



# Monitoring report

## MOLDOVA 1

*Period: May 24-30, 2021*

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## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

From May 24 to 30, 2021, the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) monitored the public television station Moldova 1, analyzing how it covers events in the political, economic, social, and other fields, and how it respects professional and ethical standards, such as verification of information in several sources, pluralism of opinions, ensuring balance in case conflicting news, and so on.

For monitoring, we selected the main daily newscasts. We started from the assumption that news stories should contain only facts, and not the opinions of journalists, should be written in a neutral and accessible language, and should present reality as correctly as possible, respecting the balance of sources.

### Purpose of monitoring

The monitoring aims to determine to what extent the public television station Moldova 1 informs citizens correctly, fairly, and impartially about the government's activity in relation to the political opposition in times of tension and/or crisis. This was done on the basis of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of the main newscasts *Mesager*, which were evaluated from the perspective of compliance with the principles of fair information, established both in the code of conduct of the public media outlet and in the Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova. Particular attention was paid to the coverage of the activity of political actors and/or entities (especially official/governmental ones).

### Methodology

Given that the aim of the research is to assess to what extent Moldova 1 complies with the principles of equal treatment, impartiality, fairness, and political neutrality, it is imperative to perform the quantitative and qualitative analysis of newscasts and informative programs that have the potential to influence public opinion. The methodology of studying the media product combined two methods, *quantitative* and *qualitative/comparative*. At the same time, newscasts were also analyzed from the perspective of manipulation and disinformation techniques, in order to help consumers distinguish between a manipulative journalistic product and one that presents reality impartially.

By means of the **quantitative analysis**, we explored the trends in the coverage of topics of public interest during the selected period. It is a research method that involves monitoring, sampling, and coding journalistic materials so as to identify political affiliation, if it exists (the number of materials casting positive light on certain political actors); extent of implementation of the principles of fairness and impartiality in informative and analytical materials (number of fair and impartial materials); whether the balance of sources is ensured (number of balanced materials); what sources are given priority in newscasts (number of sources cited or mentioned); provision of airtime to political actors and entities (amount of airtime provided, in seconds); as well as other aspects. By means of **qualitative analysis**, we sought to interpret data and information obtained from the quantitative analysis. The media content was examined in depth in order to determine whether Moldova 1 complies with the principles of equal

treatment, impartiality, fairness, and political neutrality. The data were compared with the results of the monitoring in March and September 2020.

**Period of monitoring: May 24-30, 2021**

**The main media products of Moldova 1 subjected to monitoring:**

- 7 editions of the main newscast “Mesager” [Messenger] in the period from May 24 to 30, 2021
- The programs “Dimensiunea Diplomatică” [Diplomatic Dimension] and “Focus Europa” of May 24, 2021
- The program “Moldova în direct” [Moldova Live] of May 25 and 27, 2021
- The program “Butonul Roșu” [Red Button] of May 26, 2021
- The program “Cine vine la noi?” [Who is coming?] of May 28 and 29, 2021

**General trends**

Monitoring data reveal that:

- More than a year after the outbreak of the pandemic, COVID-19 remains the most frequently addressed topic in the news. Of the total 154 news stories (except those in the *Sport* section), 35 directly or indirectly referred to the topic of COVID-19, which is about 23%.
- A substantial number of news stories referred to Chisinau Municipality. On average, 1/4 of the news stories in each edition of *Mesager* directly or indirectly covered topics related to the city of Chisinau.
- Central authorities are still frequently cited in Moldova 1 news. However, compared to March 2020, the share of direct or indirect citations of central authorities has decreased, which is explained by the lack of a functioning government and parliament.
- The municipal authorities of Chisinau were the sources most frequently cited directly and indirectly.
- Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban and Deputy Mayor Angela Cutasevici were the sources cited directly most often during the monitored period. At least one of them was cited directly in each edition of *Mesager*.
- Over half of the total 154 news stories either did not have directly cited sources (56 stories), or had only one directly cited source (30 stories), which shows superficiality in the coverage of events/news/topics.
- The news stories with the most directly cited sources covered cultural events, and sometimes contained up to 10-11 directly cited sources.
- Compared to previous reporting periods (March and September 2020), the diversity of directly cited sources has decreased.
- In terms of deontology, there were no major violations in the Moldova 1 news, except for some cases of people being favored or minor cases when facts were mixed with opinions.
- By the frequency with which they were presented in the news, but also by the slightly laudatory approach, Moldova 1 favored the representatives of Chisinau Mayor’s Office, especially Mayor Ion Ceban and Deputy Mayor Angela Cutasevici.

- During the reporting period, there was no gender balance among sources, which can contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes: men are approached/cited from the position of authorities/leaders/decision makers, and women – from the position of saleswomen, doctors, and so on. At the same time, there was a tendency to cite male sources when it comes to direct statements and official sources. For example, in the newscast of May 25, 2021, 11 civil servants or dignitaries (men) are cited, as opposed to 5 direct citations of women. This trend is seen in all monitored newscasts.
- Moldova 1 covered political parties and politicians in a neutral and impartial manner. All news stories that targeted political parties and politicians appeared in the *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021* section.

## II. DATA ANALYSIS

### Mesager Newscast

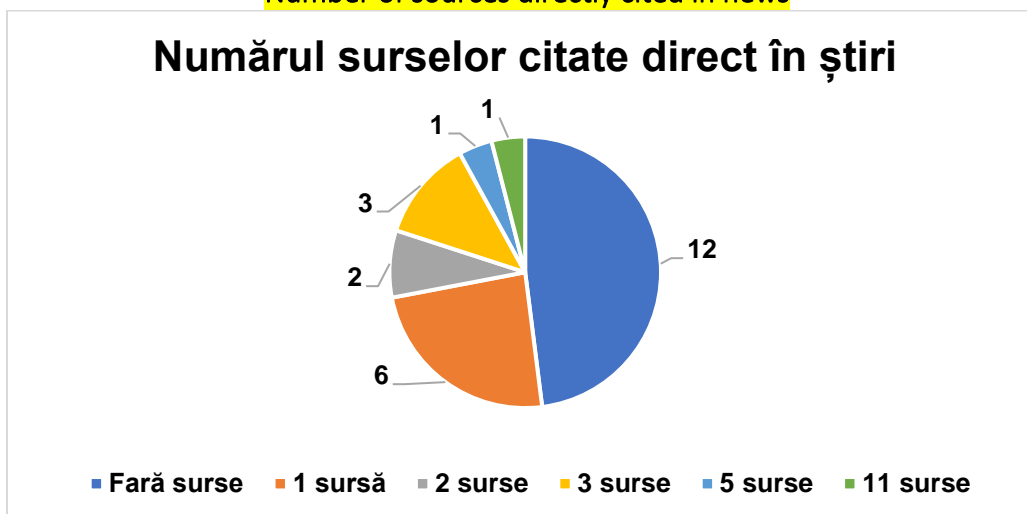
[May 24, 2021](#)

#### Quantitative analysis

The May 24, 2021 edition of the main newscast *Mesager* of the public television Moldova 1 contained 25 news stories, except the ones in the sections *Sport* (4 stories) and *Weather*. All news stories were informative, and none of them had conflict elements, which would have required ensuring the right to reply to the people targeted and/or accused. Six of the 25 stories appeared in the *News in Brief* section, and four in the *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021* section. The first six of the 25 stories directly or indirectly referred to COVID-19 (reduction of restrictions, daily statistics, vaccination, etc.). Eight of all news stories (32%, or every third story) were about or targeted Chisinau Municipality.

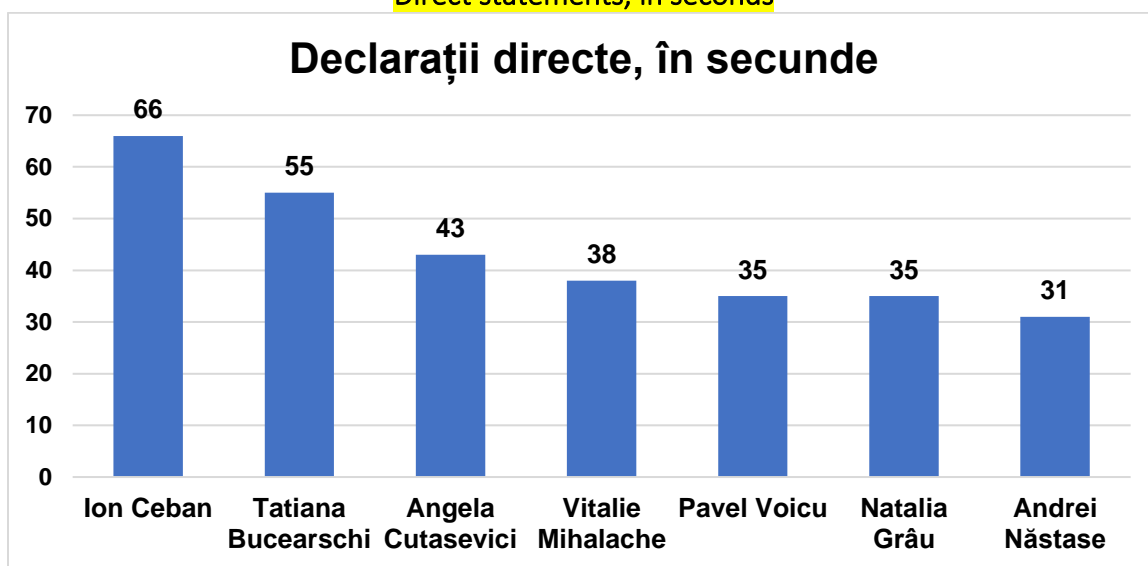
Almost half of the news stories (12) had no directly cited sources (with statements), 6 had only one directly cited source, 2 stories – 2 direct sources, 3 stories – 3 sources, 1 story – 5 sources, 1 story – 11 direct sources.

Number of sources directly cited in news



Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban was mentioned in 4 news stories and directly cited in 2 stories, with 66 seconds of airtime total. Other sources (representatives of authorities or politicians) were cited directly in one news story each: Tatiana Bucearschi, General direction for social assistance and health, Chisinau Mayor’s Office – 55 seconds; Angela Cutasevici, deputy mayor of Chisinau Municipality – 43 seconds; Vitalie Mihalache, head of direction, Chisinau Mayor’s Office – 38 seconds; Andrei Nastase, Dignity and Truth Platform Party (PPDA) – 31 seconds; Pavel Voicu, minister, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) – 35 seconds; Natalia Griu, state secretary, Ministry of Education – 35 seconds. President Maia Sandu and politician Andrei Nastase were mentioned in 2 news stories; Igor Dodon (PSRM), Vladimir Voronin (PCRM), Zinaida Greceanii (PSRM), Ilan Sor (Sor Party), Renato Usatii (Our Party), Ion Chicu (PDCM) were mentioned in one news story about the survey released by the Association of Sociologists and Demographers of Moldova. Other directly cited sources include doctors, school directors, teachers, students, performing artists, and citizens.

**Direct statements, in seconds**



**Qualitative analysis**

COVID-19 was the most frequently approached topic in the *Mesager* of May 24, 2021. Every fourth news story was about or tangentially related to COVID-19. At the same time, news about the situation, problems of and/or events organized in Chisinau Municipality prevailed in this edition of the newscast. Every third news story referred to Chisinau Municipality. The most often cited directly or indirectly and mentioned sources were representatives of Chisinau Mayor’s Office. All direct sources had a total airtime of 202 seconds.

No ethical violations or manipulation techniques were identified in this newscast.

**May 25, 2021**

**Quantitative analysis**

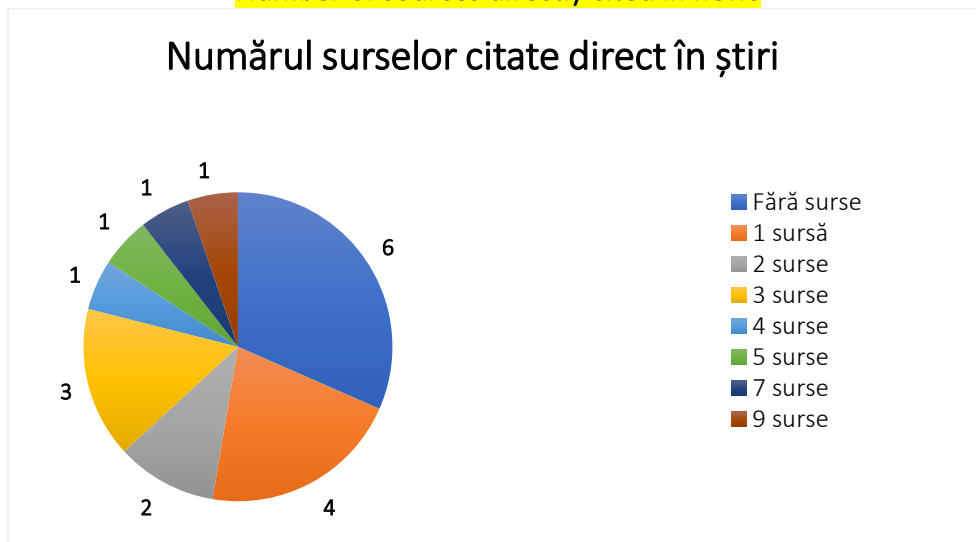
The *Mesager* of May 25, 2021 had 21 news stories (except the ones in the *Sport* section – 4 stories), including 6 in the *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021* section and 4 in the *News in Brief* section. Three

materials had COVID-19 as the main or tangential topic. Other topics were: detention of some employees of the National Agency for Food Safety, suspected of corruption; European Border Guard Day; Maia Sandu’s meeting with a group of MEPs; Bartłomiej Zdaniuk, Ambassador of Poland in Moldova, being awarded Doctor Honoris Causa by the Moldova State University; Alliance for Union of Romanians (AUR) presented its electoral program; the Party of Socialists (PSRM) proposed a draft law for the future parliament to allocate one-off social support payment of 1,000 MDL for pensioners; Moldova 1 – audience leader during the finals of Eurovision 2021 song contest; etc.

The officials directly or indirectly cited in the news were: Denis Cernelea, state secretary, Ministry of Health; Petru Corduneanu, deputy head of the Border Police; Marin Maxian, deputy head of the General Police Inspectorate; Anastasia Gruzin, head of the Child Protection Direction, Ministry of Health; Aurel Ciocoi, acting prime minister; Dorin Cimil, head of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC). Among politicians, Vlad Bilețchi (AUR), Inga Grigoriu (PPPDA), Alla Darovanaia and Vladimir Odnostalco (both from PSRM) were the protagonists of one news story each. Other directly cited sources were doctors, farmers, university professors, representatives of the diplomatic corps, teachers, people with special needs, writers, police officers, and citizens.

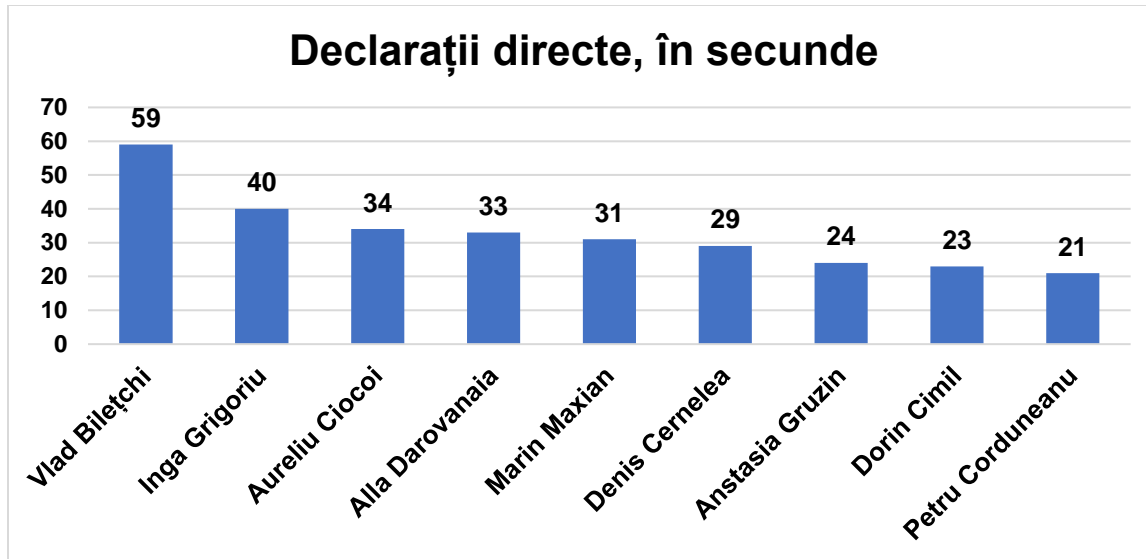
Six of the 21 news stories did not have directly cited sources; 4 stories had one direct source each; 2 stories – 2 direct sources each; 3 stories – 3 direct sources each; while some news stories had between 4 and 9 directly cited sources.

**Number of sources directly cited in news**



As for the airtime dedicated to direct citing of officials, Acting Prime Minister Aureliu Ciocoi had 34 seconds; Marin Maxian, deputy head of the General Police Inspectorate – 31 seconds; Denis Cernelea, state secretary, Ministry of Health – 29 seconds; Anastasia Gruzin, head of the Child Protection Direction, Ministry of Health – 24 seconds; Dorin Cimil, head of CEC – 23 seconds; Petru Corduneanu, deputy head of the Border Police – 21 seconds. Among politicians, Vlad Bilețchi (AUR) enjoyed direct citing of 59 seconds, Inga Grigoriu (PPPDA) – 40 seconds, Alla Darovanaia (Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists, BECS) – 33 seconds.

**Direct statements, in seconds**



#### **Qualitative analysis**

In the *Mesager* of May 25, 2021, the majority of news stories were of social nature (almost half of the 24 stories). This edition of the newscast also had the fewest stories on COVID-19. Direct and indirect sources were diverse, compared to other editions of *Mesager* during this period of monitoring, while public officials and politicians were less present than in other editions. Thus, Moldova 1 diversified its sources in news, providing to them equal airtime. There were no ethical violations or manipulation techniques in this newscast, either.

In the majority of materials, there was gender imbalance among sources. Male voices prevailed among the cited public officials: 11 male officials versus 5 direct citations from women.

#### **May 26, 2021**

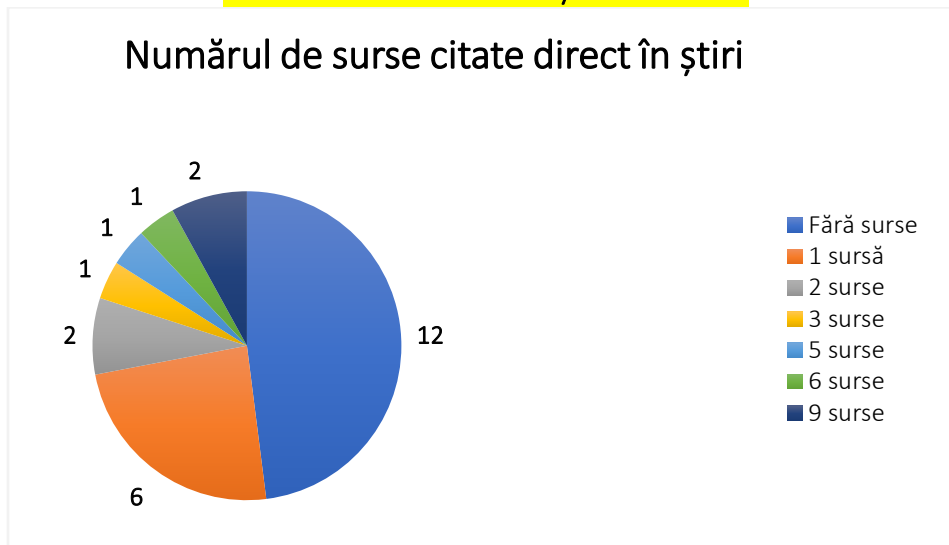
#### **Quantitative analysis**

The May 26, 2021 edition of *Mesager* included 24 news stories, 4 of which were about COVID-19 (directly or indirectly) and opened the newscast. 4 stories appeared in the *News in Brief* section, 6 stories in the *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021* section, 2 in the sections of *Foreign Affairs* and *Culture*. Other topics also included the increase of scholarships for students; World Multiple Sclerosis Day; incitement to hatred against the Roma and lack of investigation; renovation of a road in Comrat with support from USAID; the last day of pre-registration of Moldovans abroad for the early parliamentary elections; registration of the Democratic Party (PDM) for the elections; release of a monograph by the writer Nicolae Dabija. 3 of the 24 news stories were about Chisinau Municipality.

Representatives of central and/or local authorities were the most often cited directly and/or indirectly (7 news stories), including: Ion Ceban, mayor of Chisinau Municipality; Angela Cutasevici, deputy mayor of Chisinau Municipality; Serghei Atanasov, mayor of Comrat; Tatiana Zatić, state secretary, Ministry of Health; Tatiana Badan, president of the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM). Among politicians, Alexandru Jizdan (PDM) and Alla Darovanaia (BECS) were cited directly, while President Maia Sandu and Octavian Țicu, leader of the Party of National Unity (PUN) were only mentioned.

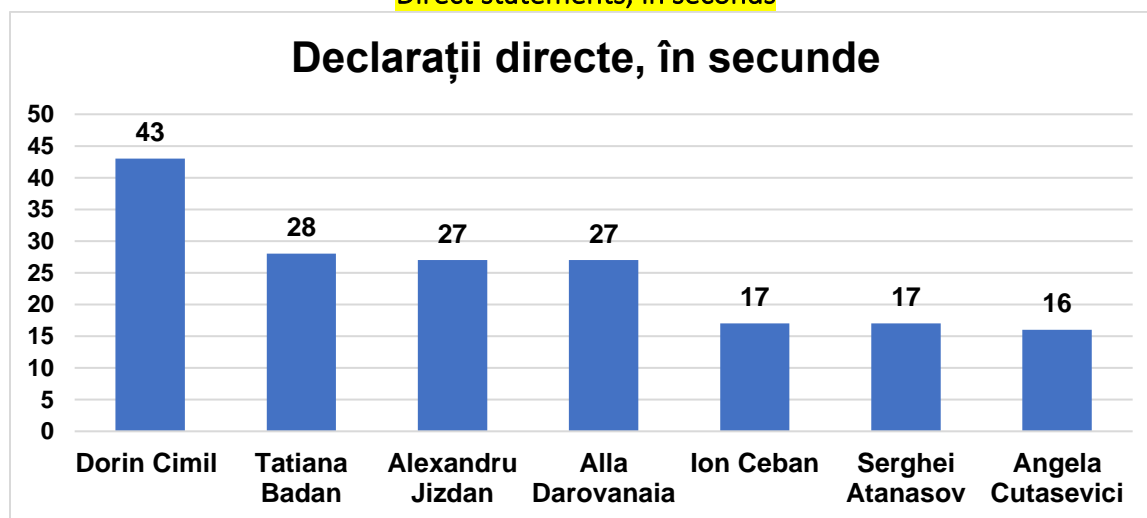
12 news stories out of 24 did not have directly cited sources; 6 stories had 1 directly cited source each; 2 stories – 2 sources each; 1 story – 3 sources; 1 story – 5 sources; 1 story – 6 sources; and 2 stories – 9 directly cited sources each.

**Number of sources directly cited in news**



In terms of the airtime dedicated to statements, representatives of local public administration had the most airtime: Ion Ceban, mayor of Chisinau Municipality, was mentioned in one news story and had a direct intervention of 17 seconds in another story; Angela Cutasevici, deputy mayor – 16 seconds; Serghei Atanasov, mayor of Comrat – 17 seconds; Tatiana Badan, president of CALM – 28 seconds. The only person who was cited directly twice was Dorin Cimil, head of the CEC, with a total airtime of 43 seconds. As for politicians, Alexandru Jizdan (PDM) had a direct intervention of 27 seconds, and Alla Darovanaia (BECS) – 27 seconds.

**Direct statements, in seconds**



*Qualitative analysis*



Most of the news stories were informative. One story was of conflicting nature, and it appeared in the *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021* section, presenting information from a press conference organized by BECS representatives, where the Socialist MP Alla Darovanaia accused President Maia Sandu of several failures during her first months in office, as well as of increase of prices for food and fuel. Moldova 1 journalists mentioned they had contacted the presidential administration spokesperson Sorina Ștefărtă for reaction, and she said that the institution does not comment. Although the right to reply was ensured to the person targeted in the news, Maia Sandu, to balance and provide the media consumer with a more complex picture of the situation, Moldova 1 could have asked an economy analyst to explain the causes of price growth and who is responsible for it.

## May 27, 2021

### **Quantitative analysis**

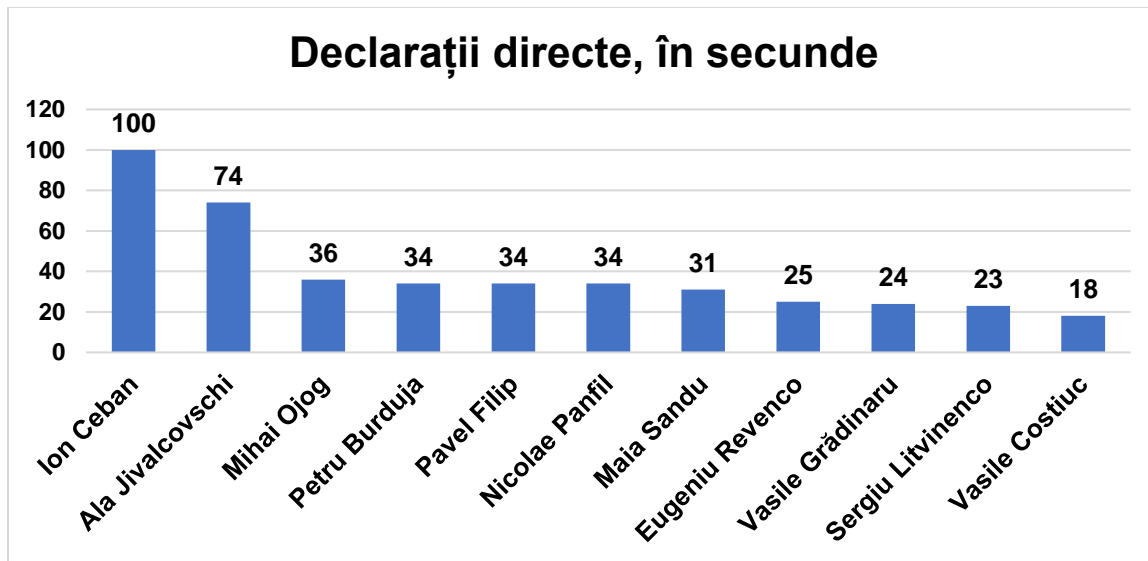
In the *Messenger* of May 27, 2021, 27 news stories were broadcast (except the ones in the *Sports* section – 3). The first 5 were about COVID-19; 6 were about Chisinau Municipality; and 2 targeted the presidential administration of Moldova. Out of the 27 news stories, 5 appeared in the *News in Brief* section, and 9 in the *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021* section.

The public television most often referred to central and/or local authorities as sources of news. 10 out of the 27 materials mentioned or cited directly/indirectly at least one public official and/or institution. Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban was the protagonist and cited directly in 3 news stories, and President Maia Sandu in two stories – mentioned in one and cited directly in the other one. Other officials mentioned and/or cited directly were state secretaries Igor Curov (Ministry of Health) and Eugen Revenco (MAEIE); Arcadie Baba, head of AviaSan service; Mihail Ciocanu, director of the Emergency Health Care Institute; Luiza Gafton, president of the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM).

PAS and the representatives of this party were targeted in 2 news stories, PSRM – 2 stories, PDM and Democracy at Home Party – one story each. Among politicians, Igor Dodon (PSRM), Sergiu Litvinenco and Vasile Grădinaru (PAS), Petru Burduja (PSRM), Vasile Costiuc (PDA), and Pavel Filip (PDM) were targeted in one news story each, all except Igor Dodon – as sources cited directly.

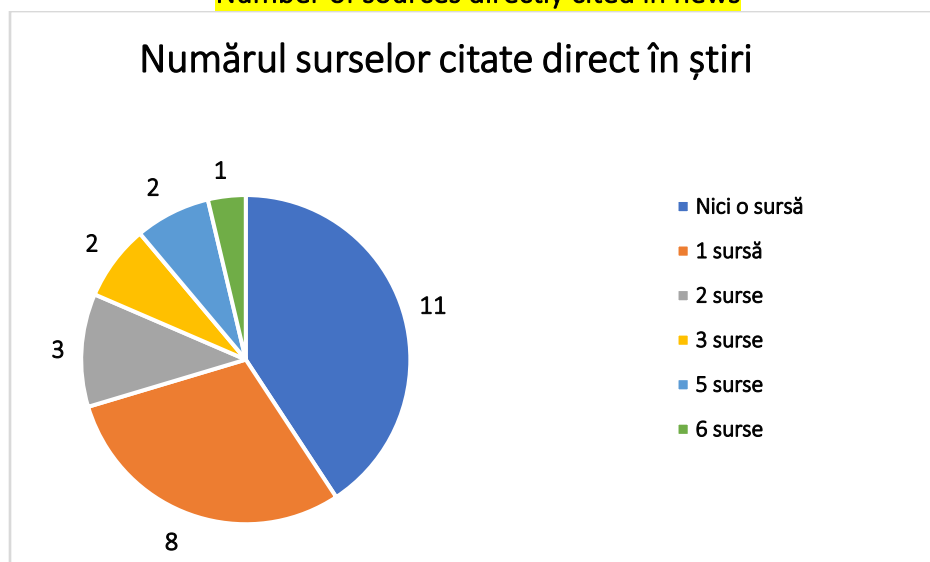
As for the airtime offered to statements, Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban was cited directly 3 times (including with a post on Facebook read by the reporter), with a total airtime of 100 seconds; President Maia Sandu – one direct intervention of 31 seconds; Eugen Revenco, state secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – one direct intervention of 25 seconds; Igor Curov, state secretary at the Ministry of Health – one direct intervention of 16 seconds. Among politicians, Pavel Filip (PDM) – one direct intervention of 34 seconds; Petru Burduja (PSRM) – one direct intervention of 34 seconds; Sergiu Litvinenco (PAS) – 23 seconds; Vasile Grădinaru (PAS) – 24 seconds; Vasile Costiuc (PDA) – 18 seconds. Other directly cited sources were Ala Jivalcovschi, head of the pediatric department, Emilian Coțaga Hospital – 74 seconds; Mihai Ojog, director of Apă-Canal Soroca – 36 seconds; and Nicolae Panfil, program director at Promo-Lex – 34 seconds.

### **Direct statements, in seconds**



11 out of the 27 news stories had no directly cited sources; 8 stories had one source; 3 stories – 2 sources; 2 stories – 3 sources; 2 stories – 5 sources; and one story – 6 sources.

#### Number of sources directly cited in news



#### **Qualitative analysis**

In the *Mesager* of May 27, 2021, the local authorities from Chisinau were slightly favored both by the time devoted to direct citations and by the number of news stories in which they were mentioned and/or cited (6 stories). For example, Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban was the most cited source and benefited from the most airtime for interventions. At the same time, almost every fourth story in the newscast was about or with reference to Chisinau Municipality, and some of these stories put the municipal authorities in a positive light. An example in this sense was the last news story in the newscast, about the renovation of a green area according to European standards in the Botanica sector of Chisinau. It was laudatory to the authorities and mayor of Chisinau: *“This park is unattractive for visitors*

*now, and there is clutter around, but the authorities promise that the park will be modernized soon. It will have new pavement, and the sidewalk will be repaired. There will be an irrigation system, an area for exhibitions, but also a special space for organizing events. According to the authorities, the project also provides for the installation of video surveillance cameras...”*

At the same time, 2 of the 27 news stories were of conflicting nature. The first one was about the visit of President Maia Sandu to the Superior Council of Magistracy, where she criticized corruption in the justice system. The second one, in the section of *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021*, informed about the PAS faction in the Chisinau Municipality Council asking Mayor Ion Ceban to urgently convene the Council in order to review the real estate tax, which, according to PAS, has doubled. In both news stories, Moldova 1 ensured the right to reply to the people concerned and presented the opinions of all sides.

[May 28, 2021](#)

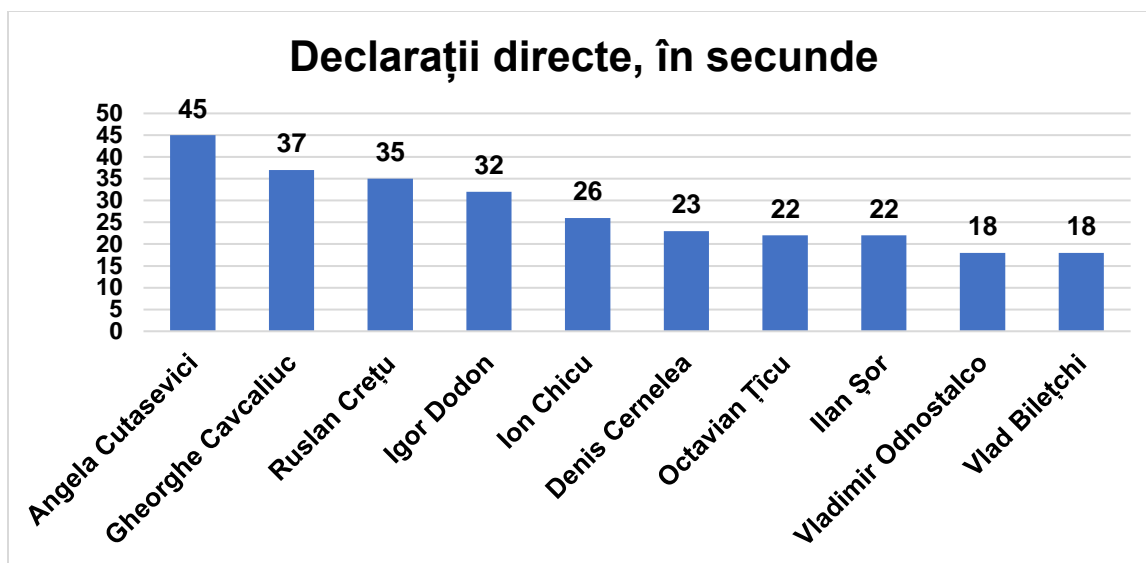
### **Quantitative analysis**

The *Mesager* of May 28, 2021 had of 27 news stories (excluding 3 stories on sports), of which 4 in the *News in Brief* section, 10 in the *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021* section, 3 international, and one about culture. 5 news stories directly or indirectly referred to COVID-19. Other topics included preparations for the opening of summer camps for children in Chisinau; tax statistics on the number of millionaires in Moldova; the announcement of the General Prosecutor’s Office that it waives all charges on Veaceslav Platon; launching of some political parties in the electoral race and registration of others by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC); the electoral promises of some politicians; a “spectacular accident” in St. Petersburg that left six people injured; a news story based on information presented by Igor Dodon in the show *President Igor Dodon Answers*; and others.

President Maia Sandu was the subject of three news stories, without being cited directly. Other officials directly cited in Moldova 1 news were Denis Cernelea, state secretary at the Ministry of Health, with an intervention of 23 seconds; Ruslan Crețu, mayor of the village of Floreni – 35 seconds; and Angela Cutasevici, deputy mayor of Chisinau Municipality – 45 seconds.

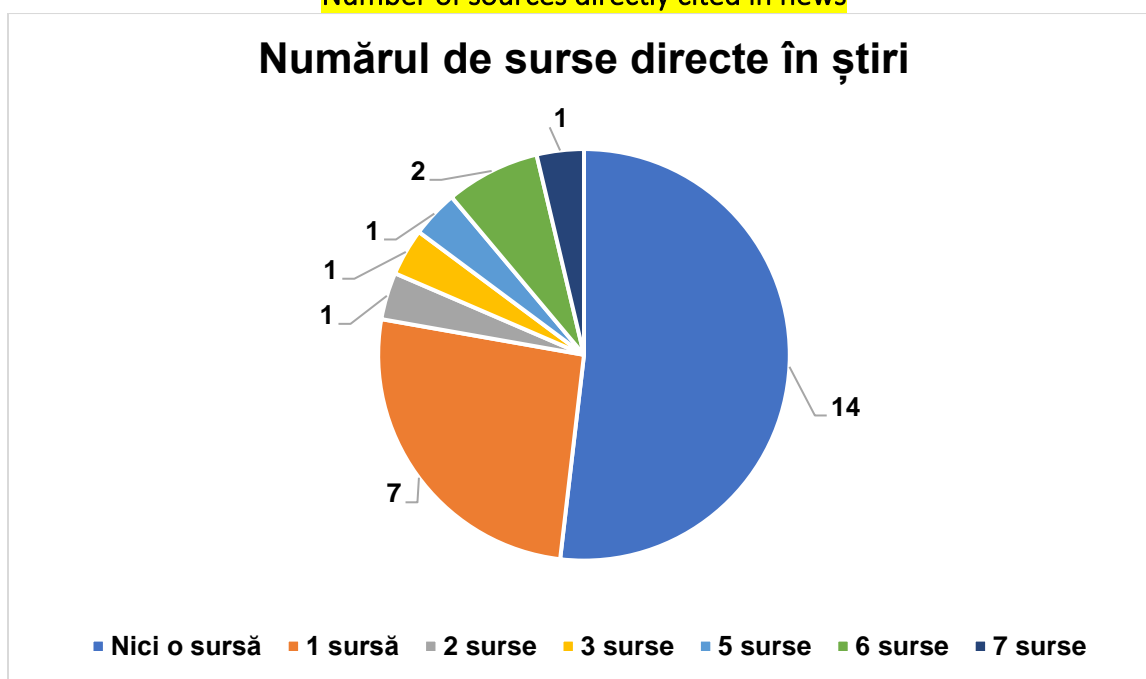
Among politicians, the news cited Vlad Bilețchi (AUR) – 18 seconds; Igor Dodon (BECS) – 32 seconds; Gheorghe Cavaliuc (PACE) – 37 seconds; Ion Chicu (PDCM) – 26 seconds; Vladimir Odnostalco (BECS) – 18 seconds; Ilan Șor (ȘorParty) – 22 seconds; and Octavian Țîcu (PUN) – 22 seconds.

**Direct statements, in seconds**



14 of the 27 news stories (except 3 in the *Sport* section) had no directly cited sources; 7 stories – one source; one story – 2 sources; one story – 3 sources; one story – 5 sources; 2 stories – 6 sources; and one story – 7 sources.

Number of sources directly cited in news



#### Qualitative analysis

In the *Mesager* of May 28, 2021, social and electoral topics predominated. More than half of the news stories did not include directly cited sources, and 1/4 of them had only one directly cited source. In some stories, Moldova 1 had the mission to provide more information, to include background data, or to approach other sources to provide an explanation or background information. An example is the news that the General Prosecutor’s Office waives all charges against Veaceslav Platon in the case of bank

fraud. Given the context and importance of this topic for the general public, Moldova 1 should have at least requested a reaction from the General Prosecutor's Office to provide an argument for the decision, or include the opinion of an expert/lawyer to comment on the correctness of the decision.

Another news story that raises questions about ethics refers to an accident that took place in the Russian city of St. Petersburg. Firstly, it is sensational and irrelevant for the Moldovan public. Secondly, Moldova 1 mixed facts with opinions, headlining: *"Spectacular accident in Russia. A passenger bus actually went up a light pole in St. Petersburg. Be warned that the footage can affect you emotionally..."*

At the same time, 4 of the 27 news stories in the newscast had a conflicting nature. The first one mentioned the protest of a group of Floreni villagers dissatisfied with the actions of a poultry factory that allegedly pollutes the river that passes through the village, after it was disconnected from the sewerage system. The second story addressed the statements of President Maia Sandu at a private television station, where she said that she was being watched by Ministry of Interior employees. In another story, Igor Dodon accused Maia Sandu of meddling in the justice sector, and in the fourth, BECS representative Vladimir Odnostalco accused right-wing parties (especially PAS) that if they come to power, then will raise the retirement age for men and women to 63 years. In all cases, Moldova 1 tried to offer the right of reply to all those targeted or accused, but none of them was cited directly.

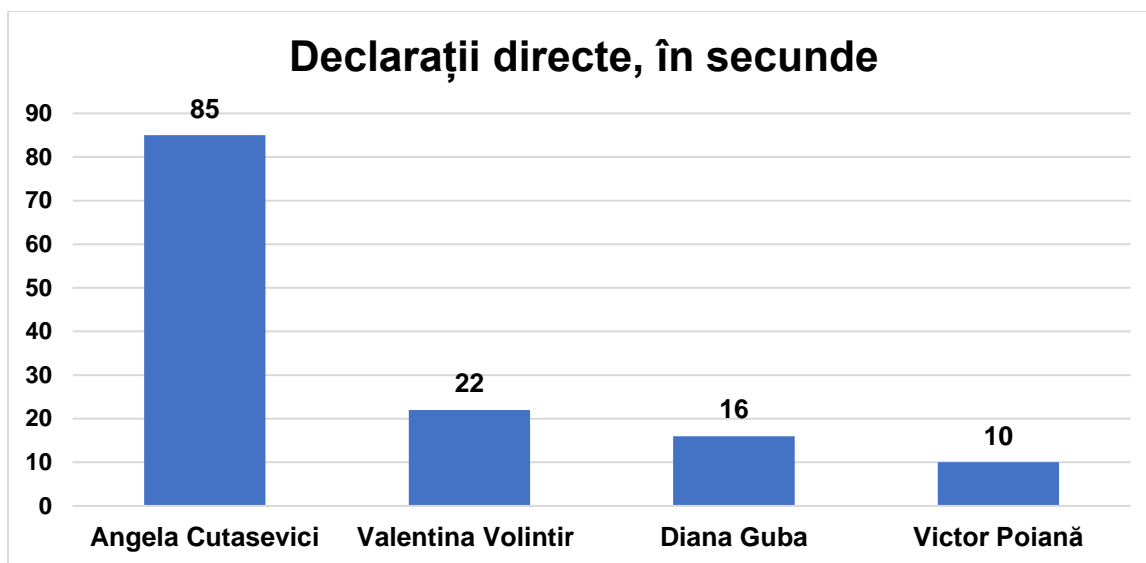
[May 29, 2021](#)

### ***Quantitative analysis***

The *Mesager* of May 28, 2021 had 11 news stories (except 3 about sports), of which 4 directly or indirectly referred to COVID-19. Other topics include a shooting in the streets of Chisinau; the conditions and organization of the end-of-school-year ceremony; a new SMURD operation; KidsExpo exhibition; the mushroom business in Moldova; the release of a new book by the writer Olga Căpățână; etc. As in previous cases, Moldova 1 broadcast a large number of news stories about events in Chisinau (6). Every second news story in the newscast targeted the country's capital city. In this edition of the *Mesager*, there was no news on politics or mentioning politicians.

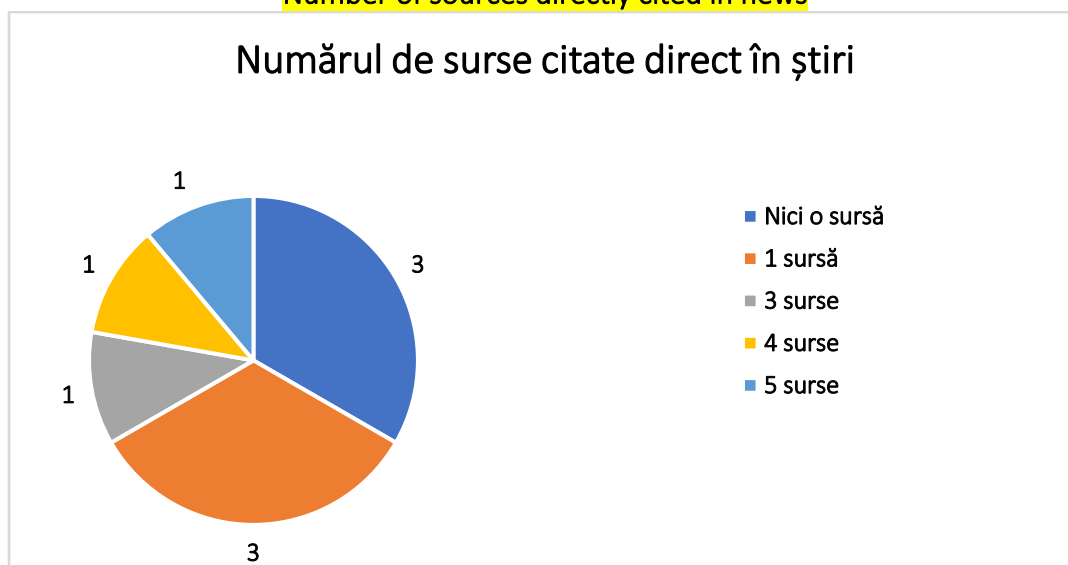
In this newscast, Moldova 1 cited directly various sources, most often representatives of municipal authorities. For example, Angela Cutasevici, deputy mayor of Chisinau, had 2 direct interventions of 85 seconds; Victor Poiană, deputy head of the Buiucani district – one direct intervention of 10 seconds; Diana Guba, head of the Botanica sector – one direct intervention of 16 seconds; Valentina Volintir, head of department, Chisinau Mayor's Office – one direct intervention of 22 seconds. Only one news story mentioned a representative of the central authorities (Lilia Pogolșa, minister of education), without being cited directly.

**Direct statements, in seconds**



3 news stories had no directly cited sources, 3 stories had one directly cited sources, and several stories had between 3 and 7 directly cited sources.

#### Number of sources directly cited in news



#### *Qualitative analysis*

As in other editions of the main daily newscast, the *Mesager* of May 28, 2021 had mostly news about Chisinau Municipality. The public television has not committed any violation of ethics and/or used manipulation techniques in any of them.

[May 30, 2021](#)

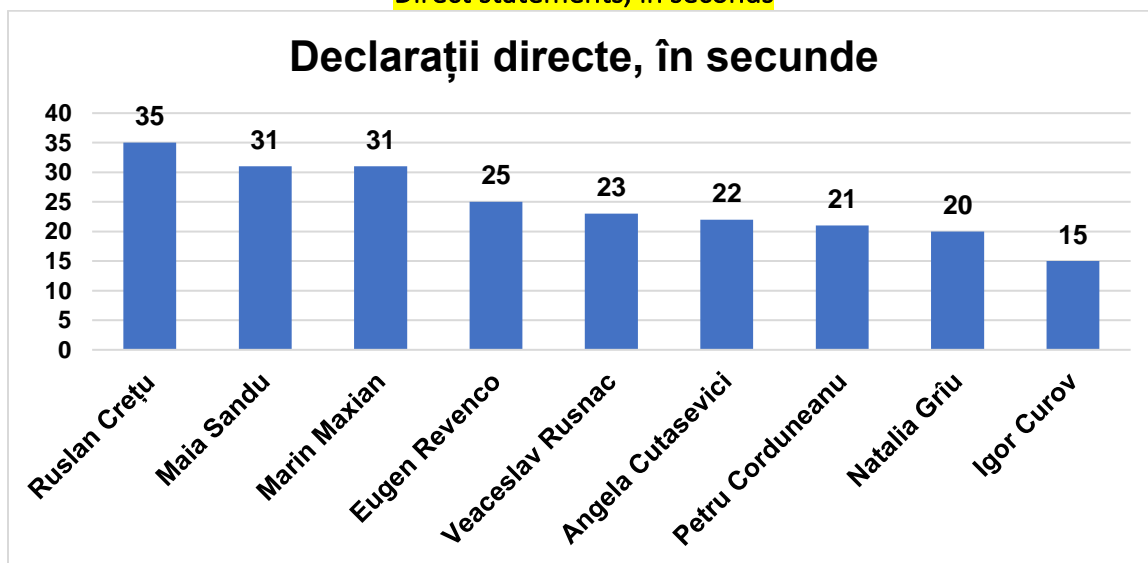
#### *Quantitative analysis*

The May 30, 2021 summary newscast, *Mesager: Stop-Cadru*, included 19 news stories, half of which (10) were aired in the newscasts over the past week. Six of all news stories (of which 5 opened the newscast) were about COVID-19, and 4 of all the news stories referred to Chisinau. The news broadcast during the week and rebroadcast in the *Mesager* of May 30, 2021 covered the following topics: the purchase of 8 ambulances for the AviaSan service with the support of the World Bank; the annual rate of missing children; the return of 13 Moldovans from the Gaza Strip; the misunderstandings in Floreni village; incomes obtained by Moldovans in 2020, according to the tax authority; the announcement of the General Prosecutor’s Office that it waives all charges against Veaceslav Platon; the presence of Maia Sandu at the meeting of the Superior Council of Magistracy; European Border Guard Day; completion of studies by 16 students of boarding schools.

The new materials of this edition informed about the latest statistics regarding the developments of the situation with COVID-19 and the vaccination process; the situation of deaf children in Moldova; cultural events organized in Soroca and Chisinau; completion of the mission of 4 Moldovan helicopter teams in Afghanistan; the prize obtained by two students for developing an application for an international engineering competition.

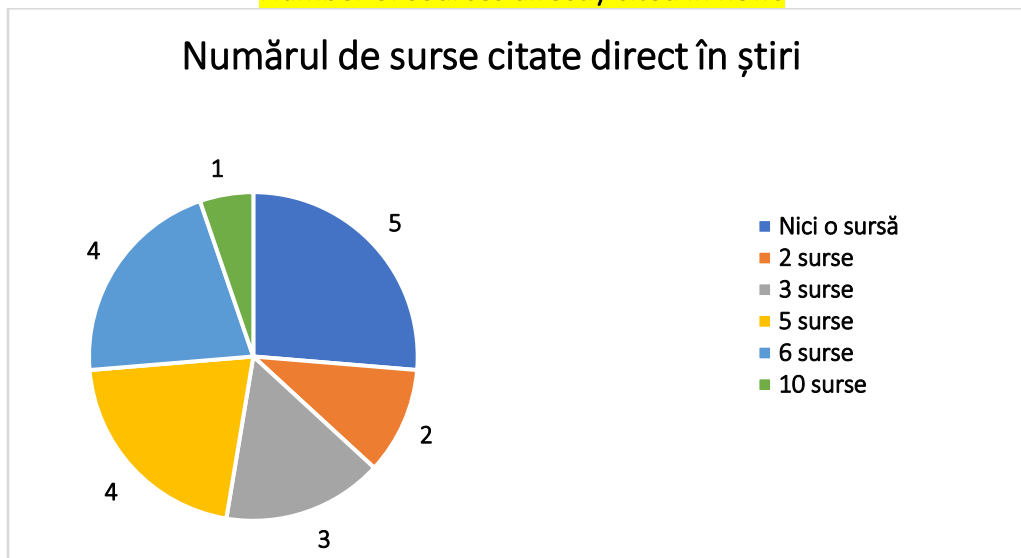
The sources most often cited directly were the representatives of local and central authorities: Igor Curov, state secretary, Ministry of Health – 15 seconds; Natalia Grîu, state secretary, Ministry of Education – 20 seconds; Eugen Revenco, state secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration – 25 seconds; Marin Maxian, deputy head of the General Police Inspectorate – 31 seconds; Petru Corduneanu, deputy head of the Border police – 21 seconds; Angela Cutasevici, deputy mayor of Chisinau Municipality – 22 seconds; Ruslan Crețu, mayor of Floreni village – 35 seconds; Veaceslav Rusnac, head of Soroca district – 23 seconds. President Maia Sandu was targeted in a news story where she was cited directly with a statement of 31 seconds. Doctors, NGO representatives, police officers, musicians, artists, citizens, etc. were also cited directly. However, in terms of airtime, sources other than officials had greater presence in the news.

Direct statements, in seconds



As for the sources cited directly, there were none in 5 news stories; 2 stories had 2 direct sources; 3 stories – 3 sources; 4 stories – 5 sources; 4 stories – 6 sources; and one story – 10 sources cited directly.

#### Number of sources directly cited in news



#### Qualitative analysis

The topic of COVID-19 was again present in the *Mesager* of May 30, 2021. Six of the 19 news stories addressed this topic (five of which appeared at the beginning of the newscast), meaning that every third story referred to COVID-19. Representatives of local and central authorities were again most often mentioned and/or cited. Like in the other editions of *Mesager*, the news about Chisinau was on the agenda, with every fifth story referring to the country's capital. On the other hand, like in Saturday's edition, there were no political news or news with and about politicians.

Regarding the deontological aspect of the content, some news stories were superficial, lacking background information or expert opinions that could have provided more explanations on some topics. An example is the news about the General Prosecutor's Office, which dropped all the charges against Veaceslav Platon in the bank fraud case.

#### Programs

##### May 24, 2021

On May 24, 2021, two programs were monitored:

- [Dimensiunea Diplomatică](#) [Diplomatic Dimension], moderated by Ludmila Barbă, with 28 minutes 30 seconds of airtime. The guest of the program was President Gitanas Nauseda of Lithuania, who was on an official visit to Moldova. The program began with a report from the official ceremony welcoming the Lithuanian president by President Maia Sandu. The head of state was cited directly for 2 minutes 40 seconds, and the Lithuanian president had 3 minutes 15 seconds for statements. Subsequently, the host interviewed the Lithuanian president. The discussion focused on Moldovan-Lithuanian relations and the results of talks with Moldovan officials; the situation in Lithuania 30 years after the break-up of the Soviet Union; Lithuania's



relations with ex-Soviet countries and, in particular, with the Russian Federation; the benefits of membership in the European Union and the chances of Moldova in the process of European integration; priorities for Moldovan-Lithuanian relations in the short and medium term; Vilnius' expectations from the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021. The host was neutral and unbiased in moderating the interview and asking questions.

- [Focus Europa](#), hosted by Leanca Lașco, with 19 minutes 45 seconds of airtime. This program was actually a translation and adaptation of the content produced by Deutsche Welle (DW). It was made of four reports:
  - *The COVID-19 pandemic revealed systemic problems in some countries.* It shows the example of Romania, where, in the city of Piatra Neamt, 10 patients hospitalized with COVID-19 died because of a fire at the hospital. A similar situation happened in Bucharest last year. The report had 5 sources cited directly: a victim's relative, a doctor, the head of the intensive care department of the Piatra Neamt hospital, public health expert Vlad Mixich, and Romanian Minister of Health Ioana Mihăilă.
  - *The story of a Syrian refugee family in Turkey who got there because of the Assad regime.* According to the material, they will not be able to vote in the upcoming presidential election, which is expected to be won by the current Syrian leader, Bashar al-Assad. The report had 2 direct sources, the man and his wife, and focused on the difficult situation of this family.
  - *The wolf population has grown significantly in recent years in Germany, posing danger to certain regions.* It tells the story of Rodi, the most famous wolf in northern Germany, who along with his pack terrorized a community. Authorities allowed the wolf to be hunted and killed, but the animal could not be captured. Report with 3 directly cited sources: a farmer, an expert, and a hunter.
  - *In Switzerland, underwear is used to fertilize the soil.* About 2,000 families in the country have "planted" identical underwear in their gardens, in an experiment that aims to verify soil quality. The report had 3 directly cited sources: a researcher and two members of a family.

## May 25, 2021

[The May 25, 2021 edition of the program Moldova în direct \[Moldova Live\]](#), with 58 minutes of airtime, was hosted by the journalist Tatiana Herța and had Dorin Cimil, president of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), as a guest, with whom they discussed the organization and conduct of the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021.

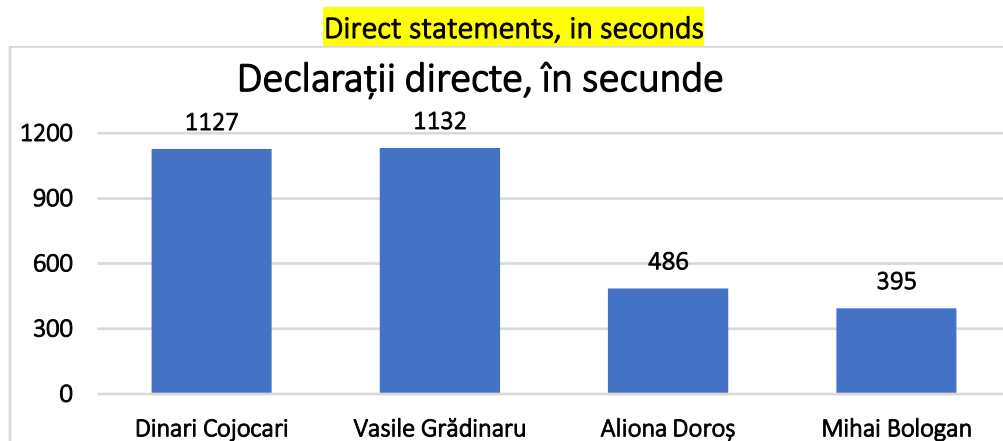
In the opening of the program, the host announced that the discussion with the CEC President Dorin Cimil would focus on the organization of the early elections of July 11, 2021. They addressed the ping-pong of statements between the CEC and the Government of Moldova on financing the electoral campaign. They also discussed the money allocated for the payment of officials involved in the elections, the number of polling stations to be opened abroad, the registration of candidates, the electoral campaign, possible violations, and the electoral process in general. No politicians and/or political parties involved in the campaign were invoked during the program. The host prepared for the program, and, among other things, referred to statements from previous interviews that Dorin Cimil gave to other media outlets.

The host was neutral, unbiased, and did not favor the guest. Whenever necessary, the journalist intervened with questions, including ones that were uncomfortable. For example: “Do you know what stocks of equipment for election employees are left over from the previous elections, so that no extra money is spent?”; “What measures will the CEC take to avoid repeating the situation from the previous elections, when there was lack of ballots at several polling stations abroad?”; “The issue of mass voting of voters from the left bank of the Dniester and organized transportation – what will the CEC do about it?”; “A party has already announced that it will change its name, and the abbreviation of the new name is similar to that of a party that has great chances of victory. How does the CEC manage such situations?”

### May 26, 2021

On May 26, 2021, Moldova 1 broadcast the program *Butonul Roșu* [Red Button], moderated by the journalist Oxana Mititelu. It had 60 minutes of airtime, and the discussion focused on the problems and challenges of Chisinau Municipality: allocation of money for suburban mayors’ offices, purchase of buses, repairs and paving of roads, etc. The guests of the program were municipal councilors Dinari Cojocaru (PSRM), Aliona Doroș (PPPDA), Vasile Grădinaru (PAS), and Mihai Bologan, director of iData Company, who represented the interests of the civil society.

The moderator was neutral and unbiased, without favoring or presenting in positive light any of the guests. Whenever it was necessary, she asked questions, including ones that were uncomfortable. As for the airtime for answers and direct interventions, Dinari Cojocaru (PSRM) spoke for 1,127 seconds; Aliona Doroș (PPPDA) – 486 seconds; Vasile Grădinaru (PAS) – 1132 seconds; Mihai Bologan (iData) – 395 seconds.



### May 27, 2021

[The May 27, 2021 edition of the program \*Moldova în direct\* \[Moldova Live\]](#), with 58 minutes 42 seconds of airtime, was moderated by the journalist Tatiana Herța, with guests Tatiana Zatić, state secretary of the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection, and Mihai Ciocanu, director of the Institute of Emergency Medicine. The topic of the program was anti-COVID vaccination process. The discussion focused on the vaccination rate in Chisinau and around the country; the campaign for informing citizens about the vaccination process; the stock, types of vaccines available, and people’s preferences for a vaccine; etc.

The program included a report from the two mobile vaccination units in Chisinau Municipality – “a trolleybus and a bus, which were stormed by the residents of Chisinau.” The material cited directly 6 sources: five citizens and Lina Baranova, coordinator of the vaccination process at the Territorial Medical Association of Buiucani sector.

The program was informative. The moderator was prepared and had an incisive attitude during the program: she did not hesitate interrupting the guests when they went off the topics of the program. Questions were correct, and the attitude towards the guests was neutral and impartial.

### May 28 and 29, 2021

On these two days, monitoring was performed of two editions of the program *Cine vine la noi?* [Who is coming?], moderated by the journalist Doina Stimpovschi.

[In the edition of May 28, 2021](#), with 56 minutes 34 seconds of airtime, the host focused on the following topics: the International Day of Action for Women’s Health (domestic violence and women’s rights); cultural projects implemented by the Culture Department of Chisinau Mayor’s Office; release of the novel “Parisul cu gust de caramelă sărată” [Paris with the taste of salted caramel]. The program also included a report, *Goodbye Kindergarten*, from Kindergarten no. 1 from Chisinau Municipality. The guests of the program were Ina Grădinaru, deputy director of the Artemida Association from the town of Drochia (online); Valentina Volontir, artist and head of the Culture Department of Chisinau Mayor’s Office (in studio); writer Olga Căpățână (in studio).

[In the edition of May 29, 2021](#), with 53 minutes 54 seconds of airtime, the host focused on seasonal allergies, folk music, the release of a book of poems called *PoEsențe*, nature photography. The guests in the studio were poet Radmila Popovici, photographer Victor Sacaliuc, and folk singer Marina Coptu.

In both programs, the host was neutral, did not favor or politicize any information and/or topic, asked correct questions and was unbiased towards all guests.

### CONCLUSIONS

Between May 24 and 30, 2021, Moldova 1 presented information in the main daily newscasts mostly in a neutral manner. During the monitoring, several violations were identified, especially regarding the prioritization of topics related to Chisinau Municipality. In almost every edition of the *Mesager* newscast there were at least 3 news stories that targeted Chisinau Mayor’s Office, which showed a predilection for topics about the capital city to the detriment of other regions of the country, thus creating the impression that Moldova 1 is rather a “municipal television” than a public one.

At the same time, the frequency of news about Chisinau suggested that the public television favored the municipal administration, by presenting in exclusively positive light some of its representatives (e.g. Mayor Ion Ceban and Deputy Mayor Angela Cutasevici), by providing them with more airtime for interventions than other sources, by the frequency of their appearances in the news, and by the way they were approached/presented in the news.

The fact that the public television favors Chisinau Mayor's Office may influence certain decisions of the citizens, especially since the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections 2021 is currently taking place in Moldova. The political history of the current mayor of Chisinau is relevant, as he took a leave at his own expense during the electoral campaign for the presidential election in November 2020 to get involved in the campaign of the Party of Socialists candidate (Igor Dodon).

Quantity-wise, the study found that the COVID-19 pandemic remains the most often addressed topic in the newscasts of the public television. Every edition of *Mesager* began with news that directly or indirectly referred to this topic (between 3 and 7 news stories per edition). They made 23% of the total volume of news in each newscast, meaning that every fifth news story was about the pandemic.

More than half of the 154 news stories broadcast during the reporting period either had no directly cited sources, but only sources mentioned and/or cited indirectly by presenters or reporters, or had only one directly cited source. It shows nothing but superficiality in the coverage of information and topics of public interest, especially given that experts were absent as sources in Moldova 1 news during the reporting period. In some materials, they could have provided details and interpretation and could have helped the media consumer better understand the context of the news or a problem. On the other hand, news about culture – book releases, organization of concerts or artistic activities, etc. – had the most sources cited directly. The reason is that all sources were in one place, and the reporter could interview them directly, without looking for them later. In news stories that required greater journalistic effort from Moldova 1 reporters (contacting experts or specialists to explain a situation or bring background details), they only presented the basic information, without direct sources in the news, or included only the primary source.

Furthermore, sources were imbalanced in terms of gender during the reporting period. In most cases, men were approached/cited in their role of authorities/leaders/decision-makers, while women appeared in vox pops.

Quality-wise, Moldova 1 covered information in a neutral and impartial manner. There were no major deontological violations, except cases in which certain people were favored (representatives of Chisinau Mayor's Office) or minor cases of mixing facts with opinions. Thus, compared to previous monitoring periods (March and September 2020), the public station progressed in this regard.

Regarding debate and/or entertainment programs, Moldova 1 addressed several issues of public interest in them. The moderators and hosts of these programs were well prepared and had a neutral and impartial attitude towards all guests. The moderation process and the questions were correct and incisive, and journalists did not hesitate interrupting the guests when they went off the topic. None of the moderators favored or politicized any information and/or topic.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The editors and producers of Moldova 1 should focus on the quality of the content and less on the quantity of materials in newscasts. Some editions of the *Mesager* newscast during the reporting period had 27 materials, most of them without directly cited sources. Moldova 1

should have less news stories and reports, but they should be of better quality and more complex, with diverse sources and experts, in order to explain certain situations and/or events. Thus, the public television would avoid presenting information and events in a superficial manner.

- Moldova 1 reporters should give priority to the public interest – at the level of the country, not of the capital city – when they choose topics for newscasts. They should report from the site on all relevant facts, in an impartial manner and with verification of information. Given that Moldova 1 is a public media outlet – not “of the state,” “official,” or “municipal/of the capital city” (as it appeared during this monitoring period), – its journalists and employees should understand that they are serving the public and citizens from the entire country, who finance the station through the taxes they pay.
- Moldova 1 should give priority to the public interest, and only then to topicality. Public interest is not any statement by politicians and/or officials.
- The management of Moldova 1 should supervise its editorial content, so that it be in line with the mission of the public media – to cover the reality in a correct manner, without favoring or disfavoring any people, institutions, parties, or politicians.
- Moldova 1 should be more responsible to the gender equality of sources. The perpetuation of the tendency to prioritize male sources over female leads to the multiplication of existing gender stereotypes.
- Members of the Supervisory Board of the Public Institution Teleradio-Moldova Company (TRM), under Article 45 (Duties of the Supervisory Board) of the [Code of audiovisual media services of Moldova](#), and under Article 17 of the [Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Supervisory Board of the National Public Audiovisual Institution Teleradio-Moldova Company](#), should supervise the activity of Moldova 1 in order to realize its mission, and to analyze the content produced in order to propose relevant recommendations.