



Media monitoring during the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021

Report no. 1
June 1-10, 2021



Kingdom of the Netherlands

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General data

Purpose and objectives of the project: Monitoring and informing the public about media behavior during the electoral campaign and access of electoral competitors to the media. The monitoring aims to analyze reporting trends that may affect the performance of media outlets and compromise their ability to provide truthful, unbiased, and pluralistic information to the public.

Monitoring period: June 1 – July 10, 2021

Criteria for selecting media outlets for monitoring:

- Audience / impact: national, regional
- Type of media: audiovisual
- Form of ownership: public, private
- Language of broadcasting: Romanian, Russian

List of monitored media outlets:

Moldova 1 (19:00) – public television, national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian

Prime TV (21:00) – private television, national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian

Primul în Moldova (18:00) – private television, national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian

Publika TV (online version) – private television, national coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian

Jurnal TV (19:00) – private television, regional coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian

NTV Moldova (19:00) – private television, regional coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian

RTR Moldova (20:00) – private television, regional coverage, broadcasts in Russian and Romanian

TV 8 (19:00) – private television, regional coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian

Pro TV (20:00) – private television, regional coverage, broadcasts in Romanian

TV6 (19:00) – private television, regional coverage, broadcasts in Romanian and Russian

ABBREVIATIONS

CPA – central public administration

LPA – local public administration

AUR – Alliance for the Union of Romanians

CEC – Central Electoral Commission

BECS – Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists

BERU – Electoral Bloc Renato Usatîi

PACCC – Civic Congress Joint Action Party

PACE – Building Europe at Home Party

PAS – Action and Solidarity Party
PDCM – Development and Consolidation Party from Moldova
PDA – Democracy at Home Party
PDM – Democratic Party of Moldova
PLD – Party of Law and Justice
PNOI – NOI Party
PPDA – Dignity and Truth Platform Party
PPPO – People Power Political Party
PPPS – Party of Change Political Party
PP Şor – Şor Political Party
PUN – Party of National Unity
PVE – Ecologist Green Party
PMPSN – Hope Professional Movement Party

2. Methodology

We monitored the entire content of the main daily newscasts from each television station, analyzing materials of direct and indirect electoral nature. The materials were subjected to a content and context assessment to determine whether they are favorable or unfavorable to any party or other political entity. Also, the materials were analyzed according to the following criteria of objective media coverage:

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship: According to the Code of Audiovisual Media Services (CAMS), by virtue of the fundamental right to information, media service providers must a) ensure a clear distinction between facts and opinions in the news; b) inform about a fact or event correctly, verifying information and presenting it impartially and in good faith (Article 13 (1)). At the same time, according to ethical standards, the news should be unbiased and objective and should not favor any parties / groups / persons at the expense of others. The presence of discriminatory elements in reports and news stories is the first sign that reality is presented through the journalist's opinions. The filtering of news and minimal analysis of history and context also suggest that the interests of certain actors, and not of the general public, are being protected. Furthermore, the Electoral Code stipulates in Article 69 (5) that mass media shall not adopt privileged treatment towards electoral competitors by virtue of their social status and/or functions held by their candidates.

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources: In order to be fair and balanced, materials must present all the sides concerned, especially when it comes to controversial topics, and must treat opponents equally. The media must also ensure access to a multitude of diverse opinions that would help the audience create their own opinion on the covered topics. CAMS stipulates that in audiovisual news programs, for which accuracy and fairness are essential, reports must come from reliable sources, with sufficient documental proof of the facts, with a credible and impartial approach to events, and with balanced coverage of different opinions (Article 13 (4)).

Language and images used:

Exaggerations and deliberately used indecent language, such as derogatory language or labels attributed to certain individuals or organizations, as well as images manipulated so that certain parties appear in a negative light, raise serious questions about compliance with ethical and professional standards. The ethical behavior of journalists is questioned most of the time when images present aspects that do not correspond to reality, when they are rigged, but also when news stories are illustrated with images that are not related to the text. The CAMS prohibits the dissemination of reports that are likely to propagate, incite, promote, or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, or other forms of hatred based on intolerance or discrimination on grounds of sex, race, nationality, religion, disability, or sexual orientation (Article 11 (2)).

3. Monitoring data



Moldova 1

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

Between June 1 and 10, 2021, in the ten editions of its daily newscast *Mesager*, Moldova 1 broadcast 72 election-themed news stories, with a total volume of 5,293 seconds (about 1.5 hours). The materials mostly informed about the registration and launch of candidates in the electoral campaign for the early elections; electoral priorities in various areas (economy, health, the diaspora, justice); decisions of the CEC; surveys on voter choices; the accusations of some candidates against others; the protests held by some candidates against the limited number of polling stations abroad; the increase in the real estate tax and in fuel prices. As a rule, election topics contained only information about the actions of candidates, without background information. All news stories of electoral nature appeared under the heading of Early Parliamentary Elections 2021.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

During the reporting period, Moldova 1 covered the activities of electoral competitors in a fair and impartial manner, without mixing facts with opinions or manipulating information in such a way as to favor or disfavor any electoral actors. The two exceptions were materials with a certain degree of bias in relation to Igor Dodon, BECS. Thus, one news story in the *Mesager* of June 4 was based on Dodon's online show, in which he said: *"The trends we see in our internal surveys as well as in some that are made public...after the creation of BECS we are growing and we see that the main party, our opponent PAS, is declining."* The reporter does not verify this information or refer to the results of the latest surveys, which actually reveal that PAS would get 39% of the votes and BECS would get 33.4% of the votes – information that was disseminated by Moldova 1 in the newscast of June 1. The story is supplemented by an intervention of Igor Dodon (not related to the announced title of the news) about the Port of Giurgiulesti, which was allegedly sold to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for 1,000 euros: *"If I am not mistaken, the law on the status of the Port of Giurgiulesti, it is a special law, stipulates that no strategic facility, including Giurgiulesti, can be sold without the Government's consent. The land under the port is the property of the state, and if anyone tries to use the port to the detriment of the interests of the state, any transaction can be annulled."* Since the defense of statehood is one of the electoral messages strongly promoted by BECS, the positioning of BECS candidate in a favorable context becomes evident, as he appears as a defender of the strategic objectives of the state.

A news story on June 9 concerned the request of PSRM MPs to the Government to compensate farmers affected by the rains. The story is balanced, but it includes information in addition to the announced topic, which suggests the intention to favor BECS: *“The Socialists also note that, in the last two years, it has been possible to stop illicit privatizations due to the involvement of the former president Igor Dodon.”* This statement is supplemented by the intervention of BECS candidate Vlad Bătrâncea, who, despite praising the PSRM achievements in recent years, does not directly mention Igor Dodon: *“Since 2019 there has been no case of alienation of movable and immovable property or raider attacks. We believe that in these important changes, we Socialists, the 35 MPs in 2019, have been well determined and have achieved what we promised to citizens, bringing freedom and access to information.”* Therefore, the mentioning of *“involvement of the former president Igor Dodon”* suggests the intention to favor him.

The tone of presentation of electoral candidates during the reporting period by Moldova 1 was neutral.

Moldova 1 also broadcast 4 news stories about electoral surveys (June 1, June 8, June 9, and June 10), in line with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*¹. They all contained information about the name of the organization that conducted the survey; the date or period in which it was conducted and the method used; the sample size and the maximum margin of error; data on the requester and the source of funding. As for the CEC being notified about the conduct of the survey, this information appears only in the material broadcast on June 1. The other 3 news stories failed to mention whether the CEC had been informed about the conduct of the surveys.

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

To document the 72 materials, Moldova 1 cited directly or indirectly 130 sources. As a rule, the main sources were electoral candidates, the CEC, representatives of the central public administration. Citizens were among the sources of two news stories.

In terms of frequency, we noted the greater presence of BECS and PAS representatives, who had the most direct appearances or mentions and the most airtime for direct or indirect interventions.

Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions / Top 10

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
BECS	15	371
PAS	18	359
PPPDA	14	186
PDCM	5	162

¹ *The Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova: Media service providers shall have the right to disseminate the results of opinion surveys on electoral topics no later than 5 days prior to the day of elections, only if they are accompanied by the following information: name of the organization that conducted the survey; date or period when the survey was conducted and the method used; the size of the sample and the maximum margin or error; the person who requested the survey and the source of its financing; the proof of CEC being notified about the conduct of the survey on electoral topics in accordance with Article 70 (10) of the Electoral Code. In the case of exit polls, the CEC decision on the conduct of this survey shall be presented.*

AUR	8	112
BERU	7	105
PACE	4	104
PDM	5	90
PUN	5	64
PPPO	2	58

PLD was cited/mentioned 3 times (38 seconds), PP Șor 4 times (24 seconds), PDA 2 times (20 seconds), and PVE and PNOI – once each.

Most of the time, the news about the registration of candidates and their launch in the campaign included only the statements of primary sources, without other relevant opinions and/or background information.

In controversial news stories, the right to reply and the balance of sources (19 of the total 21 controversial materials) were ensured. In 2 cases the right to reply was not ensured. One news story in the Mesager of June 7 refers to the accusations of the BECS candidate Bogdan Țirdea that “PAS consists of corrupt officials and millionaires,” and “after the theft of the century, PLDM performed rebranding and turned into PAS. Now they are good people and, most importantly, honest. Let’s see the lists of the PAS party. Igor Grosu, Deputy Minister of Education between 2013 and 2015, the first on the PAS lists today, participated in the privatization of BEM and the vote for the theft of the billion. Natalia Gavriliță, second on the list, worked at the Ministry of Education between 2013 and 2015, also as a member of the PLDM team.” The statement that “the faction’s spokeswoman Aurica Jardan did not answer the phone” at the end of the story is not enough to balance the news. Once the editorial team found the accusatory statements of an electoral candidate sufficiently important, they should have made efforts to support the news with facts and to present different opinions in a balanced manner, according to the Code of Audiovisual Media Services (Article 13 (4)).

A news story on June 8 reported on the protest organized by some members of the PACE party in front of the Singerei District Prosecutor’s Office, claiming that “pressure from some state institutions intensified after PACE leader Gheorghe Cavcaliuc publicly informed about a secret meeting between prosecutors and politicians that allegedly discussed the ways to eliminate PACE from the electoral race.” The story is supplemented by a similar intervention of the PACE candidate Gheorghe Cavcaliuc, and the reporter did not seem to have made efforts to obtain a comment from Singerei District Prosecutor’s Office.

Moldova 1 failed to ensure the equality of sources from the perspective of gender equality, with male sources/protagonists being cited/mentioned 76 times and female sources 24 times (24%).

Language and images used:

In the news about the electoral campaign, Moldova 1 used a neutral language. The images broadcast were in line with ethical standards.



Jurnal TV

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

During the monitored period, Jurnal TV covered the electoral campaign in eight editions of the newscast *Jurnalul orei 19.00*, having aired 40 news stories of direct or indirect electoral nature.

The total volume of relevant news stories was 4,862 seconds (1.3 hours). They concerned the work of the CEC, the registration of electoral competitors, and their launch in the campaign, focusing specifically on the presentation of electoral priorities, the results of an opinion survey, or accusations by some electoral competitors against others. In addition, some news stories contained reactions from electoral competitors, citizens, and experts on the number of polling stations abroad and on the left bank of the Dniester. Reports of direct electoral nature presented the majority of electoral competitors and brief description of their promises, without providing background information or opinions from citizens or experts, which would have helped outline a more relevant image of the candidates' electoral commitments.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

The 40 news stories of direct or indirect electoral nature were generally objective and impartial, with no violations of ethical standards. Materials of direct electoral nature (36 out of 40) presented information in an impartial manner, without mixing facts with opinions or treating events tendentiously. The television station presented electoral competitors in at least one news story during the day, without showing preference for any electoral actors.

Jurnal TV had a neutral attitude towards all electoral candidates, featuring them in materials about their registration by the CEC or launch in the electoral campaign. Reports showed no tendency to favor or disfavor any electoral competitors.

During the reporting period, Jurnal TV broadcast a report on the results of an opinion survey (June 8), presenting the electoral preferences of voters in a fair and impartial manner. The survey was covered in line with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*, mentioning its sample, margin of error, and sources of financing. The station did not mention whether the CEC had authorized the survey.

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

During the monitoring period, Jurnal TV ensured a relative diversity of sources. The 40 news stories of electoral nature cited 99 sources, mainly electoral candidates, members of the CEC, foreign observers, experts, and citizens.

From the perspective of frequency of appearances, BECS, PAS, PPDA, and PUN were in the lead. As for the duration of direct and indirect appearances, the top 3 were PLD with 123 seconds, PUN with 106 seconds, and PAS with 102 seconds. BERU, AUR, PDCM, PNOI, PDA, and PLD were quoted/mentioned twice each, while PVE, PPPO, PPPS, and PACCC each had one direct or indirect appearance. At the same time, several news stories listed all electoral competitors registered by the CEC for the early parliamentary elections.

Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions / Top 10

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
BECS	5	79
PAS	4	102
PPDA	3	95
BERU	2	64
PUN	3	106

PLD	2	123
PDA	2	89
AUR	2	68
PDCM	2	59
PNOI	2	49

The news stories about the registration of candidates and their launch in the campaign cited only primary sources, without including other relevant opinions. Reporters only presented the statements of candidates, without supplementing materials with background information.

At the same time, the balance of sources was ensured in 10 out of the 11 conflicting news stories. Only in one news story on June 7, which announced that “*the investigation regarding intermediaries in the fraudulent electricity import scheme from 2008 has been reopened,*” and that “*Igor Dodon and Vladimir Plahotniuc will be subjected to criminal investigation,*” the balance of sources was not ensured. The story was a retrospective of events since 2008 and of the prosecutors’ decision to reopen the case, without presenting the opinion of the people accused in this case.

From the perspective of ensuring gender equality, the station gave priority to male sources/protagonists, who were cited/mentioned 58 times, women being cited/mentioned in 24 cases (29%).

Language and images used:

During the reporting period, we noticed no language discriminating or disfavoring electoral competitors in the newscasts of Jurnal TV. The station did not use labels or images not corresponding to reality or not complying with ethical and professional standards.



NTV Moldova

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

Between June 1 and 10, 2021, NTV Moldova broadcast eight editions of the daily newscast at 19:00. They included 69 news stories of direct or indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 12,080 seconds (over 3.3 hours), and 46 of them appeared in the Elections 2021 section. The stories of direct electoral nature mainly referred to the achievements and commitments of BECS, vox pops with people supporting BECS and the leaders of the two parties that created the electoral bloc. Other news stories presented the accusations of BECS representatives against political opponents, especially PAS, claiming they lack integrity. 10 of the election-themed news stories covered the events of parties running in the early elections, without providing background information, as well as the results of three opinion surveys (7 stories), and a smaller part (4 stories) covered the current activities of the CEC. Most of the news stories of indirect electoral nature (15) that appeared outside the Elections 2021 section, presented the achievements of the mayors affiliated with PSRM, particularly the ones supported by central authorities. Almost all these materials were supplemented with voices of citizens who supported the successes of PSRM mayors, highlighted by NTV Moldova.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

Contrary to the provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, the Electoral Code, and the Moldovan Journalist’s Code of Conduct, during the reporting period NTV Moldova broadcast mostly biased news stories (52 out of 69).

BECS representatives appeared exclusively in positive light (32 times), and 7 times in neutral light. NTV Moldova reported in large materials about the electoral commitments of BECS; the current legislative proposals (e.g. the proposal to establish family capital, at the initiative of former President Igor Dodon); electoral meetings in territories and at institutions; achievements of the PCRM government or of Igor Dodon as president of Moldova; the politician's statements in the online show *President Igor Dodon Responds*, where he said that after the creation of the bloc "*we are growing*," and "*the main party, our opponent PAS, is declining*." In support of BECS, newscasts were supplemented by voices of citizens who "*remember nostalgically the times when the affairs of the state were managed by the team of Communists led by Vladimir Voronin*" (June 4), or by vox pops in which "*people welcome the social initiatives of the team led by Vladimir Voronin and Igor Dodon*," such as the increase of pensions, opening of pharmacies and road repairs in villages (June 9).

Between June 1 and 10, NTV Moldova broadcast outside the Elections 2021 section 14 reports from the regions of Moldova, presenting the achievements of 14 PSRM mayors: road repairs, particularly due to the Good Roads state program; renovation of lighting networks; rehabilitation of kindergartens; arrangement of parks (at least in one case with the support of Galina Dodon's charitable foundation *Din Suflet*); construction of aqueducts; connection to the natural gas network; etc. With a few exceptions, the mayors interviewed were presented as "PSRM's mayor." In most cases, local elected officials emphasized the effective collaboration they had during their term with the central and regional public administration or with some Socialist MPs. For example: "*There is a very productive collaboration between the Government and mayors. The constituency's MP Savva Oleg Iacobici [Oleg Savva, PSRM's MP], I am saying it openly, helped me whenever I asked, even in the evening, in the morning, or at night*" (Ghenadie Grădinari, Pietrosu village), or "*It is very necessary that we get support from the Government, MPs, the president. (...) Without their help, with the local budget, great achievements are not possible*" (Ala Țăranu, Albinetul Vechi village).

All reports were accompanied by vox pops with citizens who expressed support for the achievements of mayors. In several of these materials, NTV Moldova resorted to generalization and to mixing facts with opinions: "*The quality of life of the people in Albinetul Vechi village of Falesti district has significantly changed in the last year*" (June 2); "*People say that all these initiatives of local authorities make life in villages more beautiful*" (June 3); "*(...) managed to give the local people hope that they can have a beautiful life in the countryside, too*" (June 10); etc. In some cases, the news was accompanied by captions that amplified the message about the achievements of local elected officials, such as "*Change in the appearance of Albinetul Vechi*" (June 2); "*Man blesses the place*" (June 4); "*Changes for the better in Pietrosu*" (June 7); "*The fate of the village in the hands of the mayor*" (June 9); etc.

At the same time, in every newscast there were stories in which BECS representatives accused some political opponents of lack of integrity (PAS); of promoting "anti-popular" legislative initiatives such as raising the retirement age, granting the right to foreign citizens to buy agricultural land in Moldova, liquidation of districts and mayor's offices (PAS); of discriminatory attitude towards the people from the left bank of the Dniester when they oppose to the opening of polling stations in the Transnistrian region (PPDA and PAS); etc. For the most part, BECS representatives were presented as saviors, and their opponents, mostly PAS, as enemies ([the National Savior and Enemy manipulation technique](#)).

The tone of approach to PAS was negative in all 9 cases that concerned this competitor. Furthermore, NTV Moldova had a tendentious attitude and negative tone in relation to the Moldovan President Maia Sandu, in at least 9 materials dedicated to her or mentioning her. For example, on June 1 and 2, NTV Moldova broadcast extensive materials about Maia Sandu's

visits to various places. On June 1, in a report of about 7 minutes (one fifth of the newscast), NTV Moldova covered Maia Sandu's visit to Edinet, where the people from the north of the country "*protested against the anti-popular policies of the presidential office and the negligence of the president in relation to the common people.*" The report showed footage of demonstrators chanting and accusing Maia Sandu. The biased attitude of NTV Moldova could be seen in generalizations, mixture of facts with opinions, or imbalance of sources: "*Without the welcoming ceremony, Maia Sandu was quickly led into the building. Only supporters and members of a single political party had been brought there. People who are not on Maia Sandu's side were thrown out (...) The aggressive and selective attitude towards the people of the city has further heated up spirits*"; "*Victims of the situation were also some children from the Edinet district. A ceremony on the occasion of International Children's Day had been planned in the concert hall of the community center. Maia Sandu occupied the hall for almost two hours, while parents and children were held in the street*"; "*Having finished the meeting at the District Council, Maia Sandu was forced to hear again what the people think about her,*" the phrase followed by footage of a man chanting, "*The most deceitful president!*" etc. At the end of the material, the reporter mentions that before the electoral campaign Maia Sandu rarely traveled to the districts. The presidential office was deprived of the right to reply.

On June 2, in three consecutive materials that opened the newscast, NTV Moldova again showed bias and negative tone in relation to Maia Sandu. In the first material of the newscast, a continuation of events from Edinet, where Maia Sandu allegedly said that she had submitted a legislative initiative to increase the minimum pension, the station cited an online portal, according to which the president of Moldova lied, and NTV Moldova used the caption "*Saying one thing and doing the opposite.*" In the second material journalists say that "*Maia Sandu was brought to respect in Causeni,*" where the president allegedly tried to remove the media from the meeting room. At the beginning of the material, NTV Moldova reminds of Maia Sandu's commitment to the media that the presidential office would become a transparent institution. The station said that "*immediately after taking the office, Maia Sandu changed the tune,*" noting that "*Maia Sandu has already stood out as a president who does not organize press conferences and refuses to answer to journalists.*" In the third news story in this newscast, NTV Moldova journalists emphasized that "*President Maia Sandu and right-wing parties aim to liquidate two-thirds of districts and mayor's offices,*" citing PSRM MPs.

The station also had a tendentious attitude in relation to the parties that promote unification with Romania. For example, on June 7, in a material about a PUN electoral event, journalists said: "*The Parliament in Chisinau has only one mission – unification with Romania. This desideratum will be promoted in the next legislature by PUN, whose electoral program consists of a single objective – depriving Moldova of independence.*" In addition, they used a tendentious caption: "*Liquidation of the state – the only objective.*" Also in the June 7 newscast, NTV Moldova had a news story about the launch of AUR in the electoral campaign, referring to Dorin Chirtoaca, who "*led the capital's Mayor's Office for over ten years*" and "*said that the main culprits for the country's problems are the politicians who have been in charge in recent years.*"

In 4 news stories, NTV Moldova had a neutral attitude towards three other electoral competitors (PDM, PACE, and PLD). The newscast at 19:00 contained no materials about the events of other electoral competitors, which can be qualified as an omission.

During the reporting period, the station broadcast 7 materials about the results of three electoral surveys (June 1, June 8, June 10). For the most part, it took into account the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*. However, in these stories NTV Moldova

did not announce who are the people or organizations that ordered the surveys. In a news story on June 10 regarding the results of a survey conducted by Intellect Grup, the station underlined, generalizing: “*Experts believe that PCRM and PSRM will succeed in mobilizing the left-wing electorate to the maximum.*”

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

During the reporting period, the 69 materials broadcast by NTV Moldova and analyzed during this monitoring were documented from 239 sources. In most cases, the main sources were representatives of BECS and of local public administration, as well as citizens.

NTV Moldova failed to ensure equal access to electoral competitors in the news, having cited directly or indirectly in the relevant materials 9 electoral candidates. The BECS representatives had the largest presence in the news, with interventions of 3,280 seconds (0.9 hours), which is one-fourth of the total airtime allocated to the relevant materials. The space dedicated to BECS was 25-32 times larger than the one allocated to other competitors cited or mentioned.

The frequency of electoral actors appearing in the news and the volume of interventions

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
BECS	42	3,280
PDM	3	134
PPDA	4	116
PACE	3	89
PUN	2	69
AUR	3	67
PLD	1	57
PAS	12	54
PPPS	1	10

PP Șor or the leader of this party, Ilan Șor, were mentioned in 4 of the 7 news stories about the results of the electoral surveys.

28 news stories were of a conflicting nature, containing various accusations against certain political and electoral actors, the vast majority of which (24) were unbalanced.

The presidential office or Maia Sandu as president were mentioned 11 times, most often in controversial stories (except the ones on survey results), without being given the right to reply in most cases. The duration of her direct appearance was 82 seconds, and in several cases Maia Sandu’s earlier quotes were inserted in order to be challenged. Likewise, 9 controversial news stories mentioning PAS were unbalanced: the party was not given the right to reply and insufficient steps were taken to ensure this right. For example, in the story “*Skeletons in the closet*” (June 9), in which two candidates on the PAS list are accused of integrity problems, journalists claim that PAS spokeswoman Aurica Rusnac-Jardan did not answer the phone to provide feedback. In a material broadcast on June 7, NTV Moldova cites the PSRM MP Bogdan Țîrdea, according to whom several PAS representatives are targeted in criminal cases: “*Every second person in this list is either a millionaire, or corrupt, or with a fake diploma.*” According to NTV Moldova, in this case Aurica Rusnac-Jardan refused to comment.

Imbalance could also be observed in the vox pops with citizens who either criticized the activity of Maia Sandu, or supported the BECS initiatives or the achievements of the mayors affiliated to PSRM.

From the perspective of ensuring gender equality, we note a relative balance of sources, male protagonists being cited/mentioned 114 times, and women – 96 times (45%).

Language and images used:

NTV Moldova did not use discriminatory or licentious language against electoral competitors in the news broadcast during the reporting period. For the most part, the footage was in line with ethical and professional standards. However, in at least one case (June 9), the station used archival images in which Maia Sandu appeared with former Prime Minister Vlad Filat, convicted for corruption, to illustrate controversial news such as the subject of the theft of the billion or alienation of public goods, using the [image transfer technique](#).



Prime TV

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

Between June 1 and 10, 2021, in the eight editions of the monitored newscast *Primele Știri*, Prime TV broadcast 61 news stories of direct and indirect electoral nature with a total volume of 5,659 seconds (about 1.5 hours) and two relevant interviews, with Igor Grosu of PAS and Ion Chicu of PDCM. Many of the news stories analyzed referred to the registration and launch of candidates in the campaign for early elections; the regular work of the CEC; opinion surveys on voters' voting options; accusations of some electoral actors against others; protests organized by some candidates in connection with the small number of polling stations abroad; etc. Prime TV also had 6 indirect electoral materials that targeted the activities of central and local public administration representatives, certain activities of the Moldovan President Maia Sandu, news that could produce the transfer of positive or negative image to certain electoral candidates. As a rule, electoral reports were not extensive, including mostly information on the relevant actions of the candidates, without background information or expert opinions that would have outlined a clearer picture of the electoral promises of the candidates.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

During the reporting period, Prime TV covered the activities carried out by electoral competitors mostly in a fair manner. Most of the election-themed news stories (57 out of 61) presented the information impartially, without any problems related to the separation of facts from opinions or significant deviations from ethical standards that could lead to the distortion of information. In four news stories, there was a certain degree of tendentiousness in the form of selection of topics to be covered or of the quotes included. Thus, in the *Primele Știri* edition of June 4, a news story addressed two different topics: the first part of the story included the opinion of the BECS candidate Igor Dodon regarding the aid to be granted to Moldova by the European Union. The selected quote, “*This money is important for infrastructure, but I hope it will not be used for civil society, non-governmental organizations that will launder this money,*” supports the previous insinuations and speculations of PSRM about the civil society in Moldova and strengthens the message that these actors are allegedly involved in illegal actions. The second part of the story presents Igor Dodon's opinion regarding the decree of President Sandu to dismiss Vladislav Clima, the president of the Chisinau Court of Appeal. Dodon challenges the legality of the decree, concluding that “*You cannot go to heaven, doing things for which you have to go to hell,*” and the station also includes opinions of experts who criticize this decree.

Another news story, on June 2, presents Igor Dodon’s opinion on the settlement of the political crisis in the future Parliament. Given that the material does not include opinions of other parties that are likely to enter the Parliament, the newsworthy nature of this topic, taken from a TV show, is unclear, and it suggests favorable attitude towards Igor Dodon.

The tone of presentation of the electoral candidates was neutral in the absolute majority of cases. At the same time, a certain preference was observed for the BECS representatives, who were favored by the large number of appearances (15), while PP Șor was favored by a news story of indirect electoral nature. For example, the story from June 7 about the reopening of an amusement park for children in Orhei has an obvious advertising nature, including quotes from the head of Orhei district and the mayor of Orhei, both representatives of PP Șor, and finally mentioning that OrheiLand was opened at the time when Ilan Șor was mayor.

During the reporting period, the station broadcast 2 materials on electoral surveys (June 1 and June 8), largely in line with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*, but the June 1 story did not mention the sources of funding or the requester of the survey, which is contrary to the Regulation.

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

During the reporting period, Prime TV provided a relative diversity of sources. 150 sources were used to document the 61 news stories analyzed. In most of the stories, the main sources were electoral candidates, members of the CEC, representatives of the central public administration, citizens.

From the perspective of the frequency of appearances, we notice higher presence in the news of the BECS representatives, who had the most direct appearances or mentions and the largest amount of direct or indirect interventions compared to other candidates.

Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions / Top 10

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
BECS	15	615
PAS	14	225
AUR	11	187
PDCM	6	160
PDM	5	155
PPDA	7	145
BERU	5	145
PDA	5	120
PP Sor	6	115
PPPO	4	107

PLD was cited/mentioned 3 times (70 seconds), while PUN, PVE, and PNOI – once each. Several news stories listed all electoral competitors.

Most of the news stories about the registration of candidates and their launch in the campaign presented mainly opinions from a single perspective, without including other relevant opinions and/or supplementing the material with background information. At the same time, most of the

controversial news stories that contained direct accusations against electoral candidates, political parties, or local and central authorities, ensured the right to reply and the balance of sources (30 of the total 35 controversial materials). In five cases, the station failed to present both sides involved in the conflict. For example, the story of June 4 about the reaction of BECS' Igor Dodon to the presidential decree on the annulment of the decree appointing the president of the Court of Appeal remained unbalanced; the story from June 2 about the PSRM opinion on "*possible administrative-territorial reforms that would be carried out after the elections by the right-wing parties and President Maia Sandu, at the request of international financial organizations.*" The station cited Igor Dodon in detail, sending the message that "*after such a reform, two thirds of the districts and villages would be liquidated, and the citizens will have to travel dozens of kilometers to solve problems related to pensions and social allowances or to look for a job.*" Prime TV also inserted the summary opinion of the representatives of the presidential office, without citing the opinions of independent experts to balance the news.

From the perspective of ensuring gender equality, the station gave priority to male sources/protagonists, who were cited/mentioned 100 times, women being cited/mentioned in 36 cases, or 26%.

Language and images used:

Prime TV did not use discriminatory language against electoral competitors in the news broadcast during the reporting period. As for the images, they were neutral and complied with ethical and professional standards.



Primul în Moldova

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

Between June 1 and 10, 2021, the station Primul în Moldova broadcast 54 news stories with electoral significance in eight editions of the daily newscast at 18:00. Some of them appeared in the section *Elections 2021* (mainly those of direct electoral nature). The relevant news had a total volume of 8,936 seconds (about 2.5 hours). A large part of the analyzed materials referred to the electoral promises of BECS and its representatives' visits to various places in the country, the launch into elections or the campaign objectives of several other parties, as well as criticism against some of the initiatives, BECS accusations against PAS and Maia Sandu, the regular activity of CEC, opinion surveys. As for materials of indirect electoral nature, Primul în Moldova broadcast a series of reports from localities led by PSRM mayors, where infrastructure development projects have been or are being implemented. At the same time, several news stories targeted the activities of President Maia Sandu in close connection with the activities of PAS.

In most cases, the news stories were extensive, supplemented with direct quotes, vox pops with citizens, and comments from experts/analysts.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

During the reporting period, Primul în Moldova provided biased coverage in more than half of the news stories on electoral issues, with a mixture of facts and opinions, contrary to provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services (Article 13 (1)), which requires separating facts from opinions and informing on events in a fair and impartial manner. On the one hand, the television favored and placed in a positive light BECS and its representatives, and on the other

hand, it disfavored and put in a negative light PAS and President Maia Sandu. 32 news stories (60%) out of 54 were biased and did not separate facts from the opinions of journalists.

The television station Primul în Moldova promoted in each newscast the electoral objectives and promises of BECS (some being presented as a fulfilled fact), broadcasting 22 positive news stories concerning the bloc. The materials covered Igor Dodon's electoral meetings with the employees of some companies or institutions, the launching of BECS in the campaign, the PSRM leader's posts on social networks or his presence in television shows. Some initiatives, announced in an initial news story, citing primary sources, were resumed in the newscasts on the following days, but with a different approach. An example is the project of establishing the so-called maternal capital, announced on June 1 by the BECS candidate Vladimir Odnostalco. On June 2, Primul în Moldova broadcast another news story with a vox pop praising this initiative. There was a mixture of facts and opinions, as well as generalizations: *[The initiative] is supported by young families in our country; According to people, the socialist government laid the foundations for good projects; During the socialist rule, several measures were taken to help families with children.* The same scenario was applied, for example, in the case of promises of the indexation of pensions, promoted in the second week of monitoring.

Another example of generalization, in a news story on June 3, is related to Igor Dodon's promise that *"BECS will return to the laws blocked by President Maia Sandu in the very first sittings of the new Parliament,"* and the presenter said that *"voters also believe that these priority projects must be supported."* On June 9, Primul în Moldova reported on the *"positive changes that have taken place in the country since the fall of the Plahotniuc regime,"* which happened *"due to the involvement of Igor Dodon,"* who was then the country's president.

On a positive note are the news stories of indirect electoral nature, which report on infrastructure projects in the villages and communes led by socialist mayors – road repairs, connection to the gas or drinking water network, renovation of schools and kindergartens, etc. Relevant in this case are also the captions saying *"Another example of the rebirth of a locality"* or *"Investments in people's well-being."*

It should be noted that most of the positive news concerning BECS ended with the phrase *"In the early elections of July 11, BECS is number 6 in the ballots."*

On the other hand, the tone of coverage of PAS and President Sandu was negative in 31 news stories out of the 54 monitored. The station broadcast several news stories with messages that the country's districts will be liquidated and laws will be adopted to allow foreigners to buy agricultural land, this information serving as a pretext for denigrating the head of state and transferring the negative image to PAS. The station disseminated messages such as *"Maia Sandu has not taken any action to raise the level of the minimum pension in the country,"* *"the dissolution of the Parliament and the initiation of early elections by President Maia Sandu have deprived employees in the medical system of a 40% salary increase,"* or *"Maia Sandu is suspected of using problems in the justice system to gain political rating in the current campaign."* Regarding PAS, on June 4, the television began a news story with the statement that *"PAS does not hold monopoly on the right wing, and a large part of citizens got disappointed in this formation,"* without referring to any source of these statements. Instead, the leaders of other right-wing parties are cited, saying in a TV show that they will not give up the electoral race in favor of PAS.

Another biased piece of news, on June 1, reported on Maia Sandu’s visit to Edinet, where she was booed by a group of citizens, and facts in it were mixed with opinions: “*A hard day for Maia Sandu,*” “*Anti-popular policies and ignorance shown by the president,*” “*Aggressive and selective attitude,*” “*Several children were victims of the situation,*” “*Barricaded behind 100 policemen,*” etc.

In a news story on June 7 about the protest organized by several parties in front of the CEC, the editorial office failed to inform about the protesters’ demands, shifting the focus to the traffic jams created by the rally: “*Nerves and time lost in traffic around the CEC headquarters,*” “*Protesters illegally blocked the road,*” “*Infernal traffic jams,*” “*Nerves were stretched.*”

Primul în Moldova had a neutral attitude towards several other electoral competitors targeted in the news (PUN, AUR, PDM). It should be noted that the news about the registration of some parties or their launches in the campaign did not appear at all in the monitored newscasts, which can be qualified as omission (e.g., launch events of PAS or BERU in the electoral race, PDCM’s electoral activity).

During the reporting period, the station broadcast 3 materials about two electoral surveys (June 1 and June 8), mostly in line with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*. In the news story on June 8, the newsroom resorted to manipulation. More precisely, in the section of *Most appreciated politicians*, the survey showed Maia Sandu on the first place, followed by Igor Dodon and Vladimir Voronin. However, Primul în Moldova stated at the beginning of the story: “*The leaders of the Bloc of Communists and Socialists enjoy, cumulatively, the greatest trust among Moldovans, followed by the head of state, Maia Sandu.*”

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

The 54 relevant materials directly or indirectly cited 207 sources, mainly electoral candidates (usually BECS representatives), members of CEC, representatives of the central and local public administration, lawyers, doctors, citizens.

During the reporting period, a substantial difference was noticed between the frequency and length of BECS appearances in comparison with other electoral competitors. BECS representatives had the most direct/indirect appearances or mentions and the largest volume for direct or indirect interventions. The duration of appearances was 2,156 seconds – one-fourth of the total volume of monitored news stories, and some stories were particularly large, such as the June 7 story about investments in welfare (400 seconds) or the June 1 story about President Sandu’s visit to Edinet, where she was booed (340 seconds). PAS representatives were mostly mentioned (10 times), having had 6 direct or indirect interventions. Accordingly, President Maia Sandu was mentioned 17 times in the news, having direct access 3 times.

The frequency of electoral actors appearing in the news and the volume of interventions

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
BECS	29	2,156
PPDA	4	158
PDM	3	143

PUN	2	133
AUR	3	98
PAS	16	92
PACE	1	36
PPPS	1	11

Most of the controversial news stories that contained direct accusations against certain protagonists did not ensure the right to reply – 19 of the 22 controversial stories were unbalanced. For example, there was imbalance in the story of June 1 about the reaction of the Association of Judges to the presidential decree on the annulment of the decree appointing the President of the Court of Appeal; the story of June 2, according to which “Maia Sandu did not take any action to raise the level of the minimum pension in the country”; the story that “BECS will not allow the liquidation of districts and the reduction of the number of villages”; the story of June 7 that most of the candidates on the PAS lists are former members of PLDM, a party during whose rule “the biggest economic and financial crimes have happened”; the story of June 9, “Maia Sandu abuses the law when she keeps in office some councilors who are electoral candidates on the PAS lists.”

In some cases, the reply is missing, and in other cases journalists mention that PAS did not answer the phone to comment or the presidential office “*has not yet commented on the information made public by BECS,*” being obvious the lack of journalistic effort to offer the right to reply to targeted/accused sources as required by ethical standards as well as the law. Thus, the station did not comply with the provisions of Article 13 (4) of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services regarding the obligation to cover different opinions in a balanced way.

The imbalance of sources is also noticeable in the exclusively laudatory vox pops in the news stories that showed BECS in a positive light and in the exclusively negative/critical ones in the biased news about PAS/Maia Sandu.

During the reporting period, the station ensured a relative balance of sources from a gender perspective: male protagonists were cited/mentioned 106 times, exceeding the number of women, who were cited/mentioned 74 times (41%).

Language and images used:

Primul în Moldova did not use discriminatory or licentious language in relation to electoral competitors in the news broadcast during the reporting period. The included footage also complied with ethical and professional standards, but we noted that, in some cases, the reporter’s microphone had the logo of NTV Moldova.



Pro TV

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

Pro TV covered the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections on July 11 in 40 news stories of direct or indirect electoral nature broadcast in nine editions of the main daily newscast. With a total volume of 4,616 seconds (1.2 hours), the news focused on the registration of electoral competitors for the parliamentary elections and their launch in the electoral campaign, the CEC decisions on approving and subsequently supplementing the number of

polling stations abroad, as well as citizens' protests related to these decisions, opinion surveys on the electoral preferences of the people, etc.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

The reports presented the majority of candidates registered for elections, who were given airtime depending on the organized electoral events. Most (35) of the monitored news stories were approached correctly, facts being separated from opinions, electoral competitors being presented in a neutral way, and no violations of ethical standards being noticed.

However, during the reporting period, there were 5 materials in which the focus was not so much on the electoral programs and promises of competitors, but on sensationalism and irrelevant aspects from the launch events, denoting a certain degree of bias. For example, in the June 3 news about the launch of BERU in the electoral campaign, the material focused on issues irrelevant to the electoral context. The journalist noted that "*Renato Usatii was greeted with applause,*" that "*promises ran like a river,*" and "*in the meantime, the guests seemed to be bored, so everyone found an occupation – some playing in phones, others surfing the web.*"

The launch of AUR in the electoral campaign was covered similarly in a report broadcast on June 7. In the intro, the presenter mentioned that "*the event took place at the train station, where the participants arrived with a yellow bus,*" and after "*two loudspeakers were installed, Dorin Chirtoaca (...), took care for the sound to work.*" The reporter also mentioned that "*some actions were not synchronized,*" and "*after the launch participants were asked to get on the bus (...), but the bus did not move until a photo was taken of all members and supporters of the AUR party.*" Thus, out of the 115 seconds reserved for that news, only 22 seconds were given to AUR representatives to present their electoral program, the rest of the airtime being occupied by aspects irrelevant to the electoral process.

The presentation of the BECS electoral program for the early parliamentary elections was also not without nuances. At the beginning of the news story, the reporter announced that the Socialists and Communists presented their electoral program "*in a factory, surrounded by tractors and tanks,*" and in the closure he mentioned that "*in the end, Vladimir Voronin came slowly to the rostrum,*" suggesting that he had trouble moving. The mixture of facts and opinions was felt when the reporter noted in the same story that "*for the poverty in Moldova they blamed former governments, but did not mention that they were part of them,*" but also when he said that "*other members have said that if they get into the future parliament, they will allocate money for infrastructure projects, build kindergartens, and increase pensions and salaries – things promised by the Socialists in previous campaigns, but never achieved.*" The phrase "*never achieved*" is a general conclusion of the reporter, who appears as an expert.

The launch of the PCDM in the electoral race on June 8 was treated tendentiously, with the mentions of some aspects that have nothing to do with the electoral process. Thus, in the intro of the news story, the presenter highlighted the fact that "*the event took place at the party's office, in a building rented for 300,000 MDL per year.*" At the beginning of the story, the reporter said that "*after the team members arranged in front of the press, Viorica Dumbrăveanu (...) went to invite Ion Chicu from an office next door.*" Irrelevant was also the phrase that "*the former prime minister read his program from paper,*" and that "*the other candidates who made speeches also had notes,*" while Pro TV reserved a few seconds to illustrate how a candidate is taking notes out of his pocket. From the 120 seconds reserved for the news, only 13 seconds were given to the party leader Ion Chicu to present some theses from the party's electoral

program, and 6 seconds were distributed among three candidates. The rest of the time was devoted to non-essentials.

On June 10, in the material about the launch of PLD in the campaign, the reporter said that *“without too much agitation and only with a poster with the party’s logo in the background, the PLD launched into the electoral campaign.”* In the summary to the news, it was mentioned that *“although they boasted about their team, only the first three candidates were present at the event,”* and *“the three candidates contradicted themselves several times in their speeches.”*

The tone of the approach to the majority of electoral competitors was neutral. Two materials showed BECS in a negative light, 4 other competitors – AUR, PDCM, PP Șor, and PLD – were the protagonists of one negative news story each.

The station presented the electoral choices of voters, having broadcast the results of three opinion surveys (June 1, June 8, and June 9). These materials were mostly in line with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*, having mentioned the sample, margin of error, and sources of funding, but failing to mention whether the surveys were approved by the CEC.

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

In the process of documenting, Pro TV used 113 sources cited directly or indirectly, most often electoral competitors and CEC representatives. Election-themed news stories were based on statements made at press conferences or at the launches into the electoral race.

During the monitoring period, Pro TV showed no preference for any electoral competitors. At the same time, the representatives of PAS, BECS, and PPDA had the most appearances as sources, being cited directly or indirectly 11, 10, and 8 times, respectively. From the point of view of the allocated airtime, there was no obvious difference between the targeted competitors. PLD and PNOI, PVE, PDM, and PACE were mentioned only once.

Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions / Top 10

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
PAS	11	99
BECS	10	57
PPDA	8	75
AUR	5	38
BERU	4	72
PUN	4	108
PLD	3	63
PP Sor	3	19
PPO	2	36
PDCM	2	56
PDA	2	14

The station ensured the balance of sources in 17 out of the 18 controversial news stories. In a report on June 9, Pro TV broadcast a story in which “a Democratic mayor claims to have received letters from Vasile Bolea (PSRM) demanding explanations for spending public money.” The entire story is based on the statements of the Democratic mayor, and the reporter said in the end that “*neither Vasile Bolea, nor the spokesperson from the Ministry of Interior answered the phone today to comment.*” The station did not try to find other relevant sources to ensure their balance, although it is required by ethical standards.

In the news regarding the registration of political parties for the elections, Pro TV listed all the parties that were already registered or were about to be registered by the CEC.

In terms of gender balance, Pro TV gave priority to male sources (73), while female sources (18) had a lower coverage (20%).

Language and images used:

Overall, the language of the election-themed news on Pro TV was in line with ethical standards, lacking qualifiers and discriminatory language. The video and photo images used corresponded to reality.



Publika TV

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

Publika TV broadcast 63 election-related news stories during the monitoring period. Their total volume was 5,664 seconds (1.6 hours). For the most part, these materials covered the registration of competitors by the CEC and the launches into the campaign; the electoral objectives stated by candidates; protests; the survey results made public during this period; discussions around the number of polling stations to be opened abroad or around the presidential decree annulling the appointment of the president of the Chisinau Court of Appeal. Most of the news stories were based on the primary sources of information and were not supplemented with other opinions, experts, or background information, which was mainly included in controversial news stories.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

Most news stories (61 out of 63) were neutral, non-biased, and in line with the principle of separating facts from opinions. In two cases, a slight bias was observed, both in the style of coverage and in captions. In a story on June 7, about the protest of AUR members in front of the PSRM headquarters, Publika headlines, “*Scandal between AUR and PSRM,*” “*The spirits have heated up.*” The word “*scandal,*” but this time “*around the candidates,*” the station also used in the June 9 news about the accusations of some candidates regarding conflicts of interests with the involvement of a candidate from the PAS lists for the parliamentary elections.

Another biased piece of news was broadcast on June 5. In it, the station indirectly cited Igor Dodon, who said in a meeting with a US official that he regretted the attempts of some foreign forces to influence the internal affairs of Moldova and impose control in Chisinau. The editors did not specify the source of this information, Igor Dodon is not cited directly, and there is no other opinion on this subject. Apart from this case, the BECS representative was placed in a

positive light in 3 other news stories strictly based on Igor Dodon’s statements made either live on Facebook (story on June 6, accompanied by soundtrack) or in interviews for other media outlets. In these stories, the source is sure that BECS will obtain parliamentary majority, it is successful in surveys, PSRM and PCRM have joined forces “to govern together,” “for citizens.” The tone of presentation of other electoral competitors was neutral.

During this period, Publika TV reported on the results of three surveys (June 1, 8, and 9) in three news stories. The focus was on the parties that would enter the Parliament, according to survey data, and all these competitors were mentioned briefly. The information was in line with the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*.

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

To document the 63 news stories, Publika used 172 sources. In most cases, they were leaders and members of the parties participating in the elections. In addition, reporters cited the representatives of the CEC, the central public administration, state institutions and law enforcement agencies, citizens. The election-themed news stories, broadcast during the monitored period, were usually short and from a single source (primary sources from events).

BECS representatives had the most appearances on Publika, being mentioned or cited directly or indirectly 15 times, with 354 seconds of airtime. As for PAS, although it was mentioned or cited more times (18), the allocated airtime was almost twice shorter – 197 seconds.

Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions / Top 10

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
BECS	15	354
PAS	18	197
PPDA	9	167
PACE	3	158
AUR	9	148
PDCM	6	147
PDM	3	84
PUN	3	61
PLD	2	58
PPPO	3	51

PDA, BERU, PNOI, and PVE were cited or mentioned between 1 to 4 times, with airtime less than 50 seconds.

Out of the total number of 18 conflicting news stories, 6 were unbalanced and did not respect the right to reply. For example, in a June 6 news story, Igor Dodon says he is confident that BECS will obtain parliamentary majority and refers to surveys that show that the popularity of PAS is declining. In another news story the same day, regarding the number of polling stations to be opened in the diaspora, Gheorghe Cavcaliuc accuses PPDA and PAS of not implementing electronic voting while they were in power, implying that they are responsible for the current

situation. In a subsequent story on the same topic, the CEC secretary Maxim Lebedinschi accuses the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of “*cheating*” and having “*populist demands.*” At the same time, on June 7, reporting on the protest organized by several parties in front of the CEC headquarters, Publika presented the dissatisfaction and arguments of the protesters, citing the leaders of AUR, PAS, PPDA, who demanded the resignation of the CEC, among other things, but did not balance this information with the opinion of CEC representatives. All these news stories lack the reply of those targeted/accused.

In terms of gender balance, there is a significant gap between the number of men and women cited – 104 versus 35 (25%).

Language and images used:

The language used in the monitored news was in line with ethical and deontological standards and lacked labels and qualifiers. In the news story on June 3, about the protest organized in front of the Chisinau Mayor’s Office, Vladimir Mitru is initially cited directly as the PAS’ municipal councilor, and later he is already presented as Mayor Ceban’s councilor, which generates confusion.

There was also fairness in the footage used, which was relevant to the subject, and its sources were indicated.



RTR Moldova

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

During the monitored period, the RTR Moldova television station broadcast 45 electoral materials in the eight editions of the main daily newscast, with a volume of 3,822 seconds (1.1 hours). Registration of candidates for early elections by the CEC, presentation of electoral programs and campaign activities of candidates were the main topics covered in election-themed news stories. News about electoral candidates appeared in the section “Early parliamentary elections 2021” (41). Other news about the electoral process, 4 in number, appeared outside this section (information from the CEC, measures to prevent COVID-19 infection during the organization and conduct of early parliamentary elections).

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

The station provided access to news for most electoral candidates, covering their activities correctly. There were no violations of ethical standards. News stories presented electoral information in a fair, neutral way, and facts were separated from opinions. No preference for any electoral competitors or tendencies to favor/disfavor them were identified, and the tone of presentation was neutral for all competitors.

The monitored newscasts had no materials about electoral surveys.

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

RTR Moldova reporters consulted 98 sources to prepare electoral materials, most often citing electoral competitors from electoral events, from interviews for other media outlets, or from posts on social networks. In two news stories, citizens were also interviewed.

The representatives of BECS had the most appearances, with 207 seconds of airtime. PPDA representatives were cited with the same frequency, 193 seconds.

Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions / Top 10

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
BECS	5	207
PPDA	5	193
PAS	4	137
PDM	3	134
PACCC	5	133
PUN	4	108
BERU	3	96
PACE	2	66
AUR	2	64
PPO	2	62

PDA had two appearances (52 seconds); PDCM – one (46 seconds); PP Șor had one appearance (30 seconds) and was mentioned once; PVE – one appearance (28 seconds) and one mention; and PLD – one appearance (10 seconds).

Of all the news stories broadcast, two were controversial and unbalanced. The first material, aired on June 8, referred to the PACCC announcement on challenging the CEC decision on the registration of AUR for elections. According to party leader Mark Tkaciuc, AUR is an extremist party that openly promotes the liquidation of the Moldovan state. The news did not show the reaction of AUR or the CEC to these accusations, but mentioned at the end that no one has commented on these statements so far.

In the second news story, on June 10, the BECS candidate Radu Mudreac asked the Government to help the farmers affected by hail and heavy rains. He said that the authorities could offer support to citizens from the Reserve Fund, which currently amounts to 28 million MDL, but have not yet done anything. It is not clear whether the reporter tried to find out the Government's opinion, as they said that the Government did not comment on the BECS candidate's statements.

The ratio of sources from the gender perspective was clearly in favor of men (80 male sources versus 11 female sources (12%)).

Language and images used:

The language and footage used in the newscasts of RTR Moldova were in line with ethical standards, without deviations or discriminatory elements.

Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

The television station TV 6 covered the campaign in 44 news stories of direct or indirect electoral nature, which appeared in the section *Elections 2021* within the newscast *Ora Știrilor*. The total volume of relevant materials was 4,888 seconds (1.3 hours), and they referred to the registration of candidates by the CEC, launches into the campaign, presentation of electoral priorities, issues related to the number of polling stations abroad, the protests organized by some political actors, events related to the activity of the local public administration in Orhei, etc. Election-themed reports covered the majority of candidates, briefly informing about their electoral statements and promises. There were also some materials about the accusations and speculations of some candidates against others.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

A large part (31) of the monitored materials was objective, separated facts from opinion, and covered topics in a neutral way. At the same time, during the reporting period, biased approach was noted in 13 materials, which reflected either the activities of the public administration in Orhei, led by PP Șor representatives, or presented the accusations of corruption against PAS candidates. The way in which the accusatory news stories were structured shows the station's biased attitude towards PAS, as it selected information from different sources, without adopting a similar behavior in relation to other electoral competitors. Such stories presented accusations in great detail, inserting background information about other MPs who withdrew from the PAS list after information about their involvement in illicit business appeared in the public space. Some such news partially presented the opinions of the people targeted, sometimes mentioning that those people did not answer the phone to comment. In the case of materials in which sources were the representatives of PP Șor, the attitude of the outlet was positive. For example, in the story citing Ruxanda Glavan, candidate on the PP Șor list, who criticizes the way the pandemic situation is managed and offers solutions, the reporters eventually mentioned that the party had several such initiatives (June 9). Impartiality and objectivity were also affected in materials with the participation of local authorities (reopening of the OrheiLand amusement park (June 4), giving gifts to children on the occasion of International Children's Day (June 1), road repairs (June 7, 9), repairs in some yards in Orhei (June 11). Some of these news stories failed to separate facts from opinions. For example, reporters emphasized in the news how much people enjoy the developed infrastructure, mentioning that *people are happy that their yards will be renovated; residents are delighted with the way things are developing; the allocation of money is appreciated by locals; people are deeply grateful for the beautiful things being done; repair works in Orhei continue to please the eyes of people*; etc.

The attitude of the monitored station towards electoral and political actors was markedly positive towards PP Șor in 8 news stories and negative in 5 stories about PAS candidates and 2 about President Maia Sandu. The tone of presentation of other electoral candidates was predominantly neutral.

During the reporting period, TV6 aired 2 materials on the electoral surveys (June 1 and June 8), which were largely in line with the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the*

Republic of Moldova, but did not mention the sources of funding or requesters of the surveys, which is contrary to legal provisions.

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

To document the news, TV6 used 92 sources, cited directly or indirectly. The materials broadcast during the reporting period most often cited CEC representatives, electoral candidates, representatives of the central and local public administration, and citizens, especially in news stories of indirect electoral nature. Sources in election-themed news were not diverse. The station relied primarily on the statements of primary sources made at press events or at TV shows or online portals.

The representatives of PP Șor had the most appearances as sources on TV6, being mentioned/cited directly or indirectly 12 times, with 587 seconds of airtime. PAS was cited/mentioned 12 times, with 6 direct or indirect interventions of 98 seconds total.

Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions / Top 10

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
PP Sor	12	587
PACE	6	360
BECS	9	245
PAS	12	98
PLD	4	95
PPO	3	50
PCDM	2	45
BERU	5	40
AUR	4	35
PPDA	3	20

PDA, PACCC, PVE, PNOI were mentioned/cited once each, and the list of all candidates appeared as background information in several news stories.

A large part (15) of all controversial election-themed news stories broadcast by TV6 during the reporting period (22) was in line with the principle of balance of sources, but in 7 cases reporters failed to comply with the requirement of presenting both sides to a conflict. In 5 of these, reporters said that the persons concerned did not answer the phone to comment, but this fact does not free the newsroom from the responsibility to balance opinions. Once the editorial office decided to cover topics that involve accusations, journalists should have made greater effort to obtain the second opinion, especially in cases of serious and defamatory accusations. For example, in the newscast on June 9, the station had a material based on information published online, according to which a candidate on the list of PAS was allegedly involved in schemes that cost the state millions of lei. The reporter contacted the PAS spokesperson, who suggested talking directly with the person concerned. Although the spokesperson promised to provide contact details, it did not happen, the reporter said, without providing other opinions confirming or refuting the information obtained online. According to the principles of responsible journalism, the task to document the news rests not on sources, but on the media, which should make consistent efforts to ensure the balance of sources.

The gender balance of sources/protagonists was not ensured in relevant news stories. TV6 cited/mentioned male sources more often than female – 72% men versus 28% women.

Language and images used:

In most cases, the language used was in line with ethical standards. There were neither pejorative epithets/qualifiers in relation to protagonists, nor manipulation with the statements made by competitors. Only in one case the station used footage irrelevant to the topic covered – the news story on June 7 about the protest organized by the representatives of several electoral candidates in front of the CEC contained footage from another protest, organized the same day in front of the Competition Council. Messages on the protesters' signs are inconsistent with the protest in front of the CEC.



Screenshot/TV6, Ora Știrilor, June 7, 2021

In another case, in the material from the online press conference organized by party leader Ilan Șor (June 7), the caption was inaccurate and confusing, informing about the party's launch into the campaign, while the story contained statements on other topics and announced that the launch would take place on June 11.



Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

Between June 1 and 10, 2021, in the eight editions of the main daily newscast at 19:00, TV8 broadcast 36 materials of direct or indirect electoral nature, with the volume of 6,318 seconds (about 1.7 hours). In this period, TV8 did not have a special section dedicated to electoral topics. The television station covered the activities of electoral competitors; the current activities of the CEC; protests at the CEC office; the lawsuit involving the CEC for opening fewer polling stations abroad than would be necessary according to some parties; the findings of the Promo-LEX Association regarding the violations committed by three entities since the beginning of the electoral campaign. TV8 did not inform about the results of surveys made public between June 1 and 10. Several news stories referred to the criminal cases involving representatives of political parties running in parliamentary elections or covered the statements made by some politicians from these parties about high-profile criminal cases.

Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

During the reporting period, TV8 provided correct coverage of most of the activities carried out by electoral competitors. The topics that targeted the electoral process, as well as the campaign

activities of the candidates present in the news (about 20 in total), were covered in a neutral manner. The station did not obviously favor or disfavor any electoral competitor. TV8 mentioned in the election-themed news broadcast during the monitored period all the parties registered by the CEC, as well as the number of applications under examination.

In one case, at the launch of the PPDA into the campaign (June 2), TV8 mixed facts with opinions and showed a slight bias: *“The launch event, organized to perfection, with loudspeakers, cameras and two large screens,” “boasted about the party’s achievements.”* And in another news story, on June 8, TV8 covered the launch of PDCM, emphasizing that *“promises ran like a river.”*

Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources

During the reporting period, TV8 ensured the diversity of sources. To document the 36 news stories, TV8 cited/mentioned 179 sources: electoral candidates, members of the CEC, representatives of the central public administration, citizens, experts.

From the perspective of the allocated airtime, PPDA representatives had the highest presence. This party had the most direct appearances or mentions and the most volume of direct or indirect interventions compared to other candidates (almost 5 minutes).

Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions / Top 10

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
PPDA	12	294
BECS	13	170
PAS	13	136
BERU	4	106
PLD	1	68
PDCM	2	46
PP Şor	6	21
PPPO	2	19
AUR	2	6
PACE	2	5

Out of the 36 materials directly or indirectly related to elections, 29 were of a conflicting nature and, except in one case, the opinions of all sides involved in the conflict were present in the materials, or the journalists’ effort to gather the views of all people concerned was obvious.

On June 10, the station broadcast a news story based on statements made by interim Prime Minister Aureliu Ciocoi in TV8’s show *Cutie Neagra*, who claimed that MPs from several parties had put pressure on him, demanding that the Government impose a moratorium on European standards for asphalt paving: *“they were from PAS, and from PSRM, and from the DA Platform.”* In terms of the right to reply, the journalists only referred to a publication of a PPDA’s MP on Facebook. No other effort by journalists to obtain reactions or give the right to reply was seen in the news.

As for gender equality, male sources/protagonists were cited/mentioned 105 times, and women were cited/mentioned 51 times (32%).

Language and images used:

In the news broadcast during the reporting period, TV8 did not use discriminatory language in relation to electoral competitors. The images used were neutral and in line with ethical and professional standards.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Between June 1 and 10, 2021, the 10 television stations monitored during the electoral campaign showed the following trends:

- The public television station Moldova 1 had a balanced behavior, providing access to the majority of electoral competitors to news, without obviously favoring or disfavoring any candidate. Most of the election-themed materials were fair and impartial, but limited to only one source of information, without treating topics in detail by offering background information or including other relevant sources. Conflicting news stories were most often balanced, but the gender equality of sources was not ensured.
- The private stations Jurnal TV, Pro TV, RTR Moldova, and TV8 offered airtime to the majority of candidates who had campaign activities, without obviously favoring or disfavoring any electoral competitor. Election-themed materials were documented mostly from primary sources, and controversial stories in most cases were balanced, having provided the right to reply. The cited sources were not gender-balanced, as there were more male sources.
- NTV Moldova and Primul în Moldova failed to provide equal access to news to all electoral competitors, and covered election-themed topics in a biased and unbalanced manner. These stations massively favored the Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists, both through the frequency and airtime of direct interventions and the positive tone of coverage. The Action and Solidarity Party was obviously disfavored, being mentioned/cited only in a negative context. The stations ensured relative gender balance of the sources cited, but failed to ensure the diversity of sources in election-themed materials or offer the right to reply in most of controversial news stories.
- The stations Prime TV and Publika TV provided access to news to the majority of electoral candidates, presenting them mostly in a fair and objective manner. Most often, the news cited/mentioned the representatives of BECS, which was slightly favored by the frequency and airtime of interventions on Prime TV and the positive tone on Publika. The tone of presentation of other competitors was mostly neutral, with a relative pluralism of opinions, which were usually balanced in controversial news stories. There was no gender balance among sources, men being cited/mentioned more often than women.
- TV6 covered the activities of most electoral candidates in a fair and impartial manner, with the exception of PP Șor, PAS, and PACE. PP Șor was obviously favored by positive news stories, including the ones on the activities of the head of Orhei district and the mayor of Orhei, representatives of PP Șor. Representatives of PAS and President Sandu were disfavored by the large number of accusatory news stories based either on the statement of an electoral competitor, or on information from the Internet. There was insufficient diversity in the cited/mentioned sources, and some of the conflicting news stories were not balanced. The gender balance tipped towards male sources.

Recommendations:

- Broadcasters to use monitoring reports as tools for self-regulation and to eliminate deficiencies, so that their activities could be in line with legal requirements and the Journalist's Code of Conduct.
- The Broadcasting Council to take note and use monitoring reports in order to assess whether the monitored television stations respected the right to full, objective, and truthful information.
- The Broadcasting Council to develop intervention tools and apply them promptly and efficiently in cases of violation of legal requirements by broadcasters in their coverage of electoral campaigns, in order to ensure proper information of the electorate through audiovisual programs.