to do good things, but the world still got worse. “Wasn’t it all in vain?” asked the young men. “I encouraged people to do good things, and they did badly. Still, I kept going on. So the world could not change me. I am the winner in this fight,” explained the teacher.

I thought that there is a similarity between this story and the key message that I perceived in Radu Ciobotea’s book. And I also said that we, at www.stiripozitive.eu, will continue to encourage people to write human stories about other people who do good things, to draw inspiration from these examples of good.

I remember the statements of two other speakers, who also formulated positive messages about the book, life and the understanding of things.



source: <http://www.cartier.md>

Radu Ciobotea: “Journalism needs guiding marks; otherwise it becomes an endless talk show. I advocate for the dignity of this profession.”

Marius Lazurca: “Moldova has brilliant young people. He who wants to be optimistic about the future of Moldova needs only to meet the young people here.”

At this book launch I also welcomed the words shared by Mihai Guzun, Georgeta Stepanov, Vitalie Dogaru, Otilia Dandara and Emil Galaicu-Paun.

I also have a few favorite quotes from the book “Reporting. Editing Techniques” by Radu Ciobotea that I would like to share.

“According to some estimates of 2009, a consumer of economic products is exposed to approximately 3,000 commercial messages a day. The companies that want to remain visible in this flood of messages must find “the right story,” according to the nature of their activities and the public’s expectations.”

“Everyday life can be very interesting when it is well told, but this ability is not mastered on the first day of journalism. It is formed by work, both on the site and in the newsroom, as well as from the readings that open the way to mastering this profession.”

“The documentation of a report means integration into diverse communities, unobtrusive presence, and relaxed demeanor. It is not necessarily a technique, but a style of behavior intended to gain trust and open the door to confession. Naturally, it requires psychological skills and quite a lot of time. But a story documented in a hurry “catches” only the surface of things, replicas of complacency, meaningless gestures. Only easy sliding towards the other’s being, slipping through phrases, undefined expectations of a return to the topic, digressions to other circumstances and feelings of the other party, only such “loss of time” manage to coalesce into an experience that captures what could not be seen in the first moments. People are not easily deciphered.”

“A text called report is nothing but the end of an adventure. It started with a glance. An interrogating look. A confusion or curiosity. At the beginning of any report there is a person or a specific aspect of the world, at the moment of a bizarre encounter. We constantly meet with the outside world (to an extent, we *are* the outside world), but not all moments of this encounter may trigger a report. Only strange encounters, the

ones that provoke the question and then trigger confrontation. Something intrigues us, something is not right out there, in the world that does not let itself be seen in full, as if willing to hide a great truth. A truth that we, people, need.”

It must be one of the definitions of this genre: a report is the truth that people need.

Igor GUZUN

JOURNALISM TODAY Or INFORMATION v. INTERPRETATION and COVERAGE v. MODELLING

Sophisticated title, isn't it?

So it is, as the time we live in is not only awfully complicated, and even troubled as never before and ... extremely difficult to decipher. All the more difficult it is to bring it to the knowledge of the larger public in a more or less structured form.

And the unfortunate journalists are forced/obliged to do it.

How otherwise could the poor things earn their living?

Now, having pitied them, let's refer to the job itself. I know it from the inside, having practiced it for decades under the old regime and still doing it now, so I understand perfectly well the difference between then and now. It is big. Enormous. We had powerful journalists at those times, and we also had many of those who sold their souls, as we have today. It all depends on the person, their character, morality and the sense of truth.

Why the sense of truth?

Because a journalist is a soldier of the truth. He constantly works on a mine field, both figuratively and literally: in these times, with so many armed conflicts, rebellions, criminal attempts, gang fights ... the journalist goes to see and tell the truth about what happened.

Apropos, right at this moment I remembered a brilliant definition of journalist work. Or rather of a piece of information-narration-report of great interest to the public. It is this: A BESTSELLER ... FOR A DAY! Yes, for only a DAY, but a BESTSELLER! It is enough for a journalist to be lucky at least once in his life and show such a performance to consider himself happy!

Yes, but so many lose even their lives in the hot spots of the planet! So many rot in prison for their beliefs!

Now about the situation of journalism in our country. Recent years have shown an increasing role of mass media in the life of our society, which is so confused by all kinds of crises – beginning with that of identity and ending with the plague of corruption, which has accompanied us for centuries and which we cannot get rid of... I want to say that the media in our area have become combative; we have good journalists, and they are not few – both in print and electronic media.

After we gave them praise, let's give them a bit of criticism as well.

I read and follow publications from several European countries, thanks to the several foreign languages that I know: French, German, English, let alone Russian, and even some Italian and Polish... And having what to compare with, I see what they have and what we have.

The first thing that draws attention is the prolixity of our materials. We, who have so little space for printing, who are poor, often use square decimeters of paper, pouring kilograms of words for some ideas and events that are not worth half of it...

The second drawback is the soupy tone of some sketches-reports.

As for information... It often appears not as simple objective, cold, even harsh texts informing the public about a fact or event in an unbiased and even impersonal manner, but ... real poems, though bland.

Now back to the title.

Why *information v. interpretation*? Because the duty of a journalist is to give the public pure information, without interpreting it. If he does it, it is called propaganda, politics...

Why *coverage v. modeling*? Because... That's the sore! Having no access to information, the fellow journalist starts ... modeling, or fabricating it, compromising thus the professional community he is part of...

Vladimir BEȘLEAGĂ

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