



Monitoring Report

MOLDOVA 1

Period: August 31 – September 6, 2020

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Between August 31 and September 6, 2020, the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) monitored the public television station Moldova 1 in order to identify whether the journalistic materials it broadcast contained elements of disinformation or violations of professional ethics. We analyzed how the public television covered events in the political, economic, social, and other fields, as well as how it complied with professional and ethical standards, such as verifying information in several sources, pluralism of opinions, ensuring balance in case of conflicting news, and so on.

The monitoring covered the main daily newscasts. We started from the assumption that the newscasts of the public media outlet should contain exclusively facts, and not the opinions of journalists, that they should be prepared in a neutral and accessible language, and should reflect reality as accurately as possible, respecting the balance of sources.

Purpose of monitoring

The monitoring aims to determine whether the public television station Moldova 1 is journalistically fair, neutral, and impartial when it informs the public about the government's activity in relation to the political opposition in moments of tension and/or crisis. This assessment was based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of the main newscasts (*Messenger*), which were evaluated from the perspective of compliance with the principles of correct information as provided by the code of conduct of this public media outlet and by the Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova. We focused especially on the coverage of the activities of political actors and/or entities (particularly official / governmental ones).

Methodology

Given that the research aimed to assess the extent to which Moldova 1 complies with the principles of equity, impartiality, fairness, and political neutrality, as well as the hypothesis that Moldova 1 tends to adjust its media content to the messages delivered by the government, it is imperative to perform a quantitative and qualitative analysis of newscasts and news round-up programs that have the potential to influence the public opinion. Therefore, the methodology of this study combined two methods of research of the media product: *quantitative* and *qualitative / comparative*. At the same time, newscasts were analyzed from the perspective of manipulation and disinformation techniques, in order to help consumers see whether a journalistic product is manipulative or whether it covers reality impartially.

By means of the **quantitative analysis**, we explored the trends in the coverage of topics of public interest in the selected period. It is a research method that involves monitoring, sampling, and coding journalistic materials so as to identify political affiliation, if it exists (the number of materials casting positive light on certain political actors); extent of implementation of the principles of fairness and impartiality in informative and analytical materials (number of fair and impartial materials); whether the balance of sources is ensured (number of balanced materials); what sources are given priority in

newscasts (number of sources cited or mentioned); provision of airtime to political actors and entities (amount of airtime provided, in seconds); as well as other aspects. By means of **qualitative/comparative methods**, we sought to interpret data and information obtained from the quantitative analysis. The media content was examined in depth in order to determine whether Moldova 1 complies with the principles of equity, impartiality, fairness, and political neutrality.

Period of monitoring: August 31 – September 6, 2020.

The main media products of Moldova 1 subjected to monitoring:

- 7 editions of the main newscast *Mesager* in the period from August 31 to September 6, 2020.

General trends

The monitoring data show that in the main newscast Mesager:

- Covid-19 was the prevailing topic in news. Of the total 138 news stories (except the ones in the Sports section), 37 directly or indirectly concerned the topic of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is about 27%.
- More than half of the 138 news stories did not include directly cited sources.
- Central authorities are still among the entities most frequently targeted in Moldova 1 news. However, compared to the previous monitoring period (March 9-15, 2020), the share of direct or indirect citations of central authorities (Presidential Office, Government, Parliament) has decreased. On the other hand, the number of cases in which representatives of local authorities, especially from Chisinau Municipality, were cited directly or indirectly has increased.
- The persons mentioned or cited – directly or indirectly – most often as sources in Moldova 1 news were President Igor Dodon; Prime Minister Ion Chicu; Education, Culture, and Research Minister Igor Sarov; and representatives of Chisinau Mayor's Office.
- Compared to the previous reporting period, there has been greater diversification of news sources.
- President Igor Dodon benefited from the largest presence in Moldova 1 news. The head of state was either mentioned or cited directly or indirectly in at least 16 news stories out of 138, which represented 11%. In other words, every ninth news story featured President Igor Dodon. At the same time, in most of them, the head of state was presented in a positive light.
- In terms of deontology, Moldova 1 news stories had several violations, including *National Savior/Messiah manipulation technique, lack of the right to reply, lack of source on borrowed video sequences, and suggestion.*
- In its news stories, Moldova 1 presented President Igor Dodon in a positive light (some news stories were on the verge of political advertising and looked rather like electoral news).
- Moldova 1 presented in a neutral and impartial manner the information about opposition parties and politicians (Action and Solidarity Party, Dignity and Truth Platform Party, Pro-Moldova Party, Shor Party, Our Party, Liberal Party of Moldova, and so on).

II. DATA ANALYSIS

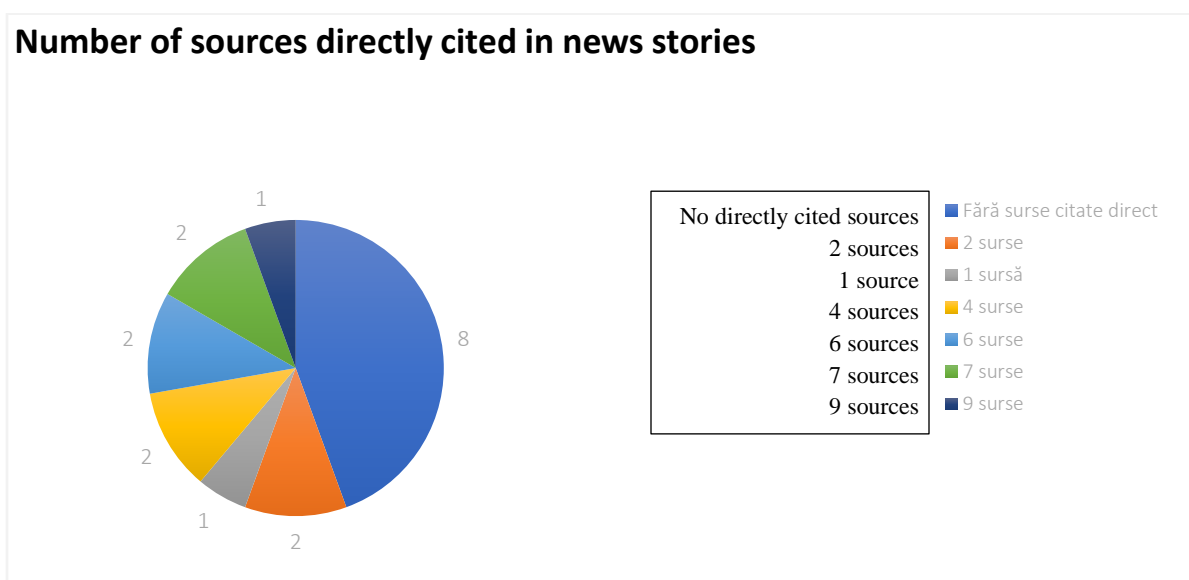
August 31, 2020

Quantitative analysis

The August 31, 2020 edition of the main newscast *Mesager* of the public television station Moldova 1 included 20 news stories, except for those in the *Sports* (4 stories) and *Weather* sections. All stories were informative, and none involved elements of conflict, which would have required ensuring the right to reply for the person concerned and/or accused. Four of those 20 stories appeared in the *News in Brief* section. Eight of the 20 stories covered – directly or indirectly – the topic of the Covid-19 pandemic, and five were about Chisinau Municipality.

In 9 news stories of the 20, sources were cited directly; in another 8 stories, sources were cited indirectly or mentioned; and 3 stories were based on direct (live) interventions of the journalist, where they presented information referring to certain sources, data, and/or statements. Thus, one news story had one direct source, 2 stories had 2 direct sources, 2 stories had 4 sources, 2 stories had 6 sources, 2 stories had 7 direct sources, and one story had 9 sources.

Number of sources directly cited in news stories



The deputy mayor of Chisinau, Angela Cutasevici, was cited directly in 2 news stories, benefiting from a total airtime of 48 seconds. The other sources (representatives of authorities or politicians) were cited directly in one story each: Andrei Nastase (Dignity and Truth Platform Party, PPPDA) – 13 seconds; Dorin Chirtoaca (Liberal Party of Moldova, PL) – 16 seconds; Valeriu Munteanu (Save Bessarabia Union, USB) – 20 seconds; Monica Babuc (Democratic Party of Moldova, PDM) – 10 seconds; Peter Michalko, EU Ambassador to Moldova – 33 seconds; Oleg Tulea, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration – 29 seconds; Igor Sarov, Minister of Education, Culture, and Research – 23 seconds. President Igor Dodon and Parliament Speaker Zinaida Greceanii were the subjects of one news story in which they congratulated the citizens of Moldova on the occasion of the “Our Language” holiday. Likewise, the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) leader Maia Sandu was the

subject of a news story on the same topic. All three were cited indirectly, based on their statements on Facebook.

Qualitative analysis

Covid-19 was the main topic of most news stories in the *Mesager* on August 31, 2020. At the same time, three stories covered the topic of “Our Language” holiday. Moldova 1 included various sources in the news, giving them equal airtime. The news stories in this newscast contained no deontological violations or manipulation techniques.

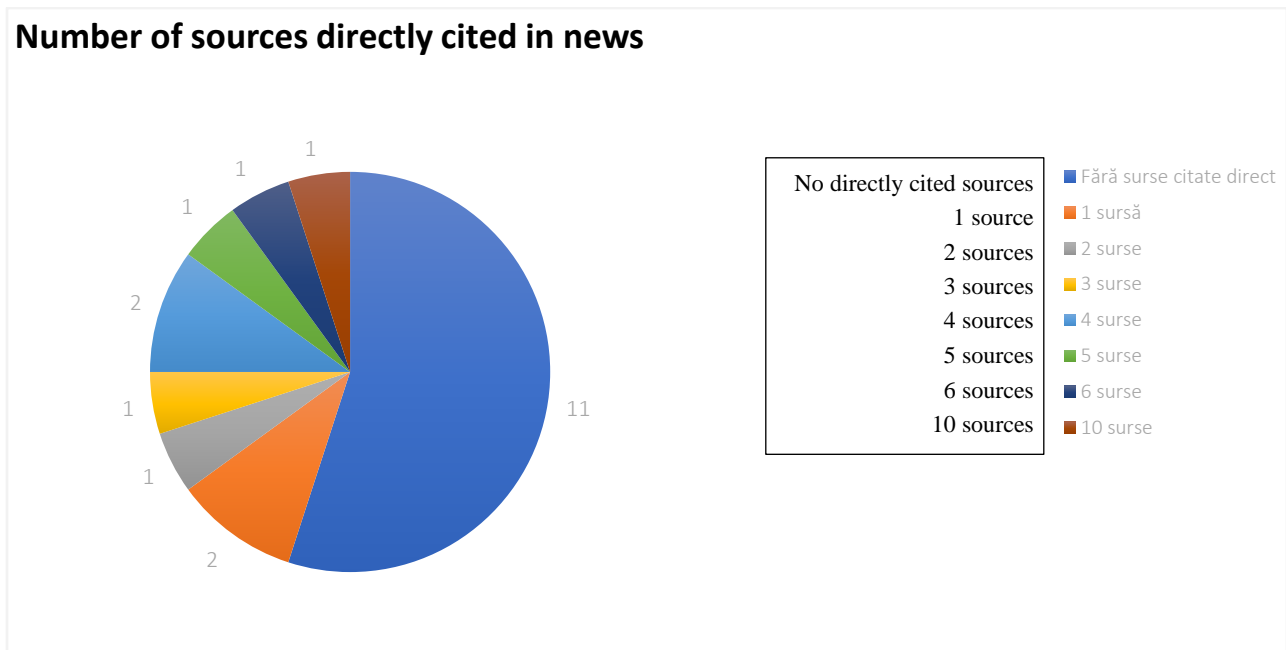
September 1, 2020

Quantitative analysis

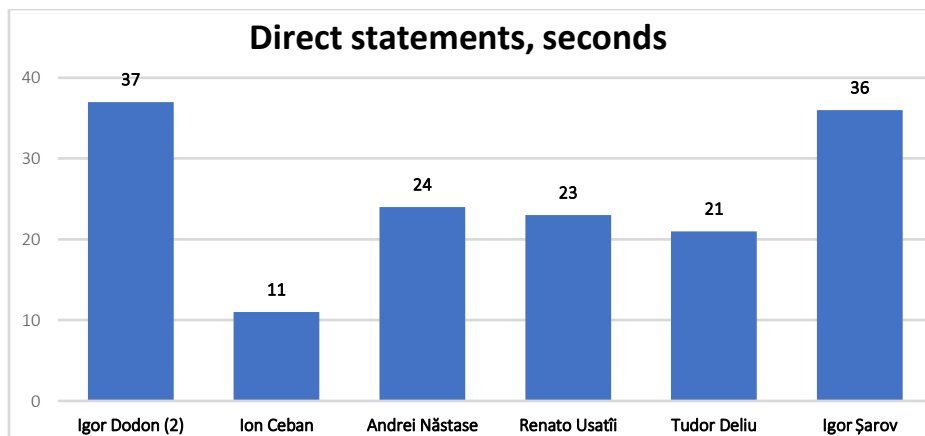
The *Mesager* of September 1, 2020 contained 20 news stories, including 16 in the *Main News* section and 4 in the *News in Brief* section. The direct or indirect topic of many of the news stories was Covid-19 (5 stories). President Igor Dodon and Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban were the protagonists of 2 news stories, while Prime Minister Ion Chicu, Parliament Speaker Zinaida Greceanii, and Education, Culture, and Research Minister Igor Sarov were targeted in one news story each. Among politicians, Andrei Nastase (PPPDA), Tudor Deliu (Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova, PLDM), and Renato Usatii (Our Party) were sources and protagonists of a single news story about the submission of documents to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) for the registration of initiative groups that will collect signatures in support of candidates for the position of president of the Republic of Moldova.

A little more than half of the news stories – 11 – did not cite sources directly (four of them in the *News in Brief* section), and in two of them reporters intervened directly.

Number of sources directly cited in news



Regarding the airtime dedicated to direct citations, Igor Dodon appeared twice in two separate news stories, with 37 seconds of airtime total; Minister Igor Sarov was cited directly in one news story with a statement of 36 seconds; and the PPPDA leader Andrei Nastase appeared in another news story with an intervention of 24 seconds.



Qualitative analysis

Moldova 1 presented in a positive light President Igor Dodon and Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban, in news stories where the two were protagonists. Favorable attitude was seen particularly in the manner in which the two stories were built, in the context in which they were presented, and especially in the selection of direct statements. For example, Moldova 1 opened one of the stories with the fact that *“19 schools did not open their doors for students today”* and carried the educational process remotely. Then, journalists slightly changed the topic announced in the introduction and delivered the congratulatory message of President Igor Dodon on the occasion of the beginning of the new school year. He noted that *“today, every member of society whose child is a school student has understood better than at the beginning of the pandemic the role and importance of teachers.”* Next, they spoke about the message of Prime Minister Ion Chicu, who gave assurances that the authorities will provide proper conditions *“to protect the health of children and youth in Moldova.”* Then, the authors of the news story returned to the primary topic – the 19 schools that did not start work – and the statement of Minister Igor Sarov, who mentioned the institutions that opened and those that did not start the educational process. The story closed with a direct quote from the congratulatory message of President Igor Dodon, according to whom *“our country has a future.”*

In another news story, Moldova 1 mentioned that between September 1 and 11, 2020 the CEC was receiving documents to register initiative groups that will collect signatures to support candidates for the position of president of Moldova. The first three candidates who submitted applications were cited directly: Tudor Deliu (PLDM), Renato Ușatîi (Our Party), and Andrei Nastase (PPPDA). Continuing the news, Moldova 1 journalists mentioned that *“meanwhile, President Igor Dodon urged the candidates running for the presidential office to show correctness in this electoral campaign,”* citing his direct statement in this context. The intervention of the head of state was irrelevant in this case and only aimed to present him in a positive light.

In the news story about “hundreds of thousands of lei for a place in the cemetery. Six people, administrators and employees of St. Lazarus Cemetery in Chisinau, were detained for having allegedly taken bribes to sell or reserve graveyard places,” Moldova 1 journalists noted that “Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban reacted to what happened, saying he would fight corruption in the city and urging people to inform him about acts of corruption among civil servants... He believes that everyone should be equal before the law” (**National Savior manipulation technique**). In this case, the mention aimed to present Ion Ceban in a positive light. At the same time, in this news story Moldova 1 included footage of someone taking a bribe, but **did not indicate the source of the borrowed footage**.

[September 2, 2020](#)

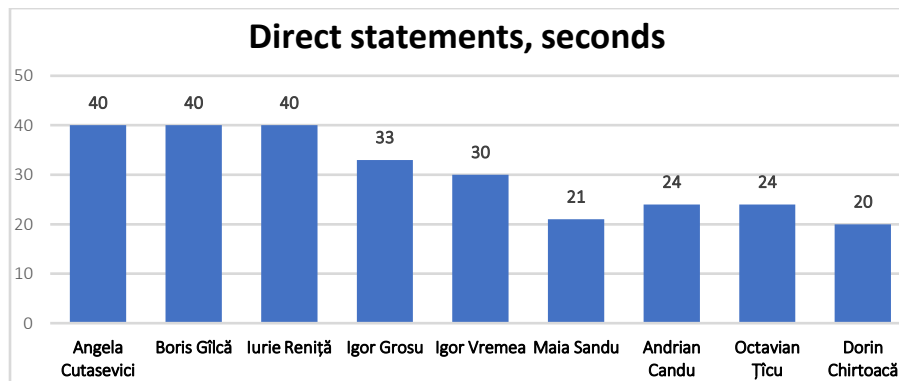
Quantitative analysis

The *Mesager* of September 2, 2020 contained 23 news stories, including five in the *News in Brief* section. Five of all the news stories covered the topic of Covid-19 (directly or indirectly), and the majority of them appeared in the *Main News* section. The news also covered other topics: kindergartens in Chisinau will work according to an extended program; on the eve of the National Army Day, several soldiers donated blood; a secondary school in Aluatu village of Taraclia region received a set of computer equipment from Romania; five more candidates for the presidency of Moldova submitted applications to the CEC to register initiative groups to collect signatures; the Socialist MP Oleg Lipski addressed the Prosecutor General’s Office regarding the investigation of a company affiliated with the Shor Party leader Ilan Shor, who, according to the parliamentarian, sponsored the 2016 presidential campaign of Maia Sandu; the PAS party’s MP Galina Sajin addressed the National Integrity Authority (NIA) regarding the alleged luxury vacations of President Igor Dodon; PPPDA party’s MP Iurie Renita voiced accusations regarding the appointment of three new ambassadors; and others.

The representatives of central and/or local authorities were most often cited as sources (7). Among them were Defense Minister Alexandru Panzari; Secretary of State Marina Golovaci from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection; Secretary of State Alexandru Holostenco from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration; Boris Gilca, head of a department at the Chisinau Mayor’s Office; Deputy Mayor Angela Cutasevici. President Igor Dodon and Prime Minister Ion Chicu were mentioned in one news story each. As for politicians, Maia Sandu (PAS) was featured in two news stories, while Andrian Candu (Pro-Moldova), Dorin Chirtoaca (Unirea Electoral Bloc), Octavian Ticu (National Unity Party, PUN), Galina Sajin (PAS), Oleg Lipski (Party of Socialists, PSRM), Igor Grosu (PAS), Renato Usatii (Our Party), Ilan Shor (Shor Party) were targeted (mentioned, cited directly or indirectly) in one news story each.

Twelve news stories did not have directly cited sources, 4 stories had one directly cited source each, 4 stories had 2 sources each, 3 stories had 4 sources, and one story had 5 directly cited sources.

In terms of the airtime offered to statements, representatives of the Chisinau Mayor’s Office benefited from the most airtime: Deputy Mayor Angela Cutasevici – 40 seconds, Deputy Head of the Health Department Boris Gilca – 40 seconds. As for politicians, Iurie Renita (PPPDA) had a direct intervention of 40 seconds, Igor Grosu (PAS) – 33 seconds, and Igor Vreimea (PDM) – 30 seconds.



Qualitative analysis

Two of the 23 news stories broadcast by Moldova 1 in the *Mesager* of September 2, 2020 referred to conflicts. One of them concerned the complaint of the Socialist MP Oleg Lipski to the Prosecutor General's Office, in which he asked for investigating the activities of a company allegedly affiliated with the Shor Party leader Ilan Shor. According to Lipski, the company financed the 2016 presidential electoral campaign of Maia Sandu. Moldova 1 reporters ensured the right to reply to the person concerned by directly citing the PAS party representative Igor Grosu.

Another controversial news story reported on the PAS party's MP Galina Sajin requesting the National Integrity Authority to give a reply *"regarding the alleged luxurious vacations of President Igor Dodon."* In this case, too, Moldova 1 journalists ensured the right to reply to Igor Dodon by citing the statement of his spokesperson Carmena Sterpu.

At the same time, Moldova 1 broadcast one news story mentioning that the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs has concluded the criminal investigation in the "laundromat case," which targeted the former Democratic Party leader Vlad Plahotniuc, Our Party leader Renato Usatii, and the businessman Veaceslav Platon. According to the ministry's press release, Plahotniuc and Platon allegedly devised the plan and realized it with the help of the Balti Mayor Renato Usatii. Given the serious accusations made by the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Moldova 1 had the mission to ensure the right to reply, which did not happen (**lack of the right to reply**).

[September 3, 2020](#)

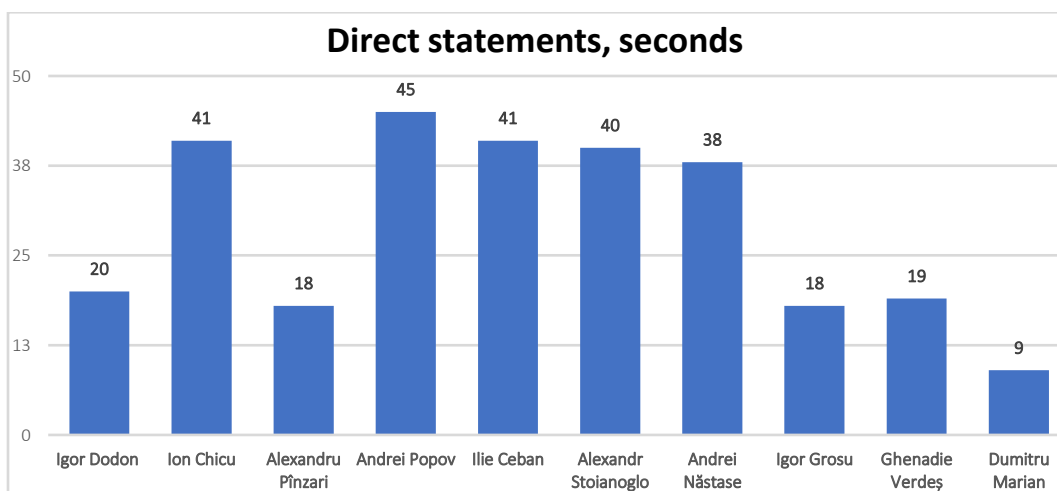
Quantitative analysis

The *Mesager* of September 3, 2020 had a total of 21 news stories. The first three of them covered the topic of the Covid-19 pandemic, and four materials appeared in the *News in Brief* section.

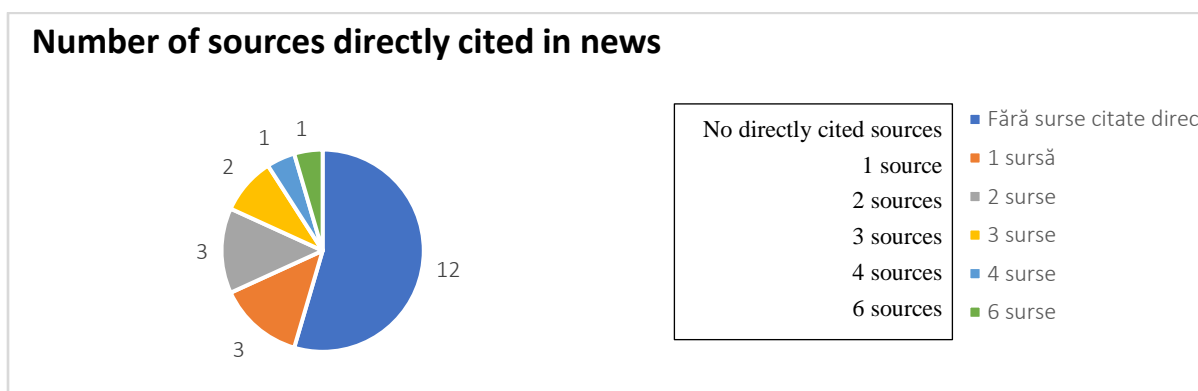
The public television station most often referred to central and local authorities as sources of news. In nine of the 21 materials, at least one public official was mentioned or cited directly or indirectly. President Igor Dodon was cited and/or mentioned in three news stories, as well as Prime Minister Ion Chicu. Other public officials mentioned and/or cited in news were ministers Alexandru Pinzari, Oleg Tulea, and Igor Sarov, and Deputy Mayor of Chisinau Ilie Ceban.

Speaking about the airtime provided for statements, Prime Minister Ion Chicu benefited from two direct interventions of 41 seconds total; President Igor Dodon – one direct intervention of 20 seconds; Minister Alexandru Pinzari – one direct intervention of 18 seconds; Special Missions Ambassador Andrei Popov – one direct intervention of 45 seconds; Deputy Mayor of Chisinau Ilie Ceban – one direct intervention of 41 seconds. Prosecutor General Alexandru Stoianoglo was the subject of one news story, where he was cited directly with a statement of 40 seconds.

As for politicians, Andrei Nastase (PPPDA) was present with a direct intervention of 38 seconds; Igor Grosu (PAS) – 18 seconds; Ghenadie Verdes (Pro-Moldova) – 19 seconds; Dumitru Marian (PAS) – 9 seconds.



Twelve of the 21 news stories (including 4 in the *News in Brief* section) did not cite sources directly; 3 of them had 1 source, other 3 had 2 sources each, two stories had 3 sources, one story had 4 sources, and one more had 6 sources cited directly.



Qualitative analysis

In the *Mesager* of September 3, 2020, central and/or local authorities were favored both by the airtime provided to direct citations and by the large number of news stories in which they were mentioned and/or cited. Some officials were presented in a positive light by the phrases used or

context provided by journalists. An example is a story that appeared in the *News in Brief* section, “659,000 beneficiaries of pensions and social allowances will receive a one-time financial support of 900 lei in October. The Government has increased the allowance by 200 lei from the initially proposed 700 lei... Prime Minister Ion Chicu said the decision was made after the application of the indexation coefficient to pensions and social benefits by 1.07% from October 1.” In it, journalists underlined that “the legal provision was proposed by President Igor Dodon, and it will be implemented from October 1. The head of state had previously said that this allowance should be given twice a year,” and Prime Minister Ion Chicu appeared with a direct statement. Thus, the reference to Igor Dodon in this context can be deemed irrelevant, since the Government was mentioned as the one who made this increase, and Prime Minister Ion Chicu was included with a statement. By mentioning President Igor Dodon, they aimed only to highlight him and present him in a positive light.

At the same time, five of the 21 news stories were controversial. The first one concerns the announcement of Prosecutor General Alexandru Stoianoglo regarding the completion of criminal investigation in the case of involvement of a commercial bank in the bank fraud and theft from the banking system, in which the final beneficiary is allegedly the businessman Vlad Plahotniuc. Another one is about the accusations of the PPPDA leader Andrei Nastase that several local councilors from PAS and Pro-Moldova in the villages of Ciutesti and Vulcanesti contributed to the closure of two schools. The third one concerns the accusation of the socialist Alexandru Nesterovschi against the Pro-Moldova’s MP Gheorghe Brasovschi regarding his wealth declaration. According to the former, the document contains several omissions and inconsistencies. The fourth story informs about a flashmob organized by the young members of PAS, who sent “wedding cakes to Prime Minister Ion Chicu,” and the fifth one transmits the intention of Special Missions Ambassador Andrei Popov to sue the PPPDA’s MP Iurie Renita for slander and lying. In the first four news stories, Moldova 1 ensured the right of reply to those targeted, but not in the case of the last one, where Iurie Renita was targeted and accused by the main source of the news (**lack of the right to reply**).

[September 4, 2020](#)

Quantitative analysis

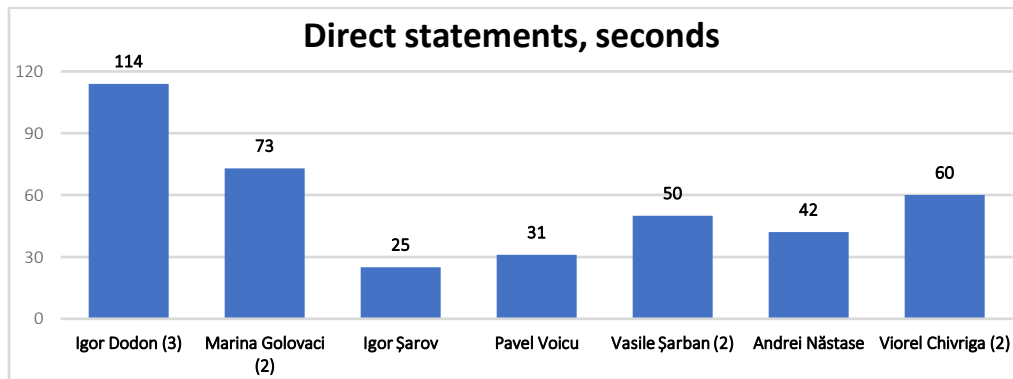
The *Mesager* of September 4, 2020 consisted of 20 news stories (excluding sports – 3 stories), of which four appeared in the *News in Brief* section. Six news stories either directly or indirectly concerned the Covid-19 pandemic. Among other topics were the new appointments in the judiciary, the CEC’s refusal to include the PACE party in the list of parties with the right to support candidates in the presidential elections, the halved harvest of sunflower this year, the detention at the Moldovan-Romanian border of Moldovans for cigarette smuggling, repair works on Albisoara Street, a summary of the program “The President Answers,” and others.

Five of the 20 news stories had President Igor Dodon as the protagonist and/or source. Other dignitaries and officials who were most often mentioned and/or cited directly in the news were Marina Golovaci, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection; ministers Igor Sarov and Pavel Voicu; and Vasile Sarban, the head of the Production Policy Department within the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development, and Environment. Among politicians, Andrei

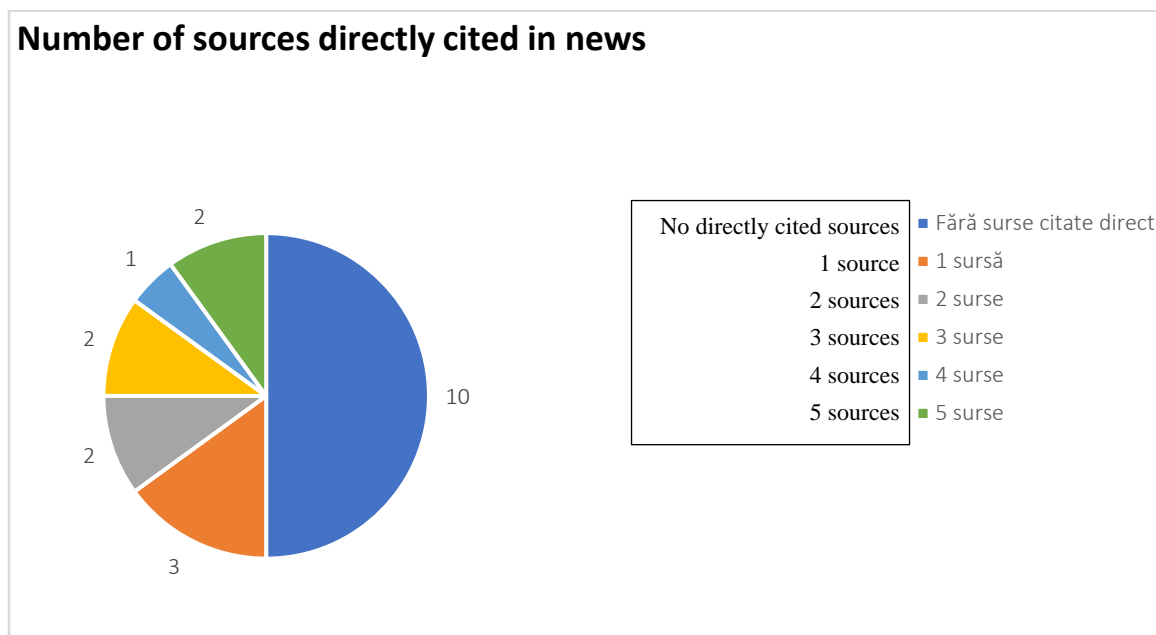
Nastase (PPPDA) and Sergiu Litvinenco (PAS) were the protagonists of one news story, and Gheorghe Cavaliuc (PACE) was targeted in another news story.

President Igor Dodon appeared with 3 direct statements in 2 news stories, which had a total of 114 seconds, followed by Secretary of State Marina Golovaci with 2 interventions of 73 seconds, Minister Pavel Voicu with an intervention of 31 seconds, Minister Igor Sarov with an intervention of 25 seconds, and head of department Vasile Sarban with 2 interventions and a total of 50 seconds.

Among politicians, Andrei Nastase (PPPDA) appeared in the news with a direct statement of 42 seconds, and among experts, Viorel Chistruga spoke directly twice, with a total airtime of 60 seconds.



Ten of the 20 news stories had directly cited sources: 4 of them had one source; two had 2 sources; one story had 3 sources; one story had 4 sources; two stories had 5 sources. Ten of the news stories (including 4 from the *News in Brief* section) did not have any directly cited source.



Qualitative analysis

In the *Mesager* of September 4, 2020, Moldova 1 favored President Igor Dodon, both by the number of news stories in which he was cited and by the airtime he benefited from, implicitly by the way in which journalists presented the news in which he was targeted. In this sense, Moldova 1 put President Igor Dodon in a positive light, and in some stories he was cited directly even if his statements/opinions were not relevant to the topic/did not add value to the information.

For example, in the news story titled *“Medical workers have been fighting Covid-19 for six months now”* journalists began by mentioning the challenges facing the medical system and its employees since the onset of the pandemic, and then they highlighted the fact that *“in order to support medical workers, including young specialists, the Government ordered to increase, in three stages, the salaries of the medical staff. (...) The draft amendment to the regulation on the remuneration of employees of public health institutions was proposed by President Igor Dodon. (...) The initiative to increase the salaries of medical workers is a recognition of the work done by Moldovan doctors.”* Subsequently, the authors of the news directly cited three doctors who welcome the initiative to increase salaries and added the opinion of the mayor of Congaz village on this subject. In this context, the reporter repeatedly mentioned that, *“since September 30, the salaries of health workers have been increased by 30 percent. According to President Igor Dodon, the decision to double salaries in the health system was approved by law and is to be done in 3 stages,”* and cited the head of state directly. The story ended with the journalist saying, *“The head of state, Igor Dodon, intends to come up with a similar initiative in the field of education. The presidential proposal provides for doubling the salaries of all employees in the education system. The president claims that the double increase of salaries will stop the exodus of employees in this sector.”*

Another news story talks about a possible cancellation of the allowance of 16,000 lei for staff infected with Covid-19 at work. In the material, the authors emphasize that the PSRM faction will not vote for the initiative in the Parliament, and *“assurances in this regard were given today by President Igor Dodon. (...) The reaction comes after the former Minister of Health Ala Nemerenco wrote on her Facebook page that the package of laws adopted yesterday by the Government (...) would also provide for the cancellation of this allowance.”* In this case, too, through the way the news story was formulated, Igor Dodon was presented in a positive light, as the only authority that can solve any problem or challenge (**National Savior manipulation technique**).

The third news story in which President Igor Dodon was favored, which appeared in the *News in Brief* section, concerns *“a new round of negotiations on concluding a loan agreement with the Russian Federation,”* which took place in the week before the monitoring, and *“the head of state Igor Dodon stated in the ‘President Answers’ program that several articles from that document have already been addressed. Igor Dodon was convinced that the negotiations will end in October and that, in a short time, our country will be able to benefit from the 200 million euros. Moldova needs the Russian loan to enter the new year with financial reserves, the head of state added.”*

Moldova 1 also broadcast a news story in which it made a summary of the *“The President Answers”* program, which appears weekly on the social networks of the head of state. In the material, the author focused on Igor Dodon’s opinion, saying, *“the current Parliament does not correspond to the*

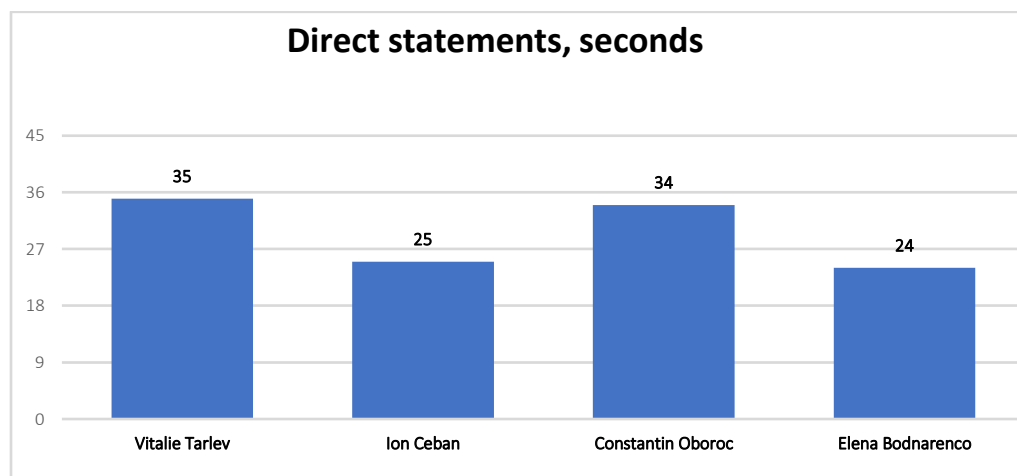
results of the 2019 elections and must be dissolved. The statement was made by President Igor Dodon during the traditional ‘The President Answers’ program.” The story was based exclusively on the direct statement of Igor Dodon, taken from the above-mentioned program, which accounted for more than half of the news story. Moldova 1 favored the head of state by including irrelevant and tendentious direct statements, for example: “As we, Socialists, promised, we have not accepted any party switcher. We did not accept any MP from other factions to join us.”

September 5, 2020

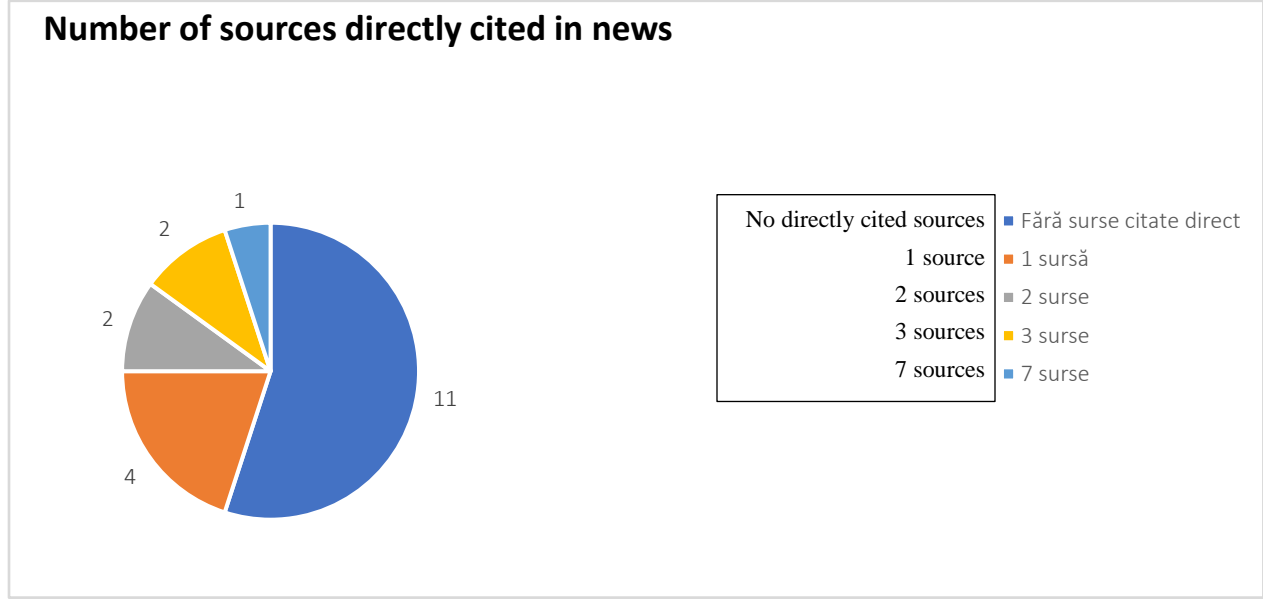
Quantitative analysis

The *Mesager* of September 5, 2020 consisted of 20 news stories, of which 6 addressed, directly or indirectly, the Covid-19 pandemic. Other topics include the work schedule of early education institutions; the local elections to be organized in the localities of Tirnova in Donduseni region and Nucareni in Telenesti region; the Kyrgyz yurts built in the Republic of Moldova; the works in the La Izvor park in Chisinau; the fact that the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) will not have a candidate in the presidential elections; the candidacy of former Deputy Prime Minister Constantin Oboroc in the presidential elections; but also a news story in which “the mother of the head of state, Galina Dodon, told for the first time about the road accident in September 2018 involving two presidential cars.”

In this edition of the newscast, Moldova 1 directly cited various sources, most often ordinary citizens, experts, mayors, police officers, IT specialists, 112 service operators, politicians, etc. Only in two news stories did Moldova 1 directly cite representatives of central and/or local authorities. Thus, regarding the airtime granted to direct statements, Vitalie Tarlev, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure (MEI), had an intervention of 35 seconds, and Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban had a 25-second statement. Among politicians, Elena Bodnarencu (PCRM) appeared directly with a 24-second statement, and potential independent candidate for the presidential election Constantin Oboroc had a 34-second speech.



Eleven news stories did not have directly cited sources, 4 stories had one directly cited source, 2 stories had 2 sources each, 2 stories had 3 sources each, and one story had 7 directly cited sources.



Qualitative analysis

Moldova 1 broadcast a biased news story, which can be described as political PR in favor of President Igor Dodon. Specifically, the journalists of the public station broadcast sequences from a film published by President Igor Dodon (without indicating the source of the footage), in which “... the mother of the head of state, Galina Dodon, told for the first time about the road accident in September 2018, with the involvement of two presidential cars. That day, the head of state, along with his mother and one of his sons, were returning from a monastery. The revelations were made in a film published by Igor Dodon at the end of his first term as President of the Republic of Moldova.” Through this news story, Moldova 1 showed tendentiousness and lack of impartiality, because the information is neither current nor of public interest, and it promotes and puts Igor Dodon in a positive light. At the same time, Moldova 1 appealed to emotions (especially by including the direct statements of Galina Dodon, in which she cries and remembers the accident with fear), which is contrary to the deontological standards of correct and neutral news, which must contain only facts (not opinions), without appealing to the emotions of the news consumer.

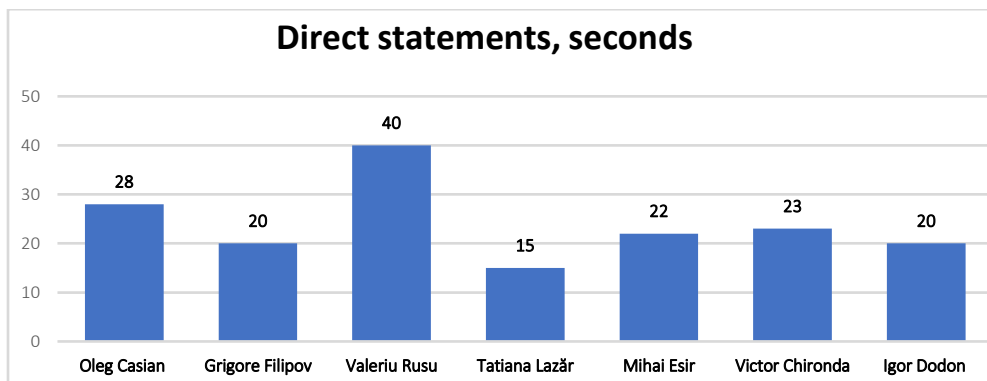
September 6, 2020

Quantitative analysis

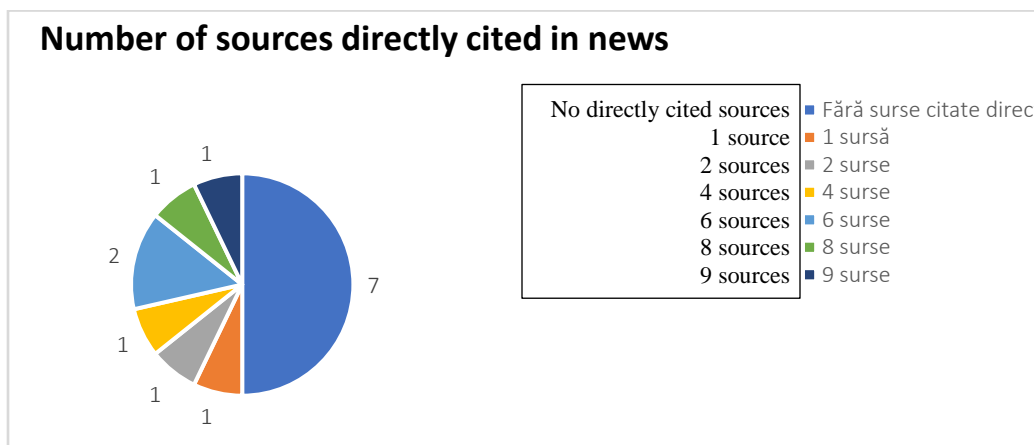
The September 6, 2020 edition of *Mesager* included 14 news stories. Three of them had the Covid-19 pandemic as their theme. Other topics were the drought that “continues to wreak havoc across the country”; social allowances announced by the Government for pensioners; the official inauguration of a roundabout in Oxentea village of Dubasari region, which was also attended by President Igor Dodon; a new edition of the Beech Festival, organized in the village of Radenii Vechi of Ungheni region; repair works in several kindergartens; a new traffic security project in Chisinau; and so on.

The most frequently cited sources were the representatives of local authorities (both level one and level two): Oleg Casian, the mayor of Radeni (Ungheni region) – a 28-second speech; Grigore Filipov,

the head of Dubasari region – a 20-second speech; Valeriu Rusu, the mayor of Oxentea village – two speeches with a total of 40 seconds; Mihai Esir, the mayor of Congaz village – a 22-second speech; Tatiana Lazar, the vice-head of Ungheni region – a 15-second speech; and Victor Chironda, the deputy mayor of Chisinau – a 23-second speech. President Igor Dodon was targeted in a news story in which he was cited directly with a 20-second statement. At the same time, the news directly cited ordinary citizens, ecologists, craftsmen, entrepreneurs, farmers, and so on.



Regarding the number of directly cited sources, 7 news stories were without such sources; one story had one direct source; one story had 2 sources; one story had 4 sources; 2 stories had 6 sources; one story had 8 sources; and one story had 9 sources cited directly.



Qualitative analysis

The topic of Covid-19 was less present in the *Mesager* of September 6, 2020. Only three news stories out of 14 focused on this topic, being placed at the beginning of the newscast. At the same time, the local authorities were cited mainly as sources, with interventions in five materials.

Regarding the deontological aspect of the content, two of the 14 news stories presented the information in a biased and selective manner and/or favored and presented in a positive light President Igor Dodon or the Party of Socialists.

For example, in one of the news stories Moldova 1 headlined that *“pensioners and beneficiaries of social allowances, especially those with monthly incomes of up to 3,000 lei, will benefit, in real terms, from one of the highest cumulative annual pension indexations, of approximately 8.1%,”* emphasizing the fact that *“the announcement was made by the head of the PSRM faction Corneliu Furculita in a post on Facebook.”* Subsequently, Moldova 1 journalists mentioned that *“the increase made by the Government, from 700 lei to 900 lei, means an equivalent of pension indexation by 3.3 percent, compared to 1.07 percent it is indexed on October 1. Please note that this year, for the first time ever, the indexation of pensions occurs twice a year. On April 1, it was 4.8%, and with these 3.3% it means an effective indexation of over 8 percent.”* First, in the context of this topic, Moldova 1 should not have suggested (**suggestion**) that this initiative belongs to a certain MP (Corneliu Furculita) by citing his statement on Facebook. Second, Moldova 1 presented the Government in a positive light. To ensure balance, the journalists had to seek the separate opinion of an independent expert (economic analyst), who would explain this initiative.

In another news story (*“New investments in road infrastructure in the country”*), Moldova 1 covered the official event of inauguration of a roundabout at the entrance to Oxentea village in Dubasari region. According to the information, the project was carried out within the *Good Roads for Moldova* program. The way in which the story was formulated and the way in which sources were cited demonstrate that Moldova 1 favored President Igor Dodon and presented him in a positive light. For example, Oxentea Mayor Valeriu Rusu appeared with a direct statement stating that this project was possible to implement because he *“approached the president of the country, asking him to support us and make this roundabout... We are very happy that this enormous problem has been solved,”* an idea taken over by journalists, who repeatedly stressed that *“... the project cost over 220,000 lei and was carried out with the support of President Igor Dodon. Present at the inauguration, the head of state mentioned that, although we are living in a difficult year, hard-working people still manage to do beautiful things,”* a statement completed with a direct citation by the head of state.

CONCLUSIONS

Between August 31 and September 6, 2020, the public television Moldova 1 in its main daily newscasts presented information in a mostly neutral manner. The monitoring, however, revealed some deontological violations, particularly the presentation of some dignitaries (e.g. Igor Dodon) in a biased and/or positive manner, both by providing more airtime for direct interventions and greater frequency of their appearances in the news, as well as by presenting the protagonists in a certain manner.

In terms of quantity, the most frequently addressed topic in the newscasts of the public television was the Covid-19 pandemic. Each edition of *Mesager* began with news that directly or indirectly addressed this topic (3-8 news stories per edition). These accounted for 27% of the total news of each newscast, which means that every fourth news story referred to the Covid-19 pandemic, directly or indirectly. At the same time, almost every edition of *Mesager* included at least two news stories about the Chisinau Mayor’s Office.

More than half of the 138 news stories broadcast during the monitoring period did not have sources cited directly, but only mentioned and/or cited indirectly by newscasters or reporters. At the institutional level, authorities continue to be among the entities most often approached as sources, cited or mentioned in the news. However, compared to the previous monitoring period (March 9-15, 2020), the frequency of direct or indirect citation of central authorities as direct sources has decreased. On the other hand, the share of direct or indirect citation of the representatives of local authorities, especially those from Chisinau, has increased. Compared to the previous reporting period (March 9-15, 2020), there has been greater diversity in terms of directly cited sources. The person mentioned and/or cited – directly or indirectly – most often remains President Igor Dodon, followed by Prime Minister Ion Chicu, Minister of Education, Culture, and Research Igor Sarov, and representatives of Chisinau Mayor’s Office (e.g. Deputy Mayor Angela Cutasevici). President Igor Dodon was mentioned and/or cited directly/indirectly in at least 16 news stories, i.e. every ninth news story.

Among politicians, the public television Moldova 1 in its newscasts favored and presented in a positive light President Igor Dodon (some stories were even on the verge of political advertising and electoral PR, such as the September 6, 2020 news about the official inauguration of a roundabout in the village of Oxentea in Dubasari region, or that of September 5, 2020, about the statements of the president’s mother, Galina Dodon, two years after the accident in which she was involved along with the president).

In terms of quality, Moldova 1 committed some deontological violations:

- *Lack of the right to reply.*
 - a. The news of September 3, 2020, mentioning the intention of Special Missions Ambassador Andrei Popov to sue the PPPDA’s MP Iurie Renita for slander and lying. Given the fact that it is a conflicting piece of news, Moldova 1 had to ensure the right to reply to the parliamentarian concerned, which did not happen.
 - b. The news of September 2, 2020, mentioning that the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs has concluded criminal investigation in the “Laundromat case,” which targeted Vlad Plahotniuc, Renato Usatii, and businessman Veaceslav Platon. Given the serious accusations brought against the three protagonists by the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Moldova 1 had the mission to ensure their right to reply, which did not happen.
- *Lack of source on borrowed footage.* In the news story of September 1, 2020, about six employees of St. Lazarus Cemetery in Chisinau, who were detained for a possible act of corruption, Moldova 1 included footage of someone taking bribe, but **did not indicate the source of the footage.**
- *Suggestion.* In a news story on September 6, 2020, Moldova 1 headlined that “*pensioners and beneficiaries of social allowances, especially those with monthly incomes of up to 3,000 lei, will benefit, in real terms, from one of the highest cumulative annual pension indexations, of approximately 8.1%,*” emphasizing the fact that “*the announcement was made by the head of the PSRM faction Corneliu Furculita in a post on Facebook.*” Thus, Moldova 1 suggested that this achievement belongs to the MP Corneliu Furculita and the Party of Socialists.

- *National Savior/Messiah technique.* In most news, President Igor Dodon was presented in a positive context, often creating the impression – especially through the formulations of journalists – that he is the one who can solve any problem and has everything under control: “... President Igor Dodon urged the candidates running for the presidential office to show correctness in this electoral campaign” (September 1, 2020); “The legal provision was proposed by President Igor Dodon, and it will be implemented from October 1. The head of state had previously said that this allowance should be given twice a year” (September 3, 2020); “In order to support medical workers, including young specialists, the Government ordered to increase, in three stages, the salaries of the medical staff. (...) The draft amendment to the regulation on the remuneration of employees of public health institutions was proposed by President Igor Dodon. (...) The head of state, Igor Dodon, intends to come up with a similar initiative in the field of education. The presidential proposal provides for doubling the salaries of all employees in the education system. The president claims that the double increase of salaries will stop the exodus of employees in this sector” (September 4, 2020); Igor Dodon gave assurances that the PSRM faction in the Parliament will not vote for the cancellation of the 16,000 lei allowance for staff infected with Covid-19 at work (September 4, 2020); Igor Dodon was convinced that the negotiations with the Russian Federation will be concluded successfully and that in a short time our country will be able to benefit from the 200 million euros. Moldova needs the Russian loan to enter the new year with financial reserves, the president added (September 4, 2020); etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Broadcasting Council (BC), based on Article 13 (*Ensuring correct information*), Article 75 (*Functions of the Broadcasting Council*), and Article 86 (*Cooperation with civil society*) of the [Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova](#), should take note of the situation and monitor the station Moldova 1 in order to identify violations of professional ethics and/or of the legislation, and apply proper sanctions in justified cases.
- Members of the Supervisory Board of the public institution Teleradio-Moldova Company (TRM), based on Article 45 (*Functions of the Supervisory Board*) of the [Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova](#), and Article 17 of the [Regulation for Organization and Operation of the Supervisory Board of the National Public Broadcasting Institution Teleradio-Moldova Company](#), should monitor the activity of Moldova 1 in order to realize their mission and analyze the content produced in order to prepare proper recommendations.
- The director and editors of Moldova 1 should monitor the editorial content so that it be in line with the mission of the public media outlet, cover the reality correctly, without favoring or disfavoring a particular person, entity, institution, or party/politician.
- Moldova 1 reporters should make the public interest a priority when they select topics for newscasts and report on relevant facts from the sites of events, in a fair manner and after verifying information. Given that Moldova 1 is a public media outlet, not “state-owned” or “official,” its journalists and employees should understand that they are in the service of the public/citizens of Moldova, who finance the station by means of the taxes they pay.