



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

Report no. 3  
June 18-24, 2021



Kingdom of the Netherlands

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## **General data**

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

**Monitoring period:** June 1 – July 10, 2021

### **Criteria for selecting media outlets for monitoring:**

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

### **List of monitored media outlets:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CPA – central public administration

LPA – local public administration

AUR – Alliance for the Union of Romanians

CEC – Central Electoral Commission

BECS – Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists

BERU – Electoral Bloc Renato Usatîi

PACCC – Civic Congress Joint Action Party

PACE – Building Europe at Home Party

PAS – Action and Solidarity Party

PDCM – Development and Consolidation Party from Moldova

PDA – Democracy at Home Party

PDM – Democratic Party of Moldova

PLD – Party of Law and Justice

PNOI – NOI Party

PPDA – Dignity and Truth Platform Party

PPPO – People Power Political Party

PPPS – Party of Change Political Party

PP Şor – Shor Political Party

PUN – Party of National Unity

PVE – Ecologist Green Party

PMPSN – Hope Professional Movement Party

## 2. Methodology

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

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

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

**Language and images used:**

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

### 3. Monitoring data



#### Moldova 1

##### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

Between June 18 and 24, 2021, the public television station Moldova 1 broadcast seven editions of the *Mesager* newscast at 19:00. Overall, the station broadcast 51 news stories directly related to the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021, with a volume of 3,688 seconds (1.02 hours). Election-themed news stories appeared in the section *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021*, covering mostly the campaign activities of competitors and their promises in political, social, economic segments.

Some of the news stories focused on the activity of the Central Electoral Commission, which registered the last two electoral competitors, opened a centralized call center, and appealed to the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) against the decision of the Chisinau Court of Appeal on the number of polling stations to be opened abroad. During the monitoring period, Moldova 1 launched electoral debates, and five news stories in its newscast featured the guests of the debates. Moldova 1 also presented a news story on the results of the second report on monitoring ten television stations during the electoral campaign, produced by the Independent Journalism Center, and showed the data of an opinion survey on voter preferences before elections.

##### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

During the monitoring period, Moldova 1 had a balanced behavior and covered the campaign activities of competitors running in elections in a fair and neutral manner, without showing any tendency to favor or disfavor any of them. All candidates had access to airtime on the public television, the volume of which depended on their activities.

The electoral activities of candidates were covered in a neutral manner, without any of the competitors in the parliamentary elections being favored or disfavored. The only exception was the Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists, whose representatives appeared more frequently in news on the campaign and in materials with accusations against other political actors, and in two cases the tone of coverage was positive.

The electoral options of citizens were covered in a news story on June 23 about a new opinion survey, which presented in a balanced manner the information about the parties that would get into the Parliament if elections happened next Sunday and the information about the politicians that are most trusted by citizens. The survey was mostly in line with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in*

*the media of the Republic of Moldova*<sup>1</sup>, having mentioned the sample, margin of error, and the sources of its financing. However, the public station did not say whether the survey had been authorized by the CEC.

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

To prepare the 51 news stories of direct electoral nature, Moldova 1 journalists used 116 sources, mostly electoral competitors and CEC representatives.

From the perspective of frequency and duration of appearances, BECS representatives had the largest presence – ten direct appearances or mentions and the largest volume of direct or indirect interventions (228 seconds), followed by AUR with eight appearances and 124 seconds. PAS had nine direct and indirect appearances with 113 seconds, and PPDA – six appearances and 99 seconds. PACE and BERU had five appearances each, PDM – four, and PACCC and PPR – two appearances each.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>BECS</b>	10	228
<b>AUR</b>	8	124
<b>PAS</b>	9	113
<b>PPDA</b>	6	99
<b>PDM</b>	4	81
<b>BERU</b>	5	69
<b>PPPS</b>	1	54
<b>PACE</b>	5	50
<b>PACCC</b>	2	55
<b>PPR</b>	2	42

In addition, news stories in the monitored week cited PDA – three times (24 seconds), PPPO and PPOM – twice each, with 18 and 19 seconds, accordingly. PUN was mentioned three times, while PP Șor, PPM, PNOI, PDCM, PP NOI, and the independent candidate Veaceslav Valico – once. President Maia Sandu was targeted in two election-themed news stories that featured BECS candidate Bogdan Țirdea. He said that he “*would demand the General Prosecutor’s Office and the Anticorruption Prosecutor’s Office to investigate the alleged connection between ANRE [National Agency for Energy Regulation] directors and Maia Sandu*” and “*presented the results of ‘reforms’ dated back to the time when Maia Sandu was a minister.*” In both cases, “*the press service of the Presidency said they would not comment of the electoral statements of Bogdan Țirdea.*”

Ten of the relevant materials were controversial, and the balance of sources was ensured in all of them. In most news stories that covered the activities of competitors, the station used only one source and did not provide background information.

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

In terms of gender equality, Moldova 1 gave priority to male sources, who were cited/mentioned 62 times, while women were cited/mentioned 19 times (23%).

### **Language and images used**

Between June 18 and 24, Moldova 1 used proper language, in line with deontological standards. The images used were in line with ethical and professional standards.



### **Jurnal TV**

### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

Between June 18 and 24, Jurnal TV broadcast 23 election-themed materials in five editions of its main daily newscast, with a volume of 4,012 seconds (1.1 hours). The station extensively covered the topic of the number of polling stations to be opened by authorities abroad, decisions of courts and the CEC in this regard, and the opinions of some experts of this topic. Other news stories referred to the campaign activities of competitors and presentation of electoral commitments; lawsuit targeting MP Petru Jardan, a candidate on the list of PP Șor, regarding the concession of Chisinau International Airport; report of President Maia Sandu after six months in office; results of a new electoral survey. The station also had an extensive news story, with elements of investigation, about the interests of two PDM representatives in the scheme of fuel supply in the Transnistrian region. The news stories that targeted directly electoral candidates appeared in the section of *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021*.

### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

During the monitoring period, Jurnal TV treated electoral topics in a neutral and impartial manner, without favoring or disfavoring any competitor or mixing facts with opinions in the news. Journalists complied with legal and deontological requirements, and there were no elements of tendentiousness in materials.

In each newscast, the station had one news story titled “Elections 2021: Campaign Events,” where it reviewed the competitors’ electoral events over the day. The duration of appearances was relatively equal for all candidates, and at the end of each such story the station noted, “*the other electoral competitors have not organized public events within the electoral campaign today*,” meaning the candidates that did not appear in the daily reviews.

On June 21, Jurnal TV informed about the results of a new opinion survey, mentioning all electoral competitors, as well as the politicians who enjoy the most trust among the people. That material was in line with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*.

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

The station cited or mentioned in election-themed news stories 91 sources, ensuring their diversity. The sources were representatives of the entities participating in the campaign, of the CEC, CPA, courts and law enforcement authorities, as well as diplomats, experts, media outlets.

During this week of monitoring, 15 competitors had access to news. PPDA had the most airtime – 276 seconds, being cited in seven materials. Next was PDM, with 269 seconds of appearance; then PAS, BECS, and PPPS with over 100 seconds of airtime each.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
PPDA	7	276
PDM	4	269
PAS	8	196
BECS	9	178
PPPS	1	100
PDCM	2	94
PRM	1	87
PACCC	2	77
AUR	3	68
BERU	3	67

The station cited PACE and PP Şor in one news story each, and the latter was also mentioned in one story. PNOI and the independent candidate Veaceslav Valico were only mentioned.

Nine news stories of the 23 monitored were controversial. In five cases, Jurnal TV ensured the right to reply to all people concerned; two stories were unbalanced; and two other were partially balanced. On June 24, the station informed in breaking news that AUR challenged in court the CEC decision to open 150 polling stations in the diaspora. It cited directly Dorin Chirtoaca, who accused the electoral authority of “*abuse of office, repeated and aggravated.*” The reply of the CEC was missing. A partially balanced news story of June 22 announced that the minister of agriculture dismissed the head of the Environmental Inspectorate for not having dismissed, in his turn, several heads of districts, who were to be replaced by people loyal to the Party of Socialists (PSRM). The minister denied accusations, while PSRM was not asked to comment. On June 23, the station broadcast a news story with investigative elements about the fact that a quarter of the annual fuel consumption in Transnistria is provided by a Moldovan company owned by another company, in which the son of Alexandru Pânzari holds a share, and “*according to documents, Alexandru Jizdan also has pecuniary interests in the business.*” While Alexandru Pânzari was cited directly with a reaction, journalists said, “*We could not reach Alexandru Jizdan by telephone. The PDM press service told us that he is gone to meetings with voters. We were advised to write him a message. There was no answer to our messages.*” They cited statements that Jizdan had made six months before, but they were about the relations of some politicians from the two banks of the Dniester, and not about the investigation.

During this period, there was a notable gap between the number of women and men cited or mentioned as sources – 56 men and 7 women (12.5%).

### **Language and images used**

Both the language and the video images used in the newscasts broadcast by Jurnal TV were in line with the deontological standards, without deviations or discriminatory elements.



**NTV Moldova**

### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

During the reporting period, NTV Moldova broadcast 40 materials of direct and indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 5,210 seconds (1.4 hours). They mainly concerned the campaign activities of some electoral competitors, accusations launched by some candidates against others, information from the CEC on electoral procedures, etc. The station also broadcast a series of materials outside the section dedicated to elections, which referred to activities in the regions, but also materials of indirect electoral nature that targeted President Maia Sandu.

### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

A large part of the materials (18) was biased, judging by the way in which topics were selected, as well as by the way in which they were reported. For example, the station broadcast daily at least three news stories with the presence of and/or about BECS representatives, who were usually the protagonists of the news, presenting electoral objectives or launching accusations against other electoral competitors, especially PAS, but also President Maia Sandu.

Accusatory news stories were usually biased and did not always separate facts from opinions. Thus, on June 23, the station broadcast a material with elements of commentary, saying, *“When she needed votes to become head of state, Maia Sandu was generous in promises, from removing the fence from the Presidency, to reducing its maintenance costs. Subsequently, voters saw that Maia Sandu had the most expensive investiture ceremony in the country’s history, and the fence remained untouched. The same thing happened with the investigation into the theft of the billion. When she needed votes, she swore to do justice...”* This quote was not attributed to anyone. The entire material consisted of such comments accompanied by images and soundbites with Maia Sandu.

Another biased and manipulative material (a vox pop survey conducted in Dubasari) was broadcast on June 18. Accompanied by the caption *“Pro-Europeans disappointed voters,”* the intro of the material was general and confusing, and it did not carry a note saying that the poll is not representative of public opinion and has no value of a survey, as required by the Code of Audiovisual Media Services (CoAMS) in Article 13 (11), leaving the impression that it was a national survey. *“Having governed the country for 12 years, pro-European parties managed to disappoint a large part of society. Moldovans say that since 2009, pro-Western parties have only made promises of a better life, but in reality, people have become poorer and hopeless about the future. People say they will go to vote en masse on July 11 to change the course of Moldova,”* announced the presenter, and then several citizens were cited, dissatisfied with small pensions, expensive medication, people going abroad, etc. It is not clear what question people were answering, since many of them spoke of the problems they had at the moment. Regarding the elections, interviewees supported the idea of going to vote, but no one mentioned the need to change the country’s development course. Thus, the reporter’s conclusions were not supported by the statements of the survey participants. The intro was accompanied by archive images, in which Maia Sandu appeared with former Prime Minister Vlad Filat, without the station announcing that it used archive materials, as required by law. The footage, meant to illustrate the connection between Sandu and Filat (convicted of corruption), was repeated twice. Thus, NTV Moldova did not comply with Article 13 (1) of the CoAMS, which stipulates that media service providers must present information impartially and in good faith.

During the reporting period, the station broadcast two news stories in which it manipulated the information and disinformed the viewers. A material on June 18 was based on the *Direct Access* program, broadcast by NTV Moldova on June 17, with the participation of the Acting Minister of Agriculture, Regional Infrastructure, and Environment Ion Perju. Titled *“The state has no*



*money for farmers,”* the story informed about the damage caused by recent rains and storms, and contained quotes from the minister on this subject. The reporter attributes to Ion Perju this statement: *“If politicians keep insisting that the little money left in the reserve fund be allocated to increase the number of polling stations for the diaspora, there is a risk that the harvest will be completely compromised.”* This indirect quote is in fact a conclusion of the reporter, who agrees with the moderator of that program. Ion Perju did not make such statements in the program. He did not make any reference to politicians or polling stations for the diaspora. In the end, the reporter said, *“Previously, at the suggestion of Maia Sandu, the Government decided that most of the money from the reserve fund should be allocated for the early parliamentary elections.”*

The topic was resumed on June 23, in a separate news story, in which the reporter referred to the damages estimated by Minister Perju. *“He was concerned that the state did not have the necessary funds to provide aid and compensation because the money from the Government’s reserve fund, set aside for interventions in such situations, was used at the suggestion of President Maia Sandu for organization of early parliamentary elections. As a result, the Government has only 28 million lei, said the acting Minister of Agriculture, Regional Development, and Environment.”* This quote was not supported by the minister’s statements, who spoke of other things in his direct intervention. It should be noted that, in the program, the concerns related to the lack of money came from the moderator, while Ion Perju did not make statements suggesting a connection between the reserve fund, elections, and President Maia Sandu. Thus, the station flagrantly violated the provisions of Article 13 (1) of the CoAMS, which stipulates that media service providers must correctly inform about a fact or event, and the information must be verified and presented impartially and in good faith.

Each daily newscast had news stories of direct or indirect electoral nature, which eventually emphasized that certain good things, initiated by PSRM, were not carried to the end because some laws were not promulgated by President Sandu.

The tone of coverage of the majority of electoral candidates was neutral, except for BECS, which benefited from a positive tone in five cases, and PAS, which was the protagonist of ten materials with a negative connotation. PAS was also disadvantaged by the large number of negative news stories referring to President Maia Sandu – ten in total. Other parties appeared mainly in neutral light, with the exception of PUN, which had one negative appearance.

It should be noted that, during the reporting period, the number of BECS campaign news decreased, and the representatives of this bloc appeared in the news more frequently as accusers of other parties. The station mentioned at least once, at the end of the relevant news, the position of this competitor in the ballot. The presence in the news of the PSRM leader Igor Dodon, who sometimes appeared on the screen, but had no direct interventions (for example, in the June 21 news story about the Strawberry and Honey Festival in Sadova), also decreased.

The station had two materials on the results of opinion surveys, in both cases in line with the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*.

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

The 40 relevant news stories were documented from 97 sources, which were not diverse, ensuring a relative pluralism of opinion. Most of the time they were representatives of the electoral competitors, the government, the CEC, the local public administration, and citizens. During the reporting period, there was no obvious increase in the number of the covered

electoral competitors. The station informed about 10 electoral candidates in total, of which eight were cited and two were only mentioned.

BECS was the protagonist with the largest number of appearances/mentions and volume allocated to direct interventions, followed by PPDA and PACCC. PAS was mostly mentioned – four times, and once it was cited.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>BECS</b>	19	1,502
<b>PPDA</b>	6	283
<b>PDM</b>	2	182
<b>PACCC</b>	1	155
<b>PUN</b>	1	86
<b>PAS</b>	5	60
<b>AUR</b>	1	58
<b>PDA</b>	1	50
<b>BERU</b>	2	0
<b>PP Şor</b>	1	0

President Maia Sandu was mentioned 10 times and had one direct intervention.

Out of the 12 conflicting news stories, the vast majority (8) were unbalanced and did not cite both sides of the conflict. The station made no effort to balance the news, often mentioning that the party concerned did not answer the phone or refused to comment, without providing evidence of journalistic effort in this regard. Thus, on June 18, NTV Moldova informed about the intention of a PSRM MP to ask the General Prosecutor’s Office to investigate Maia Sandu’s relations with oil companies, launching accusations of corruption (they allegedly sponsored Maia Sandu’s presidential campaign, and now the president allows oil prices to rise). The station said the Presidency spokeswoman refused to comment, but showed no proof of this, and PAS representatives were not contacted. In another news story from June 18, Igor Dodon accused the Presidency of not taking measures to stop the rise in prices.

A partial balance was ensured in the news about the accusations of the Parliamentary Investigation Commission regarding the abduction of the Ukrainian judge Nikolai Chaus, Maia Sandu being accused of involvement, but her reaction was missing.

In terms of gender balance, during the reporting period there was an obvious gap between the number of men and women cited/mentioned – 55 male sources versus 29 female (32%).

### **Language and images used**

In election-themed news stories, the language was generally proper and neutral. No image manipulations or editing tricks were identified. In one case (vox pop material from June 18), the station did not mention that it used archive images, which is contrary to the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*.



**Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

During the reporting period, Prime TV broadcast 30 election-themed materials in the five editions of its main daily newscast, with a total volume of 3,087 seconds (0.8 hours). Reporters informed about the electoral priorities and commitments of competitors, announced during campaign events; provided information on the electoral process from the CEC; followed the issue of the number of polling stations abroad. The newscasts also covered controversial situations involving some competitors (the attempts of the AUR electoral candidate to get into the Transnistrian region, Petru Jardan being put on trial).

All monitored news stories appeared in the section *Elections 2021*.

**Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

Prime TV covered the activities carried out by electoral competitors for the early parliamentary elections in a fair, neutral, and impartial manner. The news stories were objective, without violation of deontological standards, and facts were separated from opinions.

In the monitoring process, we found no obvious intentions of favoring or disfavoring electoral competitors. Judging by the frequency and airtime allocated to appearances, but also by the angle of approach to the topics, there was slight favoring of BECS, while the tone in relation to other candidates present in the news was neutral.

Prime TV broadcast a news story about the results of an electoral survey on June 21. The material was made in line with the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*.

**Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

Prime TV provided a relative diversity of sources during the reporting period: 72 sources were consulted to document the 30 news stories. These were electoral candidates, the CEC, and representatives of state institutions who were asked to comment in controversial materials.

From the perspective of appearances, BECS representatives had the largest presence, with a volume of direct and indirect interventions of 362 seconds. AUR followed in the top, with a volume of appearances 2.4 times smaller, 149 seconds. A short distance from AUR was BERU, with 140 seconds for direct or indirect interventions.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>BECS</b>	11	362
<b>AUR</b>	5	149
<b>BERU</b>	5	140
<b>PPDA</b>	4	131
<b>PAS</b>	7	124
<b>PACE</b>	2	58
<b>PRP</b>	1	40
<b>PP Șor</b>	2	30
<b>PDM</b>	1	30
<b>PNOI</b>	2	25

The independent candidate Veaceslav Valico had a 10-second appearance, and PDA – only one mention.

Of all news stories (30), 12 were of a conflicting nature. In all such materials, reporters ensured the balance of cited sources, providing a complete picture of the situations.

In terms of gender balance, reporters gave priority to male sources (41), while female sources (8) had a considerably lower presence (16%).

### **Language and images used**

The language and images used in Prime TV newscasts were in line with deontological standards. No violations or elements discriminating candidates were reported.



## **Primul în Moldova**

### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

Between June 18 and 24, 2021, Primul în Moldova continued actively covering the electoral campaign. In five newscasts during the mentioned period, the station broadcast 38 materials of direct and indirect electoral nature, with the duration of 5,307 seconds (1.4 hours). Of these, 27 materials appeared in the *Elections 2021* section, and 11 outside it. More than half of these news stories covered the activity of BECS representatives within the electoral campaign, but also outside it, or referred to this electoral bloc. In other materials, Primul în Moldova reported on the current activity of the CEC, political commitments made public by other electoral competitors, accusations launched within a political party or by representatives of some parties against others, the activity of the Moldovan President Maia Sandu, etc.

### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

More than half (23 news stories) of the materials analyzed during this monitoring were biased, contrary to the provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services. The lack of impartiality and objectivity could be noticed in the selection of topics, as well as in the angle of approach. For the most part, the journalists of this station brought to the fore achievements and statements of BECS representatives and accusations against PAS and President Maia Sandu. All of the above suggest the intention of Primul în Moldova to put BECS representatives in positive light and those of PAS or Maia Sandu in negative light.

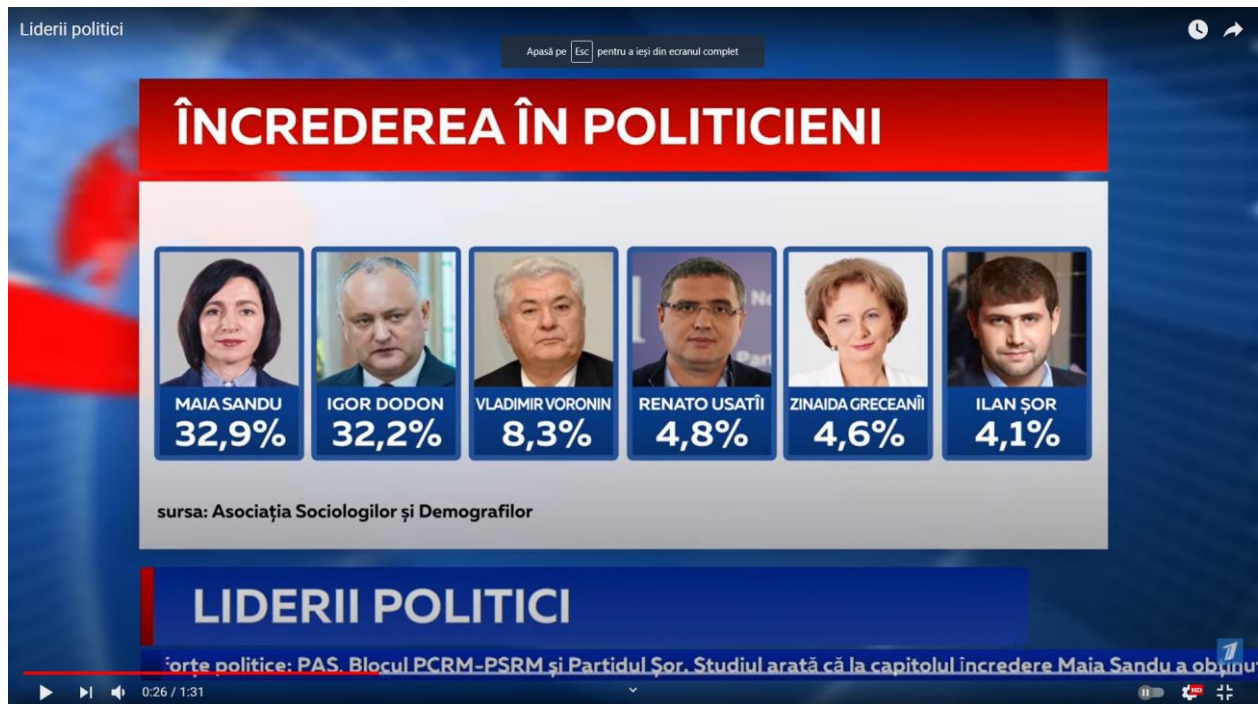
For example, on June 18, Primul în Moldova broadcast a news story announcing that PSRM MP Bogdan Țîrdea would notify the General Prosecutor's Office and the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office in order to establish connections between directors of the National Agency for Energy Regulation and President Maia Sandu, requesting "*investigation of the link between sponsorships by some oil corporations in favor of Sandu during the presidential campaign and of any links between the coming of Maia Sandu to power and the immediate increase in fuel prices.*" Also on June 18, Primul în Moldova pointed out in a news story the damage in agriculture caused by heavy rainfall and the reserve fund, "*which cannot be emptied to finance early parliamentary elections to the detriment of emergency projects for the country,*" and underlined that Maia Sandu provoked early parliamentary elections.

On June 22, the station cited PACCC, whose representatives claimed that PAS's electoral program "*is a bluff that will disappoint voters in a very short time.*" The journalists emphasized in the intro that PACCC "*refers to the proposals of the party of which President Maia Sandu used to be a member.*" In the same news story, facts were not separated from opinions. The

journalist said a phrase he did not attribute to anyone: “PAS’s offer to attract funds for village development is an empty slogan.”

On June 23, a news story about the fact that PPDA was asking for support from business circles in Moldova was supplemented with information that “the urges to financially support the electoral campaigns started from the PAS leader Maia Sandu before the presidential election. Then, PSRM made an x-ray of the donations and found that hundreds of pensioners had allocated fixed amounts to the electoral fund of the current president. PSRM representatives suspected that illegal funding for the campaign was camouflaged under these donations. Subsequently, the same pattern was used by PAS for the early parliamentary elections.” Also on June 23, in another news story, Primul în Moldova claimed that “the investigation of the theft of the billion is no longer a priority for Maia Sandu,” referring to an earlier statement and stressing that “it contradicts the promise made by Sandu before becoming president.”

Primul în Moldova included in the newscast of June 23 a biased news story about the results of a survey, stating in the intro that “BECS leaders, Igor Dodon and Vladimir Voronin, continue to enjoy the greatest trust among Moldovans, followed by the head of state, Maia Sandu.” “The study shows that, in terms of trust, Maia Sandu obtained 32.9%. However, the head of state continues to be outrun by the two leaders of the PCR-M-PSRM bloc, who cumulatively obtained over 40%,” according to Primul în Moldova. The figures presented on the screen show that, in terms of trust in politicians, Maia Sandu is followed by Igor Dodon and Vladimir Voronin.



At the same time, contrary to the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*, Primul în Moldova did not mention details about the source of funding and whether the CEC was notified of the survey.

During the reporting period, outside the *Elections 2021* section, Primul în Moldova disseminated three appreciative materials about the achievements of the mayors who ran on the PSRM list (Brezoaia village in Ștefan Vodă district, and Colibabovca and Sărăteni villages in Leova district). The appreciative approach of the journalists could also be observed in the captions used – for example, “Sarateni, a delight of projects” (June 22). These materials were supplemented by voices of citizens who appreciate the achievements of mayors.

On the other hand, on June 24, Primul în Moldova broadcast a biased news story about the accusations launched by several citizens against the mayor of Buteni village in Hincesti district. After a series of appreciative reports about the mayors who ran on the PSRM list or independently, in this case Primul în Moldova pointed out, *“While in other villages water supply, sewerage systems, and street lighting are being installed, roads are repaired and community centers are rebuilt, the only thing that changes in the village of Buteni are amounts in utility bills. People complain that the head of the local administration does nothing for the locality, and does not care about the problems of the villagers.”* At the end of the material, the journalist noted that although he ran independently, *“the mayor was seen at most PAS meetings in Hincesti district.”*

During the reporting period, Primul în Moldova was obviously partisan in favor of BECS, which was the protagonist of 22 news stories, in nine of which the tone of coverage was strongly positive. Six of these news stories presented the achievements, commitments, and proposals of BECS candidates: the donation of 60,000 doses of Sputnik V vaccine by the Russian Federation after agreements between President Vladimir Putin and Igor Dodon; promotion of the values of the traditional family; the promise that no school would be closed; etc. In seven other news stories, the representatives of this electoral bloc brought accusations against PAS, President Maia Sandu, and the US Ambassador to Chisinau Derek Hogan.

At the same time, the biased attitude towards PAS and President Maia Sandu was obvious, as the tone of their coverage was negative in 16 materials. Primul în Moldova approached the other competitors in a neutral manner.

Thus, Primul în Moldova did not comply with the provisions of the Electoral Code (Article 69 (1)), which stipulates that *“broadcasters, in all their programs (...) have the obligation to respect the principles of fairness, responsibility, balance, and impartiality in covering the elections,”* but also the provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, which provides in Article 13 (6) for *ensuring **impartiality, balance, and favoring the free formation of opinions, by presenting the main opposing points of view at the time when issues are in public debate.***

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

During the monitoring period, Primul în Moldova cited/mentioned 91 sources to document the analyzed materials, mostly electoral competitors, local public authorities, citizens, CEC, etc.

BECS benefited from the largest presence, being given dozens of times more airtime than other competitors (PPDA, PDA, PACCC, PDM, PAS). The other candidates were mentioned once when Primul în Moldova announced all the candidates registered by the CEC, BERU being mentioned in the context of a survey.

President Maia Sandu was mentioned 11 times, with one direct intervention of 31 seconds (from an interview for Free Europe).

#### *Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions*

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>BECS</b>	21	1,677
<b>PPDA</b>	7	182
<b>PDA</b>	3	150
<b>PACCC</b>	2	150
<b>PDM</b>	3	117
<b>PAS</b>	8	79

During the reporting period, Primul în Moldova broadcast 16 controversial news stories, 14 of which targeted PAS representatives or President Maia Sandu. With the exception of one material, all others were unbalanced. In most cases, Primul în Moldova did not announce what steps it had taken to balance the materials and to grant the right to reply.

In a news story about the fact that the US Ambassador to Moldova Derek Hogan is suspected of political partisanship, which referred to a letter addressed by Vladimir Voronin, Primul în Moldova announced, *“The US Embassy has not yet responded with a comment.”*

Thus, the station did not comply with Article 13 (4) of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, according to which, *“in audiovisual news programs, for which accuracy and correctness are essential, reports must come from reliable sources, sufficiently documented factually, with a credible and impartial approach to events, with a balanced presentation of different opinions.”*

During the reporting period, Primul în Moldova did not ensure the gender balance of sources/protagonists in the monitored news stories. The station cited/mentioned 62 male and 29 female sources (31%).

### **Language and images used**

The language and images used in the newscasts of Primul în Moldova were in most cases in line with deontological standards. However, there was a case in which discriminatory language could be noticed. In the context of the Family Week, launched by BECS, a PSRM councilor in the Chisinau Municipal Council and a BECS candidate declared on June 21: *“We see how signatures are collected in support of zoophilia. They misunderstand the urge to love thy neighbor,”* and *“Let us pray for others who all this week have tried to promote values foreign to our people, who have spoken of replacing the tender words mother and father with the term parent 1 and parent 2,”* statements that could incite hatred and intolerance towards representatives of the LGBT community, although the news did not mention this community. Thus, the station violated Article 11 (2) of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, which prohibits the dissemination of reports likely to propagate, incite, promote, or justify hatred based on intolerance or discrimination on grounds of sex, race, nationality, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.



**Pro TV**

### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

In the seven monitored newscasts, Pro TV Chișinău broadcast 32 news stories of direct and indirect electoral nature, with a total duration of 3,744 seconds (1.04 hours). The broadcast schedule included topics regarding the number of polling stations abroad, the campaign activities of some electoral competitors, controversial aspects related to earlier activities of some candidates, and accusations launched by some competitors against others. The station also informed about the organization of debates, *“You vote on Pro TV,”* with the announcement of the invited competitors, and in the newscasts of the following days it included news about the debates that took place the previous evening.

### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

Pro TV reported correctly on the activities carried out by competitors. The news stories about the electoral process and the campaign activities of candidates were neutral and impartial. There was no apparent predilection towards any electoral competitor or intentions to favor/disfavor them.

During the monitoring period, the station broadcast two news stories about the results of electoral surveys announced on those days (June 21 and 23), in line with the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*. The news provided information about the name of the organization that conducted the survey, the date or period in which it took place, the size of the sample and the maximum margin of error, the source of funding, etc. None of the materials said whether the CEC had been informed about their conduct, as required by the Regulation.

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

The station's reporters consulted 101 sources to document and produce election-themed materials, with direct or indirect interventions. Competitors, participants in the debates organized by Pro TV or other campaign events were cited the most.

From the perspective of the allocated airtime, BECS had the largest presence, with the largest volume of direct or indirect interventions – 168 seconds. It was followed by PDM, with 88 seconds of direct and indirect interventions. At a short distance from PDM was PPDA, with 84 seconds of airtime.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>BECS</b>	10	168
<b>PDM</b>	3	88
<b>PPDA</b>	7	84
<b>AUR</b>	3	76
<b>PAS</b>	8	74
<b>PACE</b>	4	64
<b>BERU</b>	5	60
<b>PP Șor</b>	5	48
<b>PRM</b>	2	40
<b>PACCC</b>	3	38

PMPSN had a 30-second appearance and a mention, PNOI had a 16-second intervention and a mention, PDA had a 14-second appearance and a mention, and PUN was mentioned four times. The independent candidate Veaceslav Valico was mentioned only once.

The station broadcast nine controversial news stories, one of which was unbalanced in terms of cited sources. There was a lack of comment or opinion from the CEC in a material on June 18, when President Maia Sandu said, *“There are people at the CEC who are politically influenced, and I understand that some of them are being pressured by some political actors...”*

In terms of gender balance, male sources/protagonists were cited/mentioned 45 times, and women were cited/mentioned 14 times (23%).

### **Language and images used**

In the news stories about the electoral campaign, Pro TV used a neutral language, except for a material aired on June 23, about the survey conducted by the Association of Sociologists and Demographers of Moldova. In the case of PP Șor, who ranks third in the top of citizens' electoral preferences according to the survey, the reporter resorted to labeling, saying, *“With*



*almost 6%, the party of the fugitive Ilan Șor, sentenced by the first instance to seven and a half years in prison for fraud at BEM, would also enter the Parliament.”*

The images broadcast were in line with deontological standards.



## **Publika TV**

### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

During the monitoring period, Publika TV broadcast 37 news stories of direct or indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 3,568 seconds (about one hour). The station's journalists covered the campaign activities of electoral competitors, statements regarding the electoral commitments of political parties, accusations launched by representatives of the political parties registered for the early parliamentary elections, the results of sociological surveys made public during this period, the case of the polling stations to be opened abroad for the July 11 elections, etc.

### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

Most of the news stories broadcast by Publika TV and analyzed in this monitoring were impartial and complied with the principle of separating facts from opinions.

A certain degree of bias was observed in the selection of topics to be covered, where the station gave priority to BECS representatives. Of the 37 news stories monitored, six covered the statements and commitments made by BECS representatives or the events in which they participated, and the tone of their coverage was equally neutral and positive.

Thus, on June 18, PSRM leader Igor Dodon appeared in a news story in which he *“urges PAS not to reject the idea of a dialogue after the early elections and not to repeat the situation of 2019, when PAS publicly pledged not to form a coalition with the Socialists.”* On the same day, Publika TV announced, *“The Socialists have challenged in Constitutional Court the so-called law on the billion, which provided in 2016 state guarantees worth almost 14 billion lei to cover theft from the banking system.”* On June 22, the station reported that BECS leaders Igor Dodon and Vladimir Voronin laid flowers at the Eternity memorial complex and commemorated the victims of World War II. On June 23, Publika TV announced that BECS promises to relaunch the Moldovan Village program, and on June 24 it presented Vladimir Voronin's statement on BECS' proposal to draft a new Constitution. Also on June 24, Publika TV reported on the accusations against the Information and Security Service and the Presidency in the case of abduction of the Ukrainian citizen Nikolai Chaus, which came from two PSRM MPs, Adrian Lebedinschi and Grigore Novac, both candidates on the BECS list.

The other competitors appeared in different contexts, and the tone of their coverage was neutral.

During the reporting period, there were two news stories on the results of two surveys (June 21 and 23), in which the following parties were mentioned: BECS, PAS, PPDA, PP Șor, BERU, PDM. The station adopted a neutral tone in relation to these electoral competitors.

In the case of the survey covered on June 21, Publika TV included information about the name of the organization that conducted the study, the period in which it was conducted, the method used, the sample size, and the margin of error. Contrary to the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*, Publika TV did not mention details about the source of funding and whether the CEC had been notified about the survey. In the case of the study made public on June 23, the station did not announce the maximum margin of error and did not say whether the CEC had been announced about the conduct of the survey. The journalists said that the

representatives of the institution that conducted the study did not answer the phone to provide details about who requested the investigation and how much it cost.

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

To document the 37 monitored news stories, the journalists of the TV station approached/cited/mentioned 61 sources. Most often, electoral competitors were directly or indirectly cited from events, press conferences, posts on social networks, etc.

Publika TV cited or mentioned 11 electoral competitors out of the 23 registered by the CEC. BECS benefited from the most airtime – 269 seconds, followed by PAS at a great distance – 169 seconds, AUR – 103 seconds, PPDA – 102 seconds.

#### *Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions*

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>BECS</b>	9	269
<b>PAS</b>	9	169
<b>AUR</b>	5	103
<b>PPDA</b>	9	102
<b>BERU</b>	4	79
<b>PP Șor</b>	4	73
<b>PRM</b>	1	72
<b>PACE</b>	1	69
<b>PDM</b>	4	54
<b>PNOI</b>	2	25
<b>V. Valico</b>	1	11

Of all news stories broadcast, 15 covered controversial topics. In 14 of them, Publika TV ensured the balance of sources or announced about the effort made to ensure the right to reply to those targeted. In a news story on June 24, when PAS supporters protested in front of the Government building against the decision of the Ministry of Education to dismiss Ion Iovcev from the position of director of the Lucian Blaga Lyceum in Tiraspol and chanted “*Down with the thieves!*”, Publika TV did not say what it did to obtain the position of the authorities, announcing, “*The protest lasted about half an hour. Meanwhile, no one from the Ministry of Education came out to talk to the protesters.*”

Most of the news stories were made with reference to a single source, without addressing other relevant sources.

Publika TV did not ensure the gender balance of sources/protagonists in the monitored news stories. It cited/mentioned 45 men and 16 women (26%).

### **Language and images used**

The language and images used by Publika TV in the news analyzed during this reporting period were in line with deontological standards.



**RTR Moldova**

### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

During the reporting period, RTR Moldova broadcast five editions of the newscast at 20:00. They included 41 news stories directly related to elections, with a volume of 3,103 seconds (0.8 hours). 36 stories appeared in the section *Early Parliamentary Elections 11.07.2021*, and another five, which focused on the activity of the CEC, appeared outside it. Election-themed materials mainly covered the activity of the candidates running for the seat of MP – meetings with voters in various localities, presentation of priorities in certain areas, including visions to amend the Constitution, or presentation of initiatives to reduce the electoral threshold.

### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

The 41 news stories of direct electoral nature on RTR Moldova were objective, impartial, and lacking in tendentiousness. During the reporting period, no violations of deontological or professional standards were noted. Information was presented in a fair and unbiased manner, without mixing facts with opinions, labeling, or value judgments. The station reported on the majority of electoral competitors, without showing any predilection for the coverage of any of them.

The tone of the coverage was neutral in relation to all the candidates registered by the CEC.

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

In order to document the 41 news stories aired between June 18 and 24, 2021, the journalists of RTR Moldova cited or mentioned 57 sources, mostly candidates who organized electoral events.

From the perspective of the frequency of appearance of electoral actors, no predilection for a certain candidate was noticed. BECS benefited from the most appearances (4), with 228 seconds of airtime, followed by PAS with 3 appearances and 199 seconds. PACCC and PPDA had a similar number of appearances and 106 and 85 seconds of airtime, respectively. AUR, BERU, PPPS, PRM, and the independent candidate Veaceslav Valico had between two and three appearances, with a duration that varied between 65 and 83 seconds.

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

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>BECS</b>	4	228
<b>PAS</b>	3	199
<b>PACCC</b>	2	106
<b>PPDA</b>	2	85
<b>AUR</b>	3	83
<b>BERU</b>	3	77
<b>PPPS</b>	2	75
<b>PRM</b>	2	65
<b>Veaceslav Valico</b>	2	65
<b>PDM</b>	1	60

PPO and PPOM each benefited from two appearances of 48 and 33 seconds, respectively, and PDM, PDA, PNOI, PVE, PLD, PUN, and PDCM each had one appearance.

To prepare election-themed news stories, RTR Moldova journalists usually used a single source, without presenting background information, except in a few situations where materials were more complex. In most cases, at the end of the news stories involving electoral candidates,

the reporter mentioned the place that the candidate occupied in the electoral list or the number under which the respective party will appear in the ballot paper. During the reporting period, RTR Moldova did not have conflicting news.

During the monitoring period, RTR Moldova did not ensure the gender balance of protagonists: male sources were cited/mentioned 38 times, and female sources – 8 times (17%).

### **Language and images used**

Between June 18 and 24, the language and images used by RTR Moldova were in line with deontological and professional standards, without any violations.



### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

During the reporting period, TV6 broadcast in its newscasts *Ora știrilor* 28 informative materials of direct or indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 3,783 seconds (a little over an hour). Some of them appeared in the section *Elections 2021*. In each monitored newscast, the station reported on the decisions of the courts and the CEC regarding the number of polling stations to be opened abroad, as well as on other decisions of the CEC during the electoral period. The journalists also informed about campaign launches and the electoral promises of the candidates who organized press conferences or meetings with voters; accusations made by some competitors against others; the statements of some parties on the dismissal of Ion Iovcev from the position of director of the Lucian Blaga Lyceum in Tiraspol; the progress of the criminal lawsuit started on the name of the MP Petru Jardan, former interim director of Chisinau Airport. Several news stories reported about holidays and commemorative events in the city of Orhei, as well as the repair of a road in Orhei district, all with the participation/citation of local authorities.

### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

Most of the monitored news stories complied with the principles of neutrality, fairness, and separation of facts from opinions. Elements of tendentiousness have crept into four news stories out of 28. One of them was about a meeting on June 18 of the MP Marina Tauber with the inhabitants of Orhei, and the newscaster noted at the beginning that, according to the people of Orhei, *“for more than five years, things have changed for the better in Orhei, as several social and infrastructure projects were implemented. In these conditions, local people definitely want these reforms to be implemented at the country level as well.”* The material cited a series of promises launched by Marina Tauber and Orhei Mayor Pavel Verejanu, and also mentioned Ilan Șor. TV6 also said, *“The Șor Party joined the electoral campaign with a vast program of economic and social development of the country, which will ensure the modernization of Moldova. Many of the provisions of the document were taken from the successful experience in Orhei.”* And the caption was relevant in the context: *“They want a Moldova like in Orhei.”*

Another material with tendentious elements, from June 24, informed about the fact that President Maia Sandu presented her activity report after six months in office, with emphasis on the fact that *“the head of state admits she did not succeed too much,”* and this message also appeared in the caption. TV6 reported that Sandu listed at the briefing four areas on which the presidential institution focused during this period, *“without giving too many concrete examples.”* In addition, Sandu said that she talked almost daily with various actors on the subject of receiving anti-Covid vaccines, *“even though the Ministry of Health joined the COVAX platform in August 2020 and held talks to obtain antidotes.”* *“The head of state boasted of the 600 million euros that Moldova will receive from the EU in the form of loans and*

*subsidies, but does not mention the conditions it must meet to receive the money,”* TV6 journalists added.

The station placed in a neutral context the majority of the candidates approached in the news, PP Șor being presented in positive light in four cases. In addition to the material with Marina Tauber, there were two extensive reports on June 18 and 21 about how the people of Orhei celebrated the Medical Worker’s Day, with flowers, applause, and diplomas, and the Traditional Costume Day, where *“the most cheerful folk songs”* were played on the stage. In both materials, it was noted that the events were organized by the local authorities, and they cited the head of Orhei district Dinu Țurcanu and Orhei Mayor Pavel Verejanu. On June 24, TV6 broadcast a news story about the fact that *“after three decades, the inhabitants of nine localities in Orhei district will have a properly made road,”* with the money allocated by the central and local authorities. Dinu Țurcanu was cited, again, as well as the mayor of Jora de Mijloc village. Journalists said that *“the road looked like after the war,”* and, once repaired, *“the road to the country will be smoother, and visits to parents – more frequent.”*

PACE appeared in positive light in one news story. After Gheorghe Cavcaliuc reported on a case of alleged smuggling of cigarettes in particularly large proportions on June 21, without giving a name, TV6 returned to the subject on June 24, reporting that the PACE leader *“jumps to the aid of institutions responsible for the investigation of cigarette smuggling, which he recently denounced,”* submitting complaints to the Customs Service and the Border Police.

The station showed in negative light Maia Sandu in the news story about her report at six months in office, and PDM in a news story on June 24 regarding the party’s electoral commitments for farmers. Nicolae Ciubuc was cited, and the background information reminded that he was the minister of agriculture in the Government of Pavel Filip, the leader of PDM, *“and during his time in office farmers protested against governmental policies in this industry.”*

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

The monitored news stories of TV6 cited and/or mentioned 84 sources, ensuring a relative diversity of them. They were primarily the CEC and electoral competitors, followed by representatives of public institutions such as the Customs Service, the Border Police, the Government, the Presidency, and the courts. At the same time, the station’s reporters approached several citizens. However, the comments of experts or political analysts were absent in this week of monitoring.

TV6 provided access to news for 11 electoral competitors. PP Șor had the largest presence in terms of airtime for mentions/citations and in terms of frequency, with 356 seconds of direct and indirect interventions. It was followed by PACE, cited in two news stories and mentioned in two others, BECS – cited twice and mentioned once, PDM – cited in three materials. PAS, despite featuring in six news stories, was briefly cited in only two of them.

#### *Frequency of appearance of electoral actors in the news and the volume of interventions*

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>PP Șor</b>	7	356
<b>PACE</b>	4	150
<b>BECS</b>	3	100
<b>PDM</b>	3	89
<b>PRM</b>	1	60
<b>AUR</b>	2	31
<b>PPDA</b>	2	30

PAS	6	28
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In addition to the competitors included in the table, three others were only mentioned in the news, without being cited – BERU, PNOI, and Veaceslav Valico. The Presidency and/or Maia Sandu appeared in five TV6 news stories, where she was cited directly or indirectly twice.

Six news stories were of a conflicting nature, and three of them were unbalanced or partially balanced. On June 21, Petru Jordan said that the General Prosecutor’s Office is being used as a “*political club to strike at opponents*” and that “*GPO’s actions are intentional, in the midst of the electoral campaign.*” The reaction of the institution was missing. A partially balanced news story referred to PACE’s notification that PAS uses images with Maia Sandu in the campaign, and the expenses for printing these materials are not reflected in the financial report. In this context, they recalled the BECS appeal on the same subject, which the CEC has so far refused to examine. TV6 referred to a previous statement by PAS, which “*denied the accusations, saying that PSRM promotes lies about Maia Sandu.*” The journalists did not present the reaction of PAS or the Presidency to the accusations of PACE and did not say whether they tried to contact the people targeted. In another news story, on June 23, PACE leader Gheorghe Cavcaliuc accused Renato Usatii (BERU) of running an espionage network against a foreign power. TV6 noted that Usatii did not answer the phone to comment on the accusations and did not come up with any comments on social networks. In view of the serious allegations made against him, journalists were obliged to make every effort to give him the right to reply.

TV6 ensured a relative gender balance, with 24 women versus 37 men being cited/mentioned in the news.

### **Language and images used**

The language and images used in the TV8 newscasts were in line with deontological standards, without violations and discriminatory elements.



### **TV8**

#### **Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign**

Between June 18 and 24, 2021, TV8 broadcast 24 news stories of direct and indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 3,783 seconds (1.05 hours). The station covered the activity of electoral competitors (meetings with voters, electoral priorities, donations received by competitors); investigated cases of children being involved in the electoral campaign; informed about civil society reports on the campaign, about accusations made by some competitors against others, and about the situation regarding the number of polling stations abroad (the decision of the Court of Appeal versus the decision of the CEC). Also, the section dedicated to elections included news stories based on the electoral debates on TV8.

#### **Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship**

The vast majority of election-themed materials were objective and impartial, separating facts from opinions. In two cases, the slightly biased attitude of the station towards protagonists was obvious. Thus, on June 18, the station had a news story about a video posted on social networks by a PPDA MP, in which Renato Usatii (BERU) and Alexandru Jizdan (PDM) appear shooting at a shooting range, “*along with Damir, Plahotniuc’s son.*” The station has taken the necessary steps to include the position of all those targeted in the material, but the angle of approach showed lack of impartiality and put the protagonists in negative light. After informing about the video and the reactions of those targeted, the station emphasized the relationship between

Renato Usatii and Alexandru Jizdan, citing a journalistic investigation in which Usatii said that he used to pay Jizdan when he was in power. Another biased material was aired on June 22, and it was a news story based on the discussions from the electoral debates the day before, which presented some candidates neutrally and other candidates critically.

The tone of coverage of the vast majority of electoral competitors was neutral, except for BERU, PDM, and BECS, which also appeared in negative light once each.

### **Pluralism of opinion. Fairness and balance of sources**

During the reporting period, in the 24 news stories relevant to this monitoring, TV8 cited and/or mentioned 79 sources, ensuring the diversity of sources and protagonists. The station most often cited electoral competitors, CEC representatives, judges, the central public administration, civil society, citizens, etc.

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

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>PDM</b>	2	132
<b>PR</b>	2	124
<b>PP ŞOR</b>	2	75
<b>PAS</b>	4	65
<b>PACE</b>	2	65
<b>BECS</b>	6	57
<b>PNOI</b>	3	40
<b>POM</b>	2	37
<b>PPDA</b>	3	26
<b>BERU</b>	3	25

AUR and PACCC each had an appearance of 5 and 14 seconds, respectively, and the independent candidate Veaceslav Valico had an intervention of 14 seconds. President Maia Sandu had one 31-second appearance.

The vast majority of controversial news stories – 10 out of 12 – were balanced, and in two cases the balance was ensured partially. One of these was the material from June 24 about the violations found by Promo-Lex, which contained the reply of one party concerned and said that the other parties did not answer the phone. On the same day, the news story about trolling on social networks remained unbalanced, as the station claimed that the parties concerned either did not answer or interrupted the call.

Most of the sources in the news broadcast by TV8 were men – 48, and the number of women was 14 (22%), so the station failed to ensure gender balance.

### **Language and images used**

In the news about the electoral campaign, TV8 used neutral language, and the images it aired were in line with deontological standards.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Between June 18 and 24, the 10 television stations monitored during the electoral campaign for the July 11 parliamentary elections showed the following trends:

- The public television Moldova 1 provided access to news to the majority of electoral competitors, presenting them in a neutral manner, without clearly favoring or disfavoring any of them. The selection of topics and manner of coverage suggested a slight favoring of the Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists (BECS), which had the most appearances, including some in positive light. Election-themed materials were fair and impartial, but sources were not quite diverse. Conflicting news stories were mostly balanced, while the gender balance of sources was not ensured.
- The television stations NTV Moldova and Primul în Moldova showed a biased and partisan behavior towards BECS, which benefited from the most airtime for interventions, while the tone of coverage was positive and neutral. The Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) was mostly disfavored, having more mentions than citations in the news, as well as President Maia Sandu. These stations provided access to a relatively small number of electoral competitors, with an evident lack of pluralism of opinions. Most of the controversial news stories were unbalanced, and there were some violations in the use of images and language. The gender balance was tilted towards male sources.
- Private television stations Jurnal TV, Pro TV, TV8, and RTR Moldova covered the electoral campaign in a fair and impartial manner, providing access to news to the majority of electoral competitors. The tone of coverage of electoral competitors was mostly neutral. A large part of news stories was impartial and separated facts from opinions, and controversial news stories ensured the balance of opinions in most cases. Materials were unbalanced in terms of gender equality.
- Prime TV and Publika TV mostly provided impartial information about the campaign for the early parliamentary elections, approaching the majority of electoral candidates in a neutral manner. From the perspective of selection of topics and approach, the station gave priority to BECS representatives, who had the most interventions, including some in positive light. Most of the news stories were based on only one source. The stations did not ensure the gender balance of sources/protagonists.
- The private TV station TV6 offered access to news to less than half of the electoral competitors, treating them in an impartial manner. An exception was PP Șor, which was favored by greater frequency and airtime given to interventions and by positive tone. Sources were not sufficiently diverse, and some conflicting news stories were unbalanced or partially balanced. The station ensured relative gender balance, but men prevailed.



**Recommendations:**

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