



**Public Discourse of Candidates
from the Gender Perspective in the New Parliamentary
Elections
in Single-Member Districts no. 17, 33, 48, and 50**

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I. Research Methodology

Goal

Analysis of public visibility (in media and cyberspace), of gender issues and of the gender language used by candidates in public discourse during the campaign for the new parliamentary elections in single-member electoral districts no. 17, 33, 48, and 50.

Objectives

Assessment of the public discourse of female candidates and of some male candidates from the perspective of gender issues and gender language, by applying quantitative and content methods, in: 1) electoral debates organized by six television and radio stations; and 2) information published by candidates on their public/personal Facebook accounts or on their party's Facebook account.

Glossary

By *gender issues* we mean specific matters that have impact on women and/or men in public life, such as, for example: equal representation in local and central decision-making bodies; equal employment opportunities for women and men; equal salary for the same effort and duties; construction of nurseries; equal access to education; development of care services for the elderly and persons with various forms of disability; combating sexual harassment, domestic violence, and gender-based violence in public and political life; psychological support for women and men victims of violence; psychological support for women working as home care assistants abroad.

By *gendered language* we mean gender-balanced or nonsexist language, gender-neutral language, and sexist language. "*Sexist language – expressions and addresses that present women and men in a humiliating, degrading, and violent manner, affecting their dignity*" – this is the definition according to Law no. 71 of April 14, 2016 on amending and supplementing some legislative acts,¹ which provides for introducing a new article into Law no. 5-XVI of February 9, 2006 on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men². We shall also note that Article 8 of this law, *Equal opportunities in the media*, in paragraph (2) says, "The publishing of any materials or information of sexist nature and use of sexist language shall be inadmissible and punishable by law."

This report includes an analysis from the gender perspective of the discourse of seven female candidates in four electoral districts, as well as a case study for electoral district no. 17, where two women and five men stood for election, showing a comparative analysis of the five male candidates' discourse.

The analysis covered materials from the active archives of television and radio service providers and from the candidates' posts in social networks. Data presented by the Broadcasting Council were also taken into account while analyzing the candidates' participation³.

¹ <http://lex.justice.md/md/365019/>

² <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=315674&lang=1>

³ [http://www.audiovizual.md/files/Raport%20publicitate%202020\(30%20septembrie-20%20octombrie%202019\).pdf](http://www.audiovizual.md/files/Raport%20publicitate%202020(30%20septembrie-20%20octombrie%202019).pdf)

Period: September 20 – October 18, 2019

List of monitored media outlets:

- a. Television media services providers: *MI, PRO TV, TV8, Vocea Basarabiei TV, Albasat TV, Nisporeni*;
- b. Radio media services providers: *Radio Moldova*.

List of candidates involved in the elections

I. Single-member district no. 17, city of Nisporeni

1. Ghenadie Verdes – PDM
2. Pavel Artamonov – PSRM
3. Ion Terguta – “ACUM Platform DA and PAS” Electoral Bloc
4. Ana Gutu – PUN
5. Ion Tugulea – PCRM
6. Emilia Ristic – independent candidate
7. Ion Angheluta – independent candidate

II. Single-member district no. 33, Chisinau municipality

1. Svetlana Popa – PSRM
2. Nicolae Alexei – independent candidate
3. Vasile-Andrei Nastase – “ACUM Platform DA and PAS” Electoral Bloc
4. Veaceslav Nedelea – PDM
5. Tudor Deliu – PLDM
6. Lidia Grozav – independent candidate

III. Single-member district no. 48, city of Slobozia, Tiraspol and Bender municipality

1. Vitalii Evtodiev – PSRM
2. Ion Iovcev – “ACUM Platform DA and PAS” Electoral Bloc
3. Teodor Turta – independent candidate
4. Alexei Frunze – PLDM
5. Petru Ursu – independent candidate

IV. Single-member district no. 50, west from the Republic of Moldova

1. Vitalia Pavlicenco – National Liberal Party
2. Galina Sajin – “ACUM Platform DA and PAS” Electoral Bloc
3. Ion Dron – independent candidate
4. Carolina Panico – independent candidate
5. Dorin Dusciac – National Unity Party
6. Vasile Calmatui – independent candidate
7. Anatolie Ursu – PPR
8. Iurie Bojonca – PLDM
9. Valentin Haraz – independent candidate
10. Alexandr Rosco – PPPSE
11. Ilie Rotaru – independent candidate

II. Data Analysis

Overall, we analyzed 33 electoral debates⁴ and 17 personal and/or public Facebook accounts of candidates.

Electoral debates			
No.	Link Participants	Media outlet	Date, time
Electoral district 17			
1.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Ion Terguta Pavel Artamanov Ana Gutu Not attended by: Ion Angheluta	Radio Moldova	September 30, 2019 09:10
2.	Ion Tugulea Not attended by: Ghenadie Verdes, Emilia Ristic	Radio Moldova	September 30, 2019 10:35
3.	https://voceabasarabiei.md/politic/item/17173-dezbateri-electorale-la-vocea-basarabiei-tv-ion-terguta-vs-pavel-artamonov-vs-ghenadie-verdes Pavel Artamonov Ion Terguta Not attended by: Gheadie Verdes	Vocea Basarabiei TV	October 4, 2019 19:00
4.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-95Ewa3SE Pavel Artamonov Ion Terguta Ana Gutu Ion Tugulea Not attended by: Ghenadie Verdes, Emilia Ristic, Ion Angheluta	TV8	October 4, 2019 19:50
5.	Ana Gutu, PUN Not attended by: Ghenadie Verdes, Emilia Ristic, Ion Angheluta	Moldova 1	October 7, 2019 21:15
6.	https://voceabasarabiei.md/politic/item/17206-dezbateri-electorale-la-vocea-basarabiei-tv-ana-gutu-vs-ion-tugulea-vs-emilia-ristic-vs-ion-angheluta Ana Gutu Not attended by: Ion Tugulea, Emilia Ristic, Ion Angheluta	Vocea Basarabiei TV	October 7, 2019 19:00
7.	https://www.albasat.net/news/2536655/live-dezbateri-electorale-candidatii-la-functia-de-deputat-in-circumscripția-nr17-nisporeni Pavel Artamonov Ion Terguta Ana Gutu Ion Tugulea Ghenadie Verdes (represented by Vasile Bitca) Not attended by: Emilia Ristic, Ion Angheluta	Albasat TV	October 8, 2019 18:22

⁴ In some cases, debates were watched on candidates' Facebook accounts, because they were no longer in the archives of media outlets.

8.	https://www.albasat.net/news/2537724/live-dezbateri-electorale-candidatii-la-functia-de-deputat-in-circumscripția-nr17-nisporeni Pavel Artamonov Ion Terguta Ana Gutu Ion Tugulea Ghenadie Verdes (represented by Vasile Bitca) Not attended by: Emilia Ristic, Ion Angheluta	Albasat TV	October 9, 2019 18:30
9.	teleradiomoldova/videos/urmăriți-dezbaterile-electorale-la-postul-public-de-televiziune-moldova1/694653551040674/ Ana Gutu Pavel Artamonov Ion Terguta Ion Tugulea	M1	October 14, 2019 21:15
10.	https://www.albasat.net/news/2542998/live-dezbateri-electorale-candidatii-la-functia-de-deputat-in-circumscripția-nr17-nisporeni Pavel Artamonov Ion Terguta Ana Gutu Ion Tugulea Not attended by: Ghenadie Verdes, Emilia Ristic, Ion Angheluta	Albasat TV	October 15, 2019 17:50
11.	www.albasat.net/news/2545330/live-dezbateri-electorale-candidatii-la-functia-de-deputat-in-circumscripția-nr17-nisporeni? Pavel Artamonov Ana Gutu Ion Tugulea Not attended by: Ion Terguta	Albasat TV	October 17, 2019 19:00
Electoral district 33			
1.	Nicolae Alexei Not attended by: Svetlana Popa	Vocea Basarabiei TV	September 30, 2019 19:00
2.	Veaceslav Nedelea Tudor Deleu Not attended by: Lidia Grozav	Vocea Basarabiei TV	October 1, 2019 19:00
3.	https://protv.md/tevotezilaprotv/te-votezi-la-pro-tv-din-02-10-2019-invitatii-lidia-grozav-tudor-deliu-nicolae-alexei-video---2506368.html Tudor Deliu Nicolae Alexei Not attended by: Lidia Grozav	Pro TV Chisinau	October 2, 2019 20:45
4.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Veceslav Nedelea Not attended by: Nicolae Alexei, Lidia Grozav	Radio Moldova	October 4, 2019 09:25
6.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Tudor Deliu Vasile Nastase Not attended by: Svetlana Popa	Radio Moldova	October 4, 2019 10:35
7.	Veaceslav Nedelea Not attended by: Svetlana Popa, Lidia Grozav	Moldova 1	October 9, 2019 21:15

8.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aV8kXl_UaKU Vasile Nastase Nicolae Alexei Veaceslav Nedelea Tudor Deliu Not attended by: Svetlana Popa, Lidia Grozav	TV8	October 9, 2019 19:50
Electoral district 48, city of Slobozia, Tiraspol and Bender municipality			
1.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Teodor Turta Ion Iovcev Petru Ursu	Radio Moldova	October 1, 2019 09:10
2.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Alexei Frunze Not attended by: Vitalii Evtodiev	Radio Moldova	October 1, 2019 10:35
3.	Vasile Nastase Not attended by: Petru Ursu, V. Evtodiev	Vocea Basarabiei TV	October 2, 2019 19:00
4.	Teodor Turta Ion Iovcev Not attended by: Alexei Frunze	Vocea Basarabiei TV	October 3, 2019 19:00
5.	http://www.trm.md/ro/radio-moldova Petru Ursu Ion Iovcev Alexei Frunze Not attended by: Teodor Turta, Vitalii Evtodiev	Moldova 1	October 10, 2019 21:15
Electoral district 50			
1.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Valentin Haraz Galina Sajin (represented by Radu Marian, MP) Not attended by: Carolina Panico, Ion Dron	Radio Moldova	September 25, 2019 09:15
2.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Vitalia Pavlicenco Not attended by: Galina Sajin, Ion Dron	Radio Moldova	September 25, 2019 09:15
3.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Vasile Calmatui Dorin Dusciac Vitalia Pavlicenco Not attended by: Ion Bojonca	Radio Moldova	October 2, 2019 10:35
4.	http://trm.md/ro/electorala-2019-la-radio-moldova Ilie Rotaru Anatolie Ursu Alexandru Rosco	Radio Moldova	October 3, 2019 09:10
5.	https://voceabasrabiei.md/politic/item/17225-dezbateri-electorale-la-vocea-basarabiei-tv-vitalia-pavlicenco-vs-ion-dron-vs-galina-sajin-vs-carolina-panico? Vitalia Pavlicenco Ion Dron Not attended by: Carolina Panico, Galina Sajin	Vocea Basarabiei	October 9, 2019 10:55
6.	https://www.facebook.com/tv8moldova/videos/ Alexandru Rosco Galina Sajin (represented by Virgiliu Paslariuc) Not attended by: Valentin Haraz	TV8	October 11, 2019 19:55
7.	Vitalia Pavlicenco Galina Sajin (represented by Veronica Rosca, MP)	M1	October 11, 2019

	Ilie Rotaru Alexandru Rosco		21:15
8.	Vitalia Pavlicenco Octavian Ticu	Pro TV	October 17, 2019 20:45
9.	Vasile Calmatui Iurie Bojonca Not attended by: Carolina Panico	M1	October 18, 2019 21:15

Social network		
No.	Candidate	Address
Electoral district 17		
1.	Ghenadie Verdes , PDM	https://www.facebook.com/Ghenadie-Verde
2.	Pavel Artamonov , PSRM	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100011563245808
3.	Ion Terguta , ACUM Bloc	https://acum.md › candidatul-ion-terguta https://www.facebook.com/terguta.ion
4.	Ana Gutu , PUN	https://www.facebook.com/AnaGutu.Page/ https://www.facebook.com/annette.gutu
5.	Ion Tugulea , PCRM	https://www.facebook.com/ion.tugulea.5
6.	Emilia Ristic , independent candidate	https://www.facebook.com/emilia.risticseptelici
7.	Ion Angheluta , independent candidate	https://www.facebook.com/angheluta.ion.7169
Electoral district 33		
1.	Svetlana Popa , PSRM	https://www.facebook.com/svetlana.popa.79
2.	Lidia Grozav , independent candidate	https://www.facebook.com/grozav.lidia.1
Electoral district 48		
1.	Vitalii Evtodev , PSRM	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100034226992401
2.	Ion Iovcev , ACUM	https://acum.md/candidatul-ion-iovcev/
3.	Teodor Turta , independent candidate	https://www.facebook.com/pg/candidat.Independent.TurtaTeodor/posts/?ref=page_internal
4.	Petru Ursu , independent candidate	- not found
5.	Alexei Frunze , PLDM	https://www.facebook.com/alexei.frunze
Electoral district 50		
1.	Vitalia Pavlicenco , PNL	https://www.facebook.com/vitalia.vanghelipavlicenco https://www.facebook.com/vitalia.pavlicenco
2.	Galina Sajin , ACUM	https://www.facebook.com/sajingalina/
3.	Carolina Panico , independent candidate	https://www.facebook.com/panico.carolina.1

III. Content Analysis of the Electoral Public Discourse

3.1 General trends regarding competitors in debates

The fact that the electoral campaign for the new parliamentary elections in four single-member electoral districts was conducted at the same time as the campaign for local elections led to the parliamentary elections being overshadowed by greater attention for the local elections. The persons standing for mayor offices and membership in local councils had greater visibility, although the media did hold debates with and disseminate news about the candidates standing for membership in the parliament. The civil society involved in monitoring and analysis focused their interest mostly on the competition for local elections, too.

The electoral campaign in four single-member electoral districts had 7 female candidates and 23 male candidates. Four female candidates represented political parties (Ana Gutu – PUN, district 17; Svetlana Popa – PSRM, district 33, Vitalia Pavlicenco – PNL, district 50; Galina Sajin – ACUM, district 50), and three were independent candidates (Emilia Ristic, district 17; Lidia Grozav, district 33; Carolina Panico, district 50).

Gender issues (equal representation in local and central decision-making bodies; equal employment opportunities for women and men; equal salaries for the same effort and duties; construction of nurseries; development of care services for the elderly and for people with various forms of disability; combating sexual harassment, domestic violence and gender-based violence in public and political life) were not directly and explicitly addressed in any of the electoral offers. Indirectly, they were covered in some stories, e.g. about the recognition of education documents and driver's licenses, new jobs, quality medical services, proper infrastructure.

Ana Gutu (PUN) and Vitalia Pavlicenco (PNL), former MPs, renown for being opinion-makers with a distinct voice and position, attended all the analyzed debate programs. They had prowess, coherence in speech, reasonable arguments, and efficiently used the online platform of their public accounts in social networks. They invoked their experience of work in the parliament as an asset, portraying themselves as “the voice of union in the parliament,” advocating for Romanian values and the European course in their electoral programs along with other topics identified in the content analysis.

Vitalia Pavlicenco, in her capacity as the chairwoman of PNL, is the only one who published two posts during the campaign (on October 3 and 13, 2019) about the Central Electoral Commission refusing to issue a decision regarding non-compliance with the 40% gender rate in the registered electoral lists. The notification was made by the PNL Secretary General Ion Calmic, in his capacity of citizen and taxpayer. He asked for the repeal of a large number of decisions of level II electoral councils regarding the registration of several parties' lists of candidates for district councils on the grounds that they allegedly failed to comply with the 40% gender rate.

Svetlana Popa (PSRM), former MP and member of the Chisinau Municipality Council, did not attend the debates or delegate anyone, so her discourse and dialogue with opponents during debates could not be analyzed. On her personal Facebook account, she covered first of all the electoral agenda of Ion Ceban, candidate for mayor's office in Chisinau, as well as electoral meetings in the city's neighborhoods and public institutions (kindergartens). This

candidate expressed support for the PSRM candidates, doing electoral propaganda for them. Love and care for the suburbs is the only idea in her electoral message, which, by means of the words *love* and *care*, denotes public responsibility that is based on educated and assumed female sentimentality.

Galina Sajin of the ACUM Bloc did not attend the radio and television programs organized during the campaign. Instead, she had meetings with citizens in the expat communities of electoral district 50, where she stood for election. Her teammates from the PAS party attended those programs for her and presented the three priorities of her electoral program – quality consular services, new opportunities at home, fight against corruption. All three implicitly involve solutions for both genders, like any other issue.

Independent candidates **Emilia Ristic**, **Carolina Panico**, and **Lidia Grozav** did not attend any of the debates. Like candidate Vitalii Evtodiev of PSRM in electoral district 48 and independent candidate Ion Angheluta in electoral district 17, they totally ignored the opportunity to make themselves visible through the media, to talk about their electoral priorities as women who have expertise, and to gain the trust of citizens in the electoral districts where they were involved in the electoral competition. Moreover, **Carolina Panico**, a lawyer working in the administration of Botanica sector of Chisinau municipality, and **Lidia Grozav**, a lawyer, currently unemployed, were the “anonymous” participants of this campaign, because they neither attended the debates nor were active on Facebook, and their few posts were irrelevant.

3.2 General trends of candidates' behavior on Facebook

Social networks are an easy, free, and fast platform for communication, advertising, and mobilization through the Internet, as well as for participation and influencing of democratic processes. These networks, especially Facebook, are currently an “extension” of the political, electoral forum for a growing category of politicians, mayors, heads of agencies, public and private institutions. Based on these considerations, we analyzed the candidates' information from this social network.

Through their personal or official accounts, the majority of candidates built their image (themselves or assisted by specialists) without depending on media outlets or their editorial policy. Online friends and followers were thus connected to their electoral campaign, could interact, appreciate the electoral offer, comment and propose solutions, express agreement or disagreement.

Some of the candidates chose to use the virtual space, in particular their public or personal Facebook account, to cover the progress of the campaign (**Emilia Ristic**, **Teodor Turta**).

The public account of **Galina Sajin** is one of the best platforms in terms of structure and content compared to the accounts of other candidates in these elections, and can serve as a model. Her online discourse was built primarily on empathy and on a sentimental language, specific to female discourse in politics: “I know the price of being a foreigner and the challenges it involves.” She was convincing, for she has been working in Italy for 13 years now. She assumed the responsibility of being “the voice of the expats” and proposed three general priorities in her electoral offer (quality consular services, new opportunities at home, fight against corruption) and four more priorities for young people.

Ion Tugulea of PSRM used Facebook very little and in an inefficient manner, and independent candidate Ion Angheluta did not use it at all.

The ACUM candidate Ion Terguta used the bloc's online platform as a campaign strategy of the bloc, in order to become visible during the campaign. His slogan was the same as during the parliamentary elections in February 2019, “We are winning now!”

3.3 Content analysis of female candidates' public discourse from the perspective of gender issues

3.3.1. Single-member electoral district no. 17, the city of Nisporeni

1. Ana Gutu, PUN, was present both in debates and in cyberspace, using the masculine forms of words [in Romanian] to name her profession (university professor), her status (politician), and her position (Member of Parliament). She addressed voters with generalizations (“Dear citizens, voters”), and by using the masculine forms of these words she ignored her female audience. In several situations in dialogues on television she used the feminine equivalents of words, such as “Ms. Moderator” (TV8, October 4, 2019), “headmaster or headmistress” (Albasat TV, October 9, 2019).

This candidate participated in all 12 monitored debates with a clear and consistent message, explicit and strong answers to the topic discussed, a sense of humor, appropriate answers, without offending. She described the absence of her opponents at three debates as “candidates’ cowardice and fear,” and the hesitation of MPs to amend Article 13 from the Constitution, regarding the official language, as “hypocrisy and cowardice.” This indirect form is the mark of sexist qualifiers, because they offend the persons concerned

Ana Gutu positioned herself as “the voice of union in the Moldovan parliament, which means decent life and sets the stage for a democratic state.” Respectively, she aimed at promoting union in the parliament and at supporting laws that would lead to the union of Moldova with Romania.

“The hemorrhage of human resources, departure of young people, institutional infrastructure, Article 13 of the Constitution, which is obsolete,” are the problems identified by the candidate, with an implicit gender connotation and reiterated in various contexts. The union, in her opinion, means wellbeing, political, economic, and social security, access to European civilization, and decent quality of life for all citizens.

She pleads for dignity. She is aware of moral values, implicitly of gender, professional, and identity values. “I am visionary and progressive,” says Ana Gutu, demonstrating through this statement that women can also think strategically and in line with the priorities of the time.

This candidate used her public and personal Facebook accounts, where she published 72 posts about her actions during the campaign.

On her public account, we found 34 posts about the campaign: meetings with voters in the streets, in the fields, and in public and private institutions in the villages of Milesti, Varzaresti, Cioresti, Lozova, Nisporeni; participation in electoral debates; a video message to voters. Her five-point electoral offer was published on September 18, October 1 and 10, 2019. The first two objectives aim at the union of Moldova with Romania – the healthiest treatment for all social, economic, political, and security problems. The laws regarding language and defense of citizens’ rights are the other two objectives.

On August 29, she announced to the “unionists” that, on the recommendation of the Party of National Unity, she submitted the necessary set of documents and obtained the supporting signature lists to obtain the right to stand as a candidate in the parliamentary elections on October 20, 2019 in the electoral district 17 in Nisporeni. She thanked the seven members of the initiative, and first of all the group’s leader and fellow member of her party, Iurii Carbune, for their efforts throughout the campaign.

Beginning on September 4, she was asking voters from that electoral district for support, believing them “convinced unionists.” Images with Traian Basescu, PUN chairman and former president of Romania, reinforce the idea of the electoral message in support of the union.

She promised and conducted an energetic campaign, based on fair competition and well-argued political discourse. She did not explicitly address gender issues in her electoral offer.

2. Emilia Ristic, independent candidate, did not attend any of the 12 television and radio debates we analyzed. Her campaign strategy can be deduced from her personal Facebook account and the 15 posts she published between August 30 and October 18, 2019. The account was not updated after that. On August 30 she announced her decision and willingness to stand for election in electoral district 17 in Nisporeni. The photo used had a proactive message; she appeared in action, focused on what she was doing. All images are consonant with the text message and give a sense of professionalism, appreciation of material identity values, and some professional results.

She began campaigning on September 20. The first message was focused on gender roles (woman, wife, mother, sister, and friend), which she began and identified with in her presentation, saying, “I am a woman who strives for the welfare of society. I am a wife who wants to see her husband at home. I am a mother who dreams of her child growing up in a healthy society with a prosperous future. I am a sister who wishes good things for her brother. I am a friend who really wants to help, without asking for a reward. I love what I do, I like doing good things, and that’s why I stand as an INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE in electoral district 17 in Nisporeni.”

This type of presentation is usually made by women candidates, and very rarely by men. References to the family with parallel statement of the problems she knows from the perspective of gender roles show the double responsibility she assumes in her family and public life.

Emilia Ristic identifies herself with voters through belonging to the local community and common problems, highlighting labor migration as one of the most severe problems she personally experienced. “Life was not gentle with me, and I also felt the bitter taste of being abroad. Today, I live with the same problems as each of us. *I am one of you, those who contributed to the formation of my personality.*” This message expresses credibility and association with the people she wants to represent.

In her further posts, she presented her electoral program, which, as some comments noted, contains issues that fall under the responsibility of the government and the local public administration rather than the responsibility of a Member of Parliament. The candidate willingly answered questions from comments and tactfully gave explanations.

She presented her electoral offer in thematic blocks. They do not address current gender issues, listed in the methodology. The first objective is aimed at meeting the needs of the inhabitants of Nisporeni. “I want every one of us to feel confident about the future, children to be with their parents and to have a prosperous future. I believe I am at the right age to devote time and energy to the problems of the community” (September 21).

The second objective of her electoral program was aimed at supporting farms. The third objective was meant to increase the number of tourists, to positively influence the business environment, and to develop infrastructure. By posting about an elderly voter who lived in very difficult conditions and appealing to people to help her, she showed empathy and tried to raise awareness. The language she used was not gender-sensitive.

3.3.2. Single-member electoral district no. 33 in Chisinau municipality

1. Svetlana Popa of PSRM did not attend any television or radio program organized during the electoral campaign. Her Facebook account contains 33 posts of explicit and implicit electoral nature, published between September 27 and October 18, 2019. Images and short texts mostly refer to electoral meetings with the inhabitants of suburbs (Bacioi, Dobruja, Codru, Truseni, Sangera, Dobrogea, Revaca), and only two meetings with voters from electoral district 33, where she stood for election.

These posts presented the campaign agenda, primarily of Ion Ceban, who was standing for the position of mayor of Chisinau, and electoral meetings in the city's neighborhoods and public institutions (kindergartens). The candidate expressed support for PSRM candidates in these localities, for whom she did electoral propaganda. Images in those posts convey action, whether it was day or night, involvement into solving the specific problems of the locality (for example, lighting in a neighborhood, road repairs, launch and/or sanctification of playgrounds, for which a parent thanked her). In the photos she is always surrounded by people, children, and clerics. "Together with people. Only together we will succeed... Children ... the heart of society..." were the comments to some campaign photos.

On October 15, the candidate changed her profile photo to an electoral poster with her photo and the text saying, "Suburbs – Chisinau's gold ring. Love and care. Svetlana Popa. Vote no. 1 for your MP." This photo with the text in Romanian and in Russian was repeated nine times on that day. The red color of her suit was a reference to the color of the party she represented and invoked in her address on October 18, 2019. On that day, she made 13 posts, and some of them were repeated two or even five times.

The suburbs development program called "Gold Ring" was the program of the entire PSRM team, who stood for mayor's offices in Chisinau municipality. This program has an implicit gender connotation, i.e. it proposed solutions for the benefit of both men and women. It was about transforming suburbs into residential areas and involved infrastructure projects, street lighting, and construction of schools, kindergartens, and culture centers, "because people here are great, hardworking, and kind. Pure gold, in other words," said the candidate in an interview for the Unimedia portal, posted on her account. The language used was gender neutral.

2. Lidia Grozav, independent candidate, was completely absent from the public media space. She did not participate in any debate and had only nine posts on her Facebook account. The first post appeared on October 8 and presented a campaign leaflet with a photo, name, and text saying, "Vote no. 6 on October 20, 2019." Seven other posts were taken from the website of the Central Electoral Commission and spoke of how many days remained until the general local elections of October 20, 2019. The ninth post appeared on October 21 and contained a message of thanks, saying, "Dear friends, family, fellow citizens, I thank you for your support and trust! The process and experience are sometimes more important than victory. A beautiful start, true experience, and unforgettable emotions. Thank you!"

Because of lack of necessary information for the analysis, we could not assess the quality of her discourse and of the language used from the gender perspective.

3.3.4. Single-member electoral district 50, to the west of Moldova

1. Vitalia Pavlicenco, PNL, was present at all debate programs. She positioned herself as a "free person with a distinct voice in the parliament," representing a unionist party. This self-portrait, built on gender-neutral language, which she frequently used, can also be seen in her address on September 19 on her public Facebook account to the Bessarabians living abroad

(“With Diaspora – to UNION! Why do I, VITALIA PAVLICENCO, the president of PNL, stand for the Moldovan Parliament to represent the Diaspora?”).

She presented herself as a person who had a strong position and courage, intransigency as “an MP in two legislatures,” “being punished for having pleaded for leaving the CIS, for the Romanian language in the Constitution, and for national values in general, for irreversible Atlantic orientation.” She frequently invoked her work in the Parliament as being productive and “more intense than the work of entire factions... I never yielded to outside pressure and influence.”

She knows the problems of expats through her family (her daughter, sister, and nephews are abroad). She expressed her commitment to be “active, principled, and transparent as a Member of Parliament,” and hoped, together with other unionists, to create a unionist faction in the Parliament, which would be its national consciousness! She noted that her efforts as an MP will focus on “defending the rights of the three categories of nationals who went abroad: our citizens permanently established abroad; our citizens who have been working abroad for some time but are willing to return home; our citizens who are temporarily working abroad and permanently travelling home.” Her electoral offer does not contain explicit gender issues, but only general issues.

This candidate covered her involvement in the campaign on her public and personal Facebook accounts and on her personal [blog](#) to which she referred when she shared certain positions and her electoral offer.

The analyzed public account contained 33 posts about the campaign (some of them were repeated even four times on the same day), which were published between August 31 and October 17. They spoke about the submission of documents and collection of signatures in her support; registration by the Central Electoral Commission; electoral program; appeals to voters not to give their votes for those who ruled the country since 2009 in the four single-member electoral districts and to support her; a video message to fellow citizens asking them to mobilize; press releases of PNL regarding non-compliance of some electoral competitors with the gender ratio and with the amount of donations. The explanatory materials “Why do I stand as a candidate?” and “My plans for the Parliament” speak about the reason of her involvement in the campaign.

Some posts summarized the ideas presented in TV programs. The photos posted concerned the activities of PNL, showed the three grandchildren growing in Chisinau, parents working in Germany, the sign of the tricolor and of the PNL, the PNL team at debates.

She used the masculine form of nouns for *president*, *MP*, *candidate* when she spoke about herself and the masculine plural in addresses (“Dear Bessarabians.” “Dear fellow citizens”), but we also found the phrase “the only woman-candidate for Chisinau mayor’s office Lilia Ranogaet” (October 19, 2019, public Facebook account).

2. Galina Sajin, ACUM, presented herself as a “politician,” “Member of Parliament,” “candidate,” “representative” (the last two words used both in masculine and feminine forms in Romanian). It shows that Galina Sajin knows about the flexibility of the Romanian language and the current language standards, but hesitates to always use feminine forms.

This candidate did not attend radio and television programs organized during the campaign, but had meetings in the electoral district 50, where she stood for election. Her teammates from PAS participated in debates instead of her.

Her public Facebook account is one of the best platforms in terms of structure and content, compared to other candidates in these elections. It worked from September 7, when she updated her photo, telephone number, and website address, and each of her posts bore the slogan of the ACUM bloc, “We are winning NOW!” Until October 18, 57 posts appeared on this account, presenting the campaign agenda and the electoral program. These posts contained appeals for support or for going to the vote; one live transmission; photos and videos with Maia Sandu, the president of the PAS party, who recommended this candidate; debates where she was presented by her teammates; announcements about meetings, beginning on September 21, in different places in Italy, Germany, Ireland, UK, France, and Romania.

After meetings, she posted photos and names of some of the persons she interacted with, thoughts about their expectations – an eminently feminine discourse, with expressions of gratitude, naming of persons she had spoken with, and community spirit. While suggestions regarding consular services, collaboration of consular authorities with citizens, social protection, recognition of education documents and driver’s licenses were gender-neutral, “psychological help to women working as family assistants,” with whom she identified herself in the post of September 30, is a current gender issue.

In the message on September 9, she spoke about her close relationship with the expat community since 2006. “I share the fate of hundreds of thousands of Moldovans who are physically abroad, but spiritually at home. I know what it feels like to always be thinking of your loved ones, even if you understand that life is taking you in another direction. I know the price of being a foreigner and the challenges it involves.” She expressed confidence in change together with the ACUM Bloc, referred to its leaders and to their legislative and executive levers, “with real decision-making competence.” She assumed responsibility for being “the voice of the expat community” and proposed three general priorities in her electoral offer – quality consular services, new opportunities at home, fight against corruption,– and four other priorities for young people.

For transparency, she published her CV and shared links to the supporters who recommended her (e.g. Natalia Gavrilita, at that time the Ministry of Finance; Dumitru Alaiba, MP, who is the representative of voters from the USA and Canada in the Parliament).

To involve supporters into the campaign, she created <http://bit.ly/voluntaracum>, and to communicate with voters she organized a 45-minute live Q&A session on September 15. Her messages were convincing through naturally expressed intentions, and read, “I wish we knew each other better and I wish I met more people from the expat community. I intend to win by means of what I am, with the story that I have.”

3. Carolina Panico, independent candidate, did not participate in any public debates. Her personal Facebook account had 13 posts that did not contain relevant information about the electoral program or the conduct of the campaign. The first post, bearing the text “Courage, like love, comes unexpectedly,” is a photo from September 22, 2019 depicting the copy of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) decision and the candidate permit issued on September 14.

The second post was about a news story published on deschide.md about her participation in the campaign. Beginning on September 30, she shared 10 posts taken from the CEC website, about the number of days left until the general local elections of October 20, 2019 and about the CEC meetings. The last post, of October 21, denoted joy, exuberance, gratitude to the voters who supported her, and congratulations to the winner of elections, Galina Sajin. In the absence

of information needed for our analysis, we could not assess the quality of discourse and the language used from the gender perspective.

3.4. Case study: Single-member electoral district no. 17, the city of Nisporeni

Of the seven candidates registered in the electoral race, two were women – PUN candidate Ana Gutu and independent candidate Emilia Ristic⁵. On the one hand, PSRM and ACUM candidates were tolerant in debates, did not attack each other, were respectful of the coalition. On the other hand, tempers flared in the debates between the ACUM candidate and the representative of the PDM candidate. Aggressive exchanges started from the money spent by the local PDM government on roads, kindergarten, and other projects. They, however, did not harm personal dignity, did not offend or trivialize topics.

1. Ghenadie Verdes, PDM, the winner of the race, attended only two debates on local television (Albasat TV), where he was represented by Vasile Bitca, MP. Some counter-candidates (Pavel Artamonov, for example) labeled him as “invisible” and “incapable” and criticized him for the lack of courage to come and explain what he did in Nisporeni, particularly his allegedly illegal decisions.

The candidate chose to communicate about his campaign primarily in cyberspace. On Facebook, he has one personal and one public account. We analyzed the public account – [https://www.facebook.com/Ghenadie-Verde %C8%99-](https://www.facebook.com/Ghenadie-Verde-%C8%99-) – which was created on September 2, 2019 and has not been updated since October 21.

We found three videos (intention to go to every citizen; appeal to vote; thanks for support). The photos posted showed what was “before,” what is “at present,” and what will be “soon,” in order to reinforce the message that he is a person who shows “real deeds, not empty words.” Through a hashtag, he made a link to the PDM slogan and to the achievements of the Filip government.

Some of the photos were taken at meetings with voters in neighborhoods or at places of business. In his message on September 29 he expressed his intention to stand for election. The emphasis was on the Democrat team (“Together with the entire PDM team, we will work even more for our people, for the good things to continue”) and on “good deeds, concrete achievements.” He did not explicitly address gender issues, and his language was gender-neutral.

2. Pavel Artamonov, PSRM attended all debate programs. His electoral offer was shown on his webpage and reiterated in debates: Jobs in the rural sector, free medical services, care for pensioners; Young people – our future; Incorruptible justice. His slogans, just like the offer, are very general and have no gender connotation: *“Young people are our future!!! PSRM has grown, is growing, and will keep growing!!! PSRM has done, is doing, and will keep doing beautiful things!!! PSRM – for people, for country!!! With PSRM, we will create the future that citizens want!!!”* Pavel Artamonov insisted on the ideological dimension of his platform: *“Socialism is the solution; socialism is the way to live better; socialism is the right way!!!”*

On Facebook, it is visible that he joined the electoral race on September 9, 2019. The account has images from debates on Radio Moldova 1, Albasat TV, Vocea Basarabiei TV, Moldova 1; an image with a voter; an electoral spot of October 16. The information posted refers mostly to activities of the president of the country, the speaker of the Parliament, the

⁵ The discourse of these two candidates was analyzed in subchapter 3.3.1.

PSRM candidate for the Chisinau mayor's office. He used Facebook for promotion in the campaign only in October. We found only five pieces of information related to the campaign.

Without mentioning political opponents by name, he alluded to democrats, unionists, and the ACUM bloc: "Rose petals fade, no one wants union, nor do I see escape in Europe". At the same time, he is certain that "citizens trust the PSRM."

At all meetings he was assisted only by men. As for opponents, he labeled them as "liars, traitors, profiteers (...) who have held different positions for decades and did nothing but destroy, steal, divide, and so on." These labels are sexist, because they generalize and harm the dignity of the people who have held positions and acted in a fair and professional manner. This candidate did not explicitly address gender issues, and his language was sexist in some situations, such as the one presented above.

3. Ion Terguta, "ACUM Platform DA and PAS" Electoral Bloc. The messages expressed in debates were public discourse of general nature, and the language was gender-neutral, whether he spoke about "laws for the welfare of the people," "making a change together," or about concrete solutions, such as creation of a large agricultural factory, a chamber of commerce, investments in agritourism. The priorities stated by the candidate are the priorities of ACUM: combating corruption and poverty, restoring the economy and population welfare. The emphasis was on justice and fairness at the level of the country and of Nisporeni district. "We will fight, please give us another mandate," was the message that referred to the governmental team and their results.

The candidate expressed a great deal of certainty: "I don't think there is a candidate who is better than the candidate of ACUM," "There can be no choice but to vote for the right wing." He invoked professional activity as an advantage, proved that he knew the activities of counter-candidates, and spoke about being recognized by voters as an advantage.

On Facebook, he used the online platform of his party, <https://acum.md>. The start video begins with the message of the PAS leader in support of the candidate – an image transfer to her authority and to the authority of the ACUM team, with footage from meetings with citizens, then the presentation by Ion Terguta and the statement of key objectives from his platform: restoration of rule of law and of the education system, development of a free economic zone in Nisporeni, creation of transport and commercial routes to enable economic growth. "For justice and a better life!" is one of the slogans used.

Of the three important things about Ion Terguta – *jobs at home, good living conditions, and order and cleanliness* – we noted the emphasis on "truth," "fair and responsible politicians," "new solutions," "belief in the power of citizens."

On his personal account, Ion Terguta posted only two materials. The first one, of September 25, was about the fate of "good roads" in the village of Marinici, Nisporeni district, only a year after construction, where an entire kilometer of asphalted road has been uncovered and subjected to new capital works. In the second one, on October 4, he made an announcement about his participation in debates on two televisions that day.

4. Ion Tugulea, PCRM, former head of district. In the eight debate programs he participated in, he usually supported whatever his opponents said. His phrases were very general, ideas were inconsistent, and it was impossible to identify a concrete electoral offer through distinct vectors of action. Consequently, explicit gender issues were not addressed. "To be honest and to serve voters" was the message expressed in neutral language, repeated at all programs.

His Facebook account, which he apparently uses very rarely, had only three pieces of information about debates on Radio Moldova 1 and on Moldova 1 television, and a photo with supporters.

5. Ion Angheluta, independent candidate, was anonymous in this campaign in electoral district 17. He did not participate in any debates, and his Facebook account, which he uses very rarely, had no information about the campaign.

CONCLUSIONS

- The electoral discourse of both female and male candidates was mainly focused on geopolitical or general issues and solutions.
- Gender issues, by which we mean addressing specific, explicit issues that have impact on women and/or only men in public life, did not appear in the questions asked by journalists and special guests in the programs of electoral debates.
- In the public discourse of candidates we found gender topics in three cases:
 - “Failure to comply with the 40% gender rate in the electoral lists of some political entities in the 2019 local elections, registered by the CEC,” of which the candidate Vitalia Pavlicenco of PNL spoke repeatedly during debates and in two posts on her public Facebook account;
 - “Psychological support for the women working as family assistants,” in the post on September 30 on the public account of Galina Sajin, the candidate of ACUM;
 - “Protecting Christian faith and family values,” a traditional topic from the gender perspective, addressed by the independent candidate Petru Ursu.
- The dialogue between electoral opponents during debates, where there were both women and men, was based on the dispute of ideas, personal or party actions, and geopolitical issues. Labels and sexist attacks harming the dignity of the person were noted only in several situations. It was due to either political maturity of the actors involved, or to the fact that some media outlets (Radio Moldova, Moldova 1, Albasat TV) have set up rules to prohibit instigation to public violence, incitement to hatred or discrimination, harm to the dignity or reputation of another person, public offense. There was also a case when a male candidate refused to ask questions to a female candidate. For example, “Ion Tugulea: *Ms. Gutu, I wish you success! To attack a lady with questions, no way. Ana Gutu: I am strong enough to answer!*” (Albasat TV, October 8, 2019). The statements have a slight sexist hint, reflecting the traditional perception that women are weak beings and should be protected even in the debates.
- The language used by the majority of candidates and journalists, both men and women, was not gender balanced:
 - Masculine forms of words meaning jobs, the status of candidate, president, Member of Parliament were used instead of female forms when addressed to women;
 - Addresses were formulated through the masculine plural (*dear citizens, dear voters, fellow citizens, friends*), which excluded the female public;

- Only the moderator of electoral debates on TV8 naturally used feminine forms in relation to the female candidates who participated in those debates.

Recommendations:

1. When drawing up electoral offers, candidates should take into consideration the current gender issues. They should be included in everyone's programs, especially in the programs of female candidates standing for Parliament and facing gender-based discrimination in their private and public, including political, life.

2. In the programs of debates and in other media products, candidates and journalists should use fair and appropriate language, non-discriminatory in relation to gender. In this context, we recommend consulting the guide *Gender Balance in Media Products*⁶, the study *Non-sexist Language*⁷, and the recommendations of the European Parliament⁸.

⁶ BUNDUCHI, I., HANDRABURA, L. Echilibrul de gen în produsele mediatice. Vademecum pentru instituțiile de presă. API, 2016, 14 p., available on https://comunicate.md/upload/9640_Ghid_gender_2016.pdf;

⁷ HANDRABURA, L., GHERASIM, A., BUTUC, M. Limbajul nonsexist. Repere conceptuale și recomandări practice. Studiu și Ghid, PNUD. Ch.: Novalmprim, 2018, 124 p.

⁸ LIMBAJUL NEUTRU DIN PERSPECTIVA GENULUI în Parlamentul European, 2018
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/187109/GNL_Guidelines_RO-original.pdf