



report

2020



Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent



Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent

The Independent Journalism Center (IJC) was the first media organization to support journalists and media outlets in the Republic of Moldova. Their aim is to strengthen a free and viable press via projects that provide training in journalism and public relations, media campaigns, advocacy, research, and media education.



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Introduction

Year 2020 was one of great challenges but also one of ingenious adaptation for the team at the IJC. Under crisis conditions and with the need to social distance, we nevertheless continued doing what we have aimed to do since the founding of our organization: contribute through all our projects to the strengthening of independent media in Moldova.

What exactly did we do in 2020?

- We increased audiences and contributed to the production of quality journalistic material.
- We promoted robust access to information and defended the rights of journalists.
- We held the Broadcasting Council accountable.
- We supported quality journalism.
- We warned media consumers about the dangers of disinformation.
- We trained new messengers in critical thinking.

The efforts we made during this year of crisis have yielded positive outcomes that will keep us on the same path.

Best regards,

The team of the Independent Journalism Center

The IJC remained faithful in 2020 to the values and principles it has promoted since its founding. We further supported transparency, integrity, professional ethics, gender equality, and non-discrimination while always encouraging the observance of human rights.

2020




Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent

in 10 figures




146
journalists,
bloggers, vloggers, freelancers,
communication specialists, and
students were initiated in journalism
or taught new trends in producing
media content and more.




1
**White Paper
on the media**
was published for the first time in
Moldova in which we appreciated
the efforts of 9 media outlets that
remained faithful to the rules of
fair journalism.



131
**teachers
and professors**
developed their teaching skills
in Media Education.



2.800
**school and
university students**
became or continued to be
messengers for critical thinking.



1
journalists' Crisis Cell
was launched for the first time in
Moldova to unite the journalistic com-
munity and promote transparency and
healthy access to information of public
interest even in times of crisis.



3
**innovative tools for
the media market**
were created to help media
consumers find credible sourc-
es and information and cope
with the wave of propaganda
and disinformation: the pod-
cast cuMINTE, the Media Radar
application, and the T(V)E
Privește! platform



50+
legal consultations
were offered free of charge to
journalists and media outlets.



23 cases
were reported
when the rights of
journalists were restricted.



22.883
people
followed us on
5 Facebook pages.



520+
was the number
of times our material was
published or we were cited on
media outlets.

We increased audiences and contributed to the production of quality journalistic material

In 2020 we learned to adapt in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, and we supported media outlets by helping them increase their online audiences, their revenue from advertising, and the quality of their media products.

GRANTS FOR BUSINESSES: “MERCHANDISE” QUALITY JOURNALISM

At least four media outlets are more independent financially and more visible in the media market in Moldova. Locals, Wind, Știri Pozitive, and Observatorul de Nord became our partners after winning a [grant competition](#) in which 23 media outlets took part.

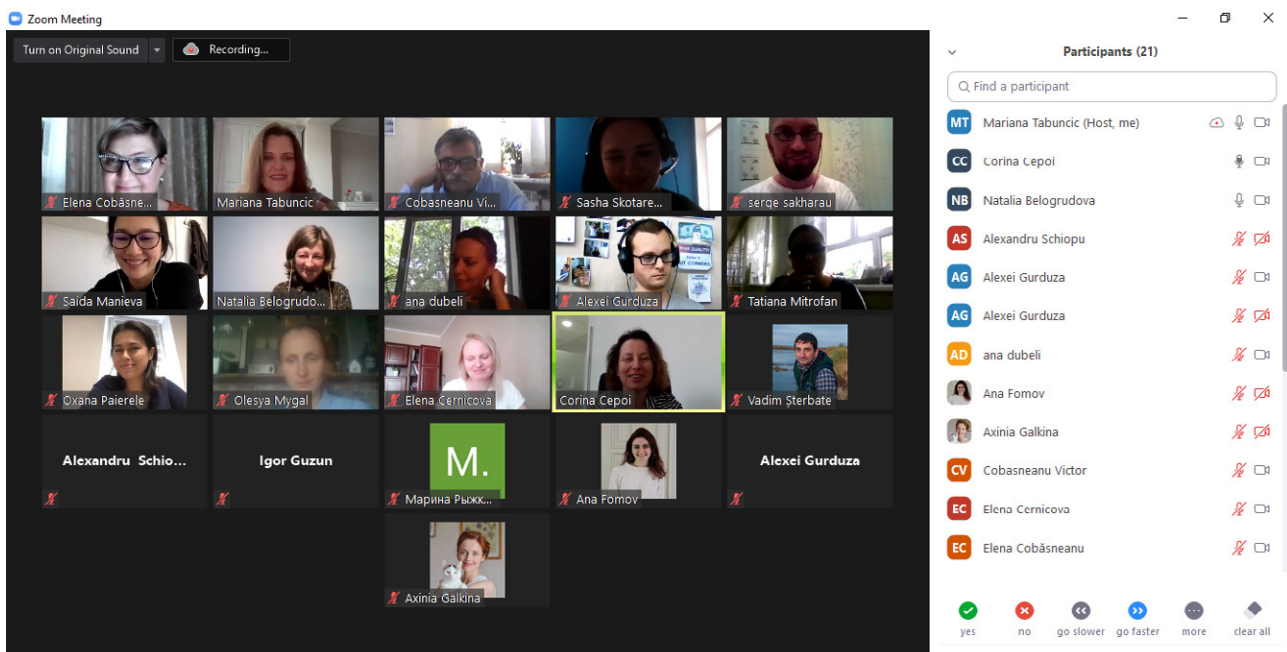
In the first stage, we selected 10 media outlets to participate in [training](#) by Kirill Artemenko, co-founder of the media company Bumaga in St. Petersburg, Russia. The history of Bumaga, which was created in 2012 and had an income of 500,000 euros in 2019, has certainly become a source of

inspiration for Moldovan journalists. The outlet creates quality content and identifies unique methods of monetization while always seeking to know its audience to meet the information needs of its public. Training helped participants review their approaches and improve their project ideas, and in the end, Locals, Wind, Știri Pozitive, and Observatorul de Nord convinced the jury that their ideas were worthy of implementation.

For seven months, journalists on the four teams worked hard to improve their online content and developed new strategies to promote it, established



Kirill Artemenko, co-founder of the company Bumaga of St. Petersburg, Russia training journalists to increase audiences. March 13–14, 2020



Media partners Locals, Observatorul de Nord, Wind, and Știri Pozitive shared their experiences increasing audiences and income. September 25, 2020

partnerships, and attracted additional financial resources to their outlets, thus becoming more competitive. They managed to do all this with remote guidance from Natalia Belogradova, a media expert from Russia, and Serge Sakharau, the founder and editor-in-chief of the Belarusian publication CityDog.by. They were in the editorial offices of the project partners virtually to share their experience with the 16 journalists and to offer them suggestions and recommendations for increasing their audiences according to the needs of each outlet.

Also virtually, on September 25 the four media

outlets had a [meeting](#) to exchange views on their collaboration throughout the year to increase their audiences and revenue and to improve content.

In 2020, five local media outlets—Albasat TV, Ziua de Azi, Nokta, Bas TV, and Observatorul de Nord—and five national outlets—Moldova.org, Locals, Ziarul de Gardă, Diez, and Batiscaf—received grants for multimedia packages that reflect topics of major public interest. All 10 IJC partners were guided by a mentor in the production of material, and the quality of their media products was periodically evaluated.

We helped civil society organizations convey their messages more effectively

In 2020, we continued providing support to communicators in several civil society organizations to disseminate their messages more effectively. In the [second](#) phase of the project for training and supporting nongovernment organization (NGO) communicators conducted online on from July 1 to 3, the 21 participants were guided by trainers Cristina Lupu, Sorina Ștefârță, and Ludmila Andronic in how to structure communication strategies and how to convey messages during crises. A special session on the presence of NGOs on social networks was moderated by Stela Roman. Training was followed by an in-house counseling program in which five organizations were assisted to develop or update their communication strategies: the Union for HIV Prevention and Risk Reduction, A.O. Baștina Frășinești, Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature, A.O. Afina, and A.O. Cimislîenii everywhere.

Of the five local media outlets, Albasat TV, Ziua de Azi, and Observatorul de Nord benefited financially following a grant competition launched by the IJC in August 2020 to implement a business plan. The partners were guided online by expert Serge Sakharau from Minsk to help their ideas take shape. The business program encouraged Ziua de Azi editorial staff to make live broadcasts (commercials) at public and private events. Albasat TV focused on

advertising articles and developed an extension of its website with local [announcements](#) as well as a new section [Photo-Video](#) to let viewers download high quality content for a fee. In its turn, Observatorul de Nord launched a new page in its newspaper and a new section on its website [Jobs in Soroca](#)—for job ads. Because they put their ideas to good use, the three partner outlets earned additional income and became more independent financially.

WE PROMOTED ROBUST ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND DEFENDED THE RIGHTS OF JOURNALISTS

In 2020, a year of great challenges for journalists and attempts by some authorities to impose limits on them, IJC further promoted transparency and whole-hearted access to information of public interest.

It was another year in which we “knocked” on the doors of state institutions to remind them of a draft law on access to information that was the result

efforts by the IJC and other media organizations. If Parliament would vote it in, it would simplify the work of journalists in the interests of citizens. It was also the year in which we searched for and found solutions for gaining access to information and the year in which we continued to “fight” for press freedom and for respect for the rights of our colleagues.

JOURNALISTS’ CRISIS CELL AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION: THE KEY TO TRANSPARENCY

The state of emergency proclaimed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic put the ingenuity of journalists to the test. Their access to public institutions became increasingly difficult, and the new restrictions limited their access to information while the lack of transparency on the part of the authorities became more and more pronounced. At the beginning of April, we decided that these obstacles could be overcome only through solidarity and launched the first [crisis cell](#) for journalists in Moldova in which we asked the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection to organize weekly, online press conferences where the media could ask questions and receive answers directly. After repeated [requests](#), the ministry responded to the initiative, and the first conference with the online



participation of journalists took place on May 1, 2020. Over the course of several months, the ministry organized such conferences weekly.

“PUBLIC INTEREST BEATS THE STATE OF EMERGENCY”

Traditionally on May 3 we launch [Press Freedom Days](#) to draw attention to the problems of the media. Because the Covid-19 pandemic was a pretext for many authorities to close their doors to journalists, on Press Freedom Days 2020 we bluntly proclaimed: “Public interest beats the state of emergency.” We drew the attention of state institutions to the fact that they must show greater openness to the media, ensure transparency in decision making, and facilitate access to information of public interest for journalists, even during pandemics.

In this context, we launched a petition to the authorities on the need to provide journalists with access to information of public interest. [The petition to Parliament and Government](#) was signed by over 500 people who joined our call. In response to the [IJC petition](#), government officials agreed that mechanisms to ensure access to information needed to be improved and said they plan to review the regulatory framework, “...in order to strengthen freedom of expression and prevent unjustified restrictions on access to information.”

Also on Press Freedom Days, we reminded the authorities that they must publish several types of information on their websites to facilitate the access of journalists, members of civil society, and citizens

to data of public interest. We “helped” them learn more about [the standards of proactive publication of information in times of crisis](#).

In order to highlight just how closed public institutions had become during the state of emergency and to make the authorities open up their relations with the press, we conducted an [online flashmob](#) with a reminder on Facebook that “[Public interest beats the state of emergency](#).” The problem of restricted access to information was also reported in the public space in a [cartoon](#) intensely promoted on social networks. Dozens of journalists and media consumers joined the campaign.



Protective equipment for journalists

The Covid-19 pandemic made us also turn our attention to health and care of our loved ones; masks and disinfectants were always at hand. Most journalists continued their work and managed to bring quality information into our homes. We set out to support them and distributed protective equipment to partner media outlets. In June, 12 local and national media outlets were given personal protective equipment (PPE) consisting of masks, gloves, and disinfectant. In December, we came to the aid of the outlets again supplementing their PPE and adding 100 vouchers for Covid-19 tests.

Moreover, we offered grants to independent media outlets Agora, Jurnal TV, Pro TV, and Ziarul de Gardă to continue to accurately and impartially cover current events, even during the crisis caused by Covid-19.

In 2021, we will continue supporting journalists so that they can do their jobs safely.



In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, IJC distributed protective equipment to partner media outlets.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA: JOURNALISTS TRAINED TO DEFEND THEIR RIGHTS; OFFICIALS TRAINED HOW TO RESPECT THEM

In October 2020 in partnership with the Legal Resource Center in Moldova, IJC [trained 10 journalists](#) on access to information and protection of personal data, encouraging them to use and defend the rights and freedoms essential for their jobs. In addition, at the same training session, we established collaboration between those 10 and 16 lawyers who strengthened their knowledge in media law and will be ready to help the journalists when they need professional assistance.

To improve journalists' interactions with civil servants, we continued [the training program carried out in partnership with the Academy of Public Administration](#) started in 2019. In 2020, we trained dozens of civil servants there and created [an online course](#) for the academy through which dozens of officials were trained in the right of media representatives to have access to information.

IJC: THE TRUSTED "LAWYER" FOR JOURNALISTS

In 2020, we continued providing assistance to conscientious journalists when they were sued or when their rights were violated. In five cases we provided free representation in court and at the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office.

Wiretapping telephone calls. In December 2019 after MP Chiril Motpan said that in addition to representatives of some NGOs, several journalists had been wiretapped during Democratic Party rule, the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation. The IJC continued providing assistance to colleagues summoned as witnesses.

Vladimir Moşneaga vs. Ziarul de Gardă, Unimedia.info, and Nordnews.md. In 2019, *Ziarul de Gardă* published an investigation into the properties of former prosecutor Vladimir Moşneaga. The article was also published by Unimedia.info and Nordnews.md. The former prosecutor sued the three media outlets claiming that he had been defamed. The case is at the Central Division of Chisinau Court.

The case of Radio Orhei vs. the Broadcasting Council initiated in 2018. The journalists sued the Broadcasting Council after it issued a license to a different radio station with the same name. After the court of first instance and the Court of Appeals rejected their case and appeal, in 2020 the Supreme Court of Justice declared Radio Orhei's appeal inadmissible. The applicants and their lawyer are considering whether to lodge a complaint with the European Court Human Rights.

RISE Moldova vs. Central Electoral Commission. Investigative reporters asked the commission for access to the original wealth declarations of candidates in the parliamentary election held in early 2019. The commission rejected the request on the grounds that those declarations contained personal data. The case is now at the Chisinau Court of Appeals.

Igor Dodon vs. Ziarul de Gardă. In January 2020, the newspaper *Ziarul de Gardă* published an article about the various vacations of the former president in several luxury resorts. Dodon sued alleging a violation of his right to respect for privacy and family life. The case is at the Central Division of Chisinau Court.

PROFESSIONAL LEGAL CONSULTATIONS: THE LIFELINE FOR JOURNALISTS IN DIFFICULTY

During 2020, we offered more than 50 free legal consultations to journalists and media outlets—a record for us. The need for professional legal assistance increased during the year mainly due to the pandemic which put new burdens on the shoulders of the media. For example, journalists faced numerous cases of restricted access to public events, illegal dismissals, abusive lawsuits by protagonists in journalistic articles, and limitations on access to information of public interest because authorities' refusals were routine.

We monitored the progress of each case and made sure that we did everything possible to help the media. Precisely for these reasons, in 2020 the legal assistance provided by the IJC was the lifeline for journalists in difficult situations.

Every Friday in 2020, legal advice was published in the regular column “Lawyer for the Media” in a total of 62 articles. We wanted to inform journalists about the relevant, useful solutions offered by the law for the problems daily faced by media representatives.

IJC: THE “RADAR” FOR PRESS FREEDOM IN MOLDOVA

We remained the “radar” for press freedom, daily monitoring whether the rights of journalists were respected. IJC and seven other partner media organizations reacted every time media representatives became the target of attacks or aggression. During 2020, we reported 23 cases of restricting the rights of journalists drawing the attention of civil society and of the diplomatic corps accredited in Chisinau to issues that threaten press freedom. This helped to increase community support and put pressure on the authorities to investigate abuses and combat such practices.

In order to offer access to current information on media legislation, IJC launched six editions of its legislative bulletin in Romanian and Russian. In addition to legislative news, the bulletins also contain the decisions of the Broadcasting Council and of the European Court of Human Rights targeting journalists and media outlets. In particular, these bulletins helped inform media representatives and media consumers about legal realities that directly concern them and were extremely useful for practicing lawyers trained to defend the rights and interests of journalists.

CRITICAL ASPECTS FOR THE MEDIA HIGHLIGHTED BY THE IJC

In order to know the real state of media organizations and where they are heading, in February the IJC compiled its annual [Index on the Situation of the Media in Moldova](#)

(Moldovan Press Status Index) for 2019. The report reflects the actual situation of the media and highlights critical issues that need to be dealt with.

We held the broadcasting council accountable

One of the objectives set by the IJC for 2020 was to hold the Broadcasting Council accountable; with the launch of the [T\(V\)E Privește! platform](#) in July, the council was obliged to adopt a more responsible attitude towards media consumers.

T(V)E Privește! or a “click” away from the Broadcasting Council

”

Have you ever had the feeling that your radio or TV station offers you biased information that discriminates or misinforms you or promotes violence or uses vulgar language? Have you felt frustrated that you could not oppose these phenomena?



WHAT IS T(V)E PRIVEȘTE!?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, that is why we launched the T(V)E Privește! platform. Specifically, it is a unique tool in Moldova through which citizens can report when radio and TV stations broadcast content inconsistent with journalism deontology, ethics and relevant legislation. All that viewers or listeners have to do is enter details about the station and the program where they noted alleged violations on a special form, and after thorough verification, the IJC team will turn those complaints into petitions to the Broadcasting Council.

Through this tool, the IJC aims to increase the involvement of media consumers in monitoring media content as well as the accountability of the Broadcasting Council. In the first six months since

the launch of T(V)E Privește!, we received 50 complaints from citizens about numerous violations from films with gratuitous violent or erotic scenes or insulting language to the lack of pluralism of opinion and hidden political advertising. Based on the complaints, we sent 20 petitions to the Broadcasting Council. In several cases, the authority imposed sanctions.

The platform was especially useful before the presidential election in the autumn of 2020. Then too, the IJC turned complaints into petitions to the Broadcasting Council to discipline outlets that, as in the past, were biased toward political interest groups and neglected the principles of quality journalism. Again, the goal was to hold the council accountable.

We supported quality journalism in our 26th year

Even though the pandemic imposed restrictions in 2020, we continued to support quality journalism by offering students and novice and experienced journalists opportunities to develop their professional skills. Throughout the year, we made courses at the School of Advanced Journalism (SAJ) open to all those interested and conducted information and training sessions with the participation of experts from abroad.

THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED JOURNALISM: ONLINE, BUT OPEN

For the SAJ launched in 2006 and in its 15th year, 2020 brought great changes and adaptations as a result of the pandemic. We reorganized and rethought the activities planned for 2020 and adjusted to the new reality. Starting in March, all classes were online. We also used a hybrid model (online and offline), respecting the rules imposed by the epidemiological situation including social distancing.

SAJ managed to complete the curriculum planned for 2020. The 8 students in the 14th class

attended 34 courses. They learned news writing techniques and the meaning of mobile and investigative journalism; they practiced writing material on social, economic, and political issues; and they learned about the management of a media outlet, about entrepreneurship, and how to launch a start-up. We continued to offer the new courses Blogging, Vlogging, Mobile Journalism (MoJo), Visual Journalism, Social Media Marketing, Entrepreneurship and Innovative Journalism Business Models, Media Startups, Digital Storytelling.



14th class, at the beginning of the year of studies, with Alex Nedeia, investigative journalist in Romania. September 2020

In May and June, the program and strategy of the SAJ were evaluated by Laura Kelly, an assistant professor at the American University in Bulgaria in the Department of Journalism and Communication.

The students had internships in several media outlets in Moldova (Agora, RISE Moldova, Oameni și Kilometri, Sănătate Info, Economica, Moldova9.md, Privesc.eu). Throughout the year, over 20 articles by SAJ students were published in Moldovan media.

Six new students were accepted in September 2020 as the 15th SAJ class. As part of the admission and promotion campaign, in February the SAJ organized Open Door Day, an event attended by dozens of potential students; in July a similar event was held online.

In 2020, we continued to open SAJ courses to all those interested in journalism, an initiative launched in 2019. At least 60 people—some from the diaspora—attended including reporters, bloggers, vloggers, freelancers, students, NGO managers, communication and public relations specialists,

and artists passionate about *string art*. The courses with the largest audiences of non-SAJ students were: Podcasting, Vlogging, Video Editing, and Cultivating the Romanian language. It is noteworthy that several media professionals showed an interest in our courses.

Extra-curricular activities. At the end of the year, the students visited the studios of radio and TV stations in Chisinau as part of the courses TV Journalism and News and Reporting. To facilitate online teaching, in October we organized training in online teaching tools for 14 SAJ trainers with IT expert Vitalie Eșanu. They learned to use Zoom and Google classroom platforms and applied their knowledge to their SAJ courses.

Accomplishments. In 2020, former SAJ students were prominent in the country's media. Vlada Ciobanu and Natalia Sergheev and SAJ trainer Victoria Colesnic were among the best journalists of the year honored at the 2020 Press Club Gala, and SAJ trainer and photojournalist Nicolae Pojoga also received the Excellence Award.



Kirill Artemenko, co-founder of the company Bumaga of St. Petersburg, Russia sharing his experiences running a media business with journalists. March 12, 2020

QUALITY IN JOURNALISM UNWAVERING DURING THE PANDEMIC

A few days before the state health emergency was established in March, we met in Chisinau with Kirill Artemenko, co-founder of the media company Bumaga in St. Petersburg, Russia. During the informal [meeting](#), the expert shared his experiences in successfully running a media business.

In order to meet the new challenges, starting in April we adapted our training to online formats. We conducted 41 online training programs and individual consultations for 23 journalists from the local media outlets Albasat TV, Ziua de Azi, Nokta, Bas TV, and Observatorul de Nord. Serge Sakharau, founder and editor-in-chief of CityDog.by in Belarus and social media managers Anastasia Borema at Bihus.INFO Ukraine and Cătălin Bindea and Cristiana Andrei from Romania taught journalists how to better plan online content, how to manage a media outlet during a pandemic, how to implement a business plan, and how to increase their audiences.

In 2020, we also supported photojournalists encouraging them to participate in various international photography competitions to highlight their

“If you respect your reader, he begins to love you and to feel a part of what you do.”

Kirill Artemenko, co-founder of the company Bumaga

creations. In November, we invited 12 photojournalists to discover the art of photography through the prism of the World Press Photo exhibition during online [training](#).

Together with Georgian photographer Daro Sulakauri whose works have been published in National Geographic, *New York Times*, Forbes, GEO Magazine, *Der Spiegel*, Mother Jones, *Sunday Times*, The Economist, Bloomberg News, and *die Zeit*, the participants discovered the hidden skills in a photographer’s work, how to discover amazing photographic stories, and how to present them to a global audience.

WORLD PRESS PHOTO EXHIBITION IN CHISINAU AGAIN

The pandemic was not an obstacle for the world's most prestigious photographic exhibition, World Press Photo, [to come](#) to Chisinau for the fourth consecutive year. Traditionally organized at the National Museum of History, from November 18 to December 9 the exhibition attracted over [1,300](#) visual art lovers eager to discover the impressive stories behind 140 winning photos capturing the realities of 2019. Images expressing joy, pain, compassion, despair and hope enthralled the audience teaching them to appreciate and discover the value of a photograph which can say more than a thousand words.



The National Museum of History hosted the fourth edition of the World Press Photo exhibition. November 18–December 9, 2020



JURNALIȘTII ANULUI 2020
Ediția a 26-a

Gala Anuală a Clubului de Presă

Best Journalists of the Year at the 2020 Press Club Gala in online format. December 23, 2020

ANNUAL PRESS CLUB GALA THE “BEST JOURNALISTS OF THE YEAR”: IN TIMES OF CRISIS, ANNOUNCED FROM ... THE KITCHEN

Traditionally, at the end of every year we award the Best Journalists of the Year at the Annual Gala of the Press Club. Because the pandemic had not gone away by the end of the year, we put our imagination to use again and found a format that, on the one hand, would maintain suspense and interest, and on the other provide security for all participants.

We met again in virtual space for this unique [event](#) where the winners were announced from the kitchen while we were making chicken soup. They were chosen from among the journalists who participated in a [competition](#). The 69 articles submitted were initially judged by experts and were then analyzed by the IJC Administrative Council and the Founders' Assembly. In 2020, we awarded 11 prizes in 8 categories as well as 6 special prizes. Because this year was special and really put journalists to the test, we decided to offer an “apple” for the widest coverage of Covid-19.

- **Extensive coverage of the Covid-19 theme**
Violeta Colesnic,
Report.md and Sanatateinfo.md
- **Podcast/audio report**
Natalia Sergheev and Victoria Colesnic,
“I’m OK” [Sunt Bine] podcast

- **Online report**
Moldova.org
- **Video report**
Felicia Crețu, *CU SENS*
People and kilometers [Oameni și Kilometri]
Viorica Tătaru and Andrei Captarenco, *TV8*
- **Longread**
Alexandra Batanova, *NewsMaker*
- **Opinion-editorial**
Stela Untilă, *NewsMaker*
- **Photography**
Nadejda Roșcovanu, *Jurnal.md*
- **Investigation**
RISE Moldova
Victor Moșneag, *Ziarul de Gardă*

Special prizes:

- **Best debut of the year: CU SENS**
- **Most promising journalist of the year: Georgeta Carasiucenco, *Moldova.org***
- **For active coverage of topics from the left bank of the Dniester: “Asphalt of Moldova, between two banks” *Jurnal TV***
- **Best blog: Vlada Ciobanu**
- **Event of the year: AGORA**
- **Excellence award: Nicolae Pojoga**

White Paper on the Media

In order to appreciate media outlets that do their work with integrity, in May 2020 we launched the [White Paper on the Moldovan Media](#) to illustrate the success stories of nine local and national media outlets: Agora, Journalistic Investigation Center, Moldova.org, *NewsMaker*, *Observatorul de Nord*, RISE Moldova, *SP Bălți*, TV8, and *Ziarul de Gardă*. Over the years, despite all their difficulties, these outlets have managed to develop and publish quality journalism.



MEDIA AZI PORTAL AND HEALTH CRISIS IN RELATION TO JOURNALISTS

The coronavirus pandemic also affected the editorial agenda of Media Azi. At the onset of the state of emergency, we helped increase the level of professional training for the journalistic community as we were the only local source providing them with tools and resources useful in reporting about Covid-19, tips about safety in fieldwork and work at home, suggestions on the financial challenges posed by the pandemic, and guidance on maintaining mental health during crises. In fact, the most-read articles on our website in 2020 were those listing useful resources to write about the pandemic and the ethical aspects of journalism during Covid-19. At the same time, using articles, comments, programs, and photos on networks we showed how various outlets were

able to overcome the challenges generated by the pandemic.

We kept our finger on the pulse of other events in the media aiming to increase citizens' awareness of the impact of certain phenomena on this market and to urge the authorities to act. We explained clearly and in detail the situation regarding digitalization, media-related initiatives that had reached Parliament, legislative changes, and the decisions of the Broadcasting Council, especially its performance during the campaign for president. We continued illustrating hot topics and problematic situations for the media in Media Azi cartoons, an accessible way to make our message better heard and understood.

MEDIA AZI PROGRAM AND THE MOST RELEVANT TOPICS FOR THE MEDIA COMMUNITY

We issued new editions of the Media Azi program for both the media community and the general public almost every two weeks. Together with guest media experts and researchers, fellow journalists, and authorities, we discussed relevant issues from difficulties in accessing information and databases

to flaws in ensuring freedom of expression, among others. All editions can be seen on [Media-azi.md](https://www.media-azi.md), [Moldova-azi.md](https://www.moldova-azi.md), as well as on the [YouTube channel of the IJC](#).

The foreign public was alerted to media events in the monthly newsletter “Moldova Media News.”

THE MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS UNDER THE IJC MAGNIFYING GLASS DURING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

In the autumn of 2020 Moldova held a presidential election during the health crisis. We again monitored how 10 TV stations covered electoral events from candidates’ promises to polls that predicted winners and losers. We issued six reports pointing out the worst violations committed and urging journalists to abide by the Journalist’s Code of Ethics and not by an editorial policy imposed by a political group.

For the first time in Moldova, both [during the campaign](#) for president and [before it](#), we monitored the behavior of journalists and media outlets on the social network Facebook. In three reports the IJC recommended, among other things,

respecting ethical standards on Facebook and addressing the status of social networks in the Journalist’s Code of Ethics taking into account the opportunities and dangers of the online environment.

In 2020, the [IJC also found](#) that topics about the Transnistrian settlement and the Chisinau-Tiraspol relationship were not a priority for the 10 outlets on both banks of the Dniester they monitored for several weeks. The IJC urged them to become more actively involved in the coverage of relations by presenting realities accurately and impartially and giving voice to all parties involved in the negotiations.

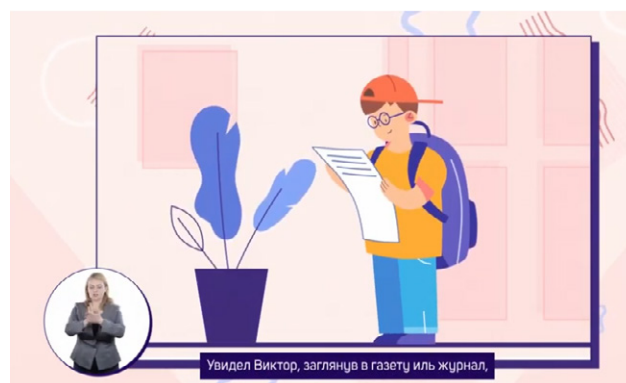
We warned media consumers about the dangers of disinformation

MEDIACRITICA PORTAL: A POINT OF REFERENCE DURING THE INFODEMIC

In the context of the infodemic in Moldova, we understood how important it is for our community to expose fake news and manipulation about Covid-19, and we offered articles to the public daily that exposed media disinformation and manipulation on social networks to help them navigate through the avalanche of information. Thus, in 2020, the Mediacritica portal doubled its number of views and became a source of reference.

By posting examples of news written in violation of the Journalist's Code of Ethics and other self-regulation tools as well as analyses by media experts and researchers, we contributed on the one hand to the development of critical thinking among media consumers while on the other hand we set out to focus the attention of journalists on the standards for our profession. In the sections "Media in the spotlight" and "Filter information," we analyzed political topics; social issues; and articles that promoted stereotypes, discrimination, gender imbalance, and deviations from the protection of minors.

One of the unique products launched by Mediacritica in 2020 was the online interactive game "Island of Truth" (*Insula Adevărului*) for primary school students to test their knowledge of media education, their critical thinking, and their ability to identify accurate information even in early childhood. Based on a story about an imaginary island, children take on the role of a journalist and follow a



route with 10 questions that challenge them to deal with disinformation and fake news.

Last year, we set out to talk to children, teenagers, and their parents about information dangers in the media and the online environment through three animations. [Victoriaș](#) is an imaginary character who has fallen into the trap of believing several fake news stories on radio and television and online. Who helps him understand how things really are? His grandfather! Victoriaș' story is a lesson for all media consumers that urges them to think, select, and analyze information before believing it.

In [two other animations](#), we approached the rules of conduct online using accessible language and reviewed the questions that each of us must ask ourselves when getting information from a website. Animations have become a useful source for school teachers of the optional course Media Education.

TELERADIO-MOLDOVA AND 11 OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF THE IJC

In 2020, we monitored 12 television stations and Internet portals with national coverage in Romanian and Russian analyzing how they informed the public about the most important events of the year, especially whether they had committed any ethical violations. We found that some journalists continue to mix facts and opinions in their news items and to ignore the obligation to offer the right to reply to protagonists. In addition, some of the outlets base their agendas on their political affiliations. Unlike in previous years, this time we monitored public television station Moldova 1 separately and found that it was no exception in this regard as in several cases its content was adjusted to fit the government agenda.

Based on the violations identified, we highlighted

the worst of them using infographics and videos, and in order to reach a wider audience with this information, we collaborated with vlogger Dorin Galben. In several editions of his program “*Un show de doi galbeni*,” the vlogger spoke to his followers about, “what you will not hear or see on most television stations,” noting in particular the fact that some of the outlets monitored favored the authorities.

After launching several reports, we hosted a discussion among representatives of these media outlets and members of the Press Council and the Broadcasting Council in which we pointed out the main problems in an attempt to identify the best solutions.

PODCAST CUMINTE: FILTER WITH A CLEAR MIND!

Since September 2020, the IJC has helped its followers filter the information they consume on podcasts, a newer but increasingly popular format in Moldova. The cuMINTE podcast appears twice a month and is the first and only podcast in the country that explains media disinformation, manipulation techniques, and fake news. In each edition, journalists, media researchers, and experts analyze and explain how facts are interpreted, why a certain statement may not be the ultimate truth, why media education is crucial, and how not to be manipulated by the information avalanche of our times. Unmasking fake news and manipulation in the media is the focus of the top-notch specialists who offer detailed and easy-to-understand explanations.

In the first 10 editions, podcast listeners learned about netiquette, clickbait, trolling, online harassment, fake coronavirus news, how to get information on the eve of an election, how to distinguish fact from opinion, and why teaching media education in schools is crucial today. In fact, the edition about bullying, cyberbullying, and child safety online enjoyed the greatest popularity in 2020.



Created as a platform especially for educating the younger generation, our podcast is also valuable for people with visual impairments for whom audio products are the most accessible forms of learning. We are present on the most important podcasting platforms and will keep launching new editions on relevant topics in 2021.

MEDIA RADAR AND THE CREDIBILITY OF MEDIA PORTALS

Media Radar is another tool in the IJC's efforts to help media consumers understand the risks of disinformation and how to avoid it by telling them just how credible the portals from which they get information are. This mobile phone application, the only one of its kind in Moldova, monitors and evaluates the credibility of dozens of news websites and ranks them on a credibility index. With the Media Radar app, consumers get notifications when websites change their scores and can also choose to be notified about their favorite websites only. The aim is to help media consumers navigate more easily through the quantities of information



provided daily by online media resources and to encourage media outlets to be transparent, to adhere to professional and ethical standards, and to provide quality content.

FIFTH POWER MEDIA HACKATHON: THE POWER OF CRITICAL THINKING

The Covid-19 pandemic turned many of our plans upside down in 2020; however, because good work must continue, we took a deep breath and worked hard to adapt to the new circumstances and in the

end realized that a media hackathon can be organized just as effectively in an online format. For the sixth successive year, we challenged all those passionate about innovation and full of creative energy



Members of the jury announce the winning teams in the Fifth Power Media Hackathon "Media Education: Analyze, Raise Awareness, Create." August 7–9, 2020

to participate in the [Fifth Power Media Hackathon](#) with the theme “Media Education: Analyze, Raise Awareness, Create.” Nine teams comprising 38 participants tested their creativity in designing applications and tools to promote and develop critical thinking. After three inspiring days, the jury selected three winning teams each of which was awarded \$4,250 US to make their ideas take shape. In 2021, their tools will be finalized and made available in the optional course Media Education and also to the general public.

Evrica develops critical thinking in students and teachers through games, quizzes, and exercises.

Tinerii Abraziv Online explains the topics in the Media Education textbook in a form accessible to students.

Between the Lines contains various tools designed to stimulate the critical thinking of students using an interactive platform.

Stay tuned to see how the winning projects progress!

GRANTS FOR CAMPAIGNS AGAINST DISINFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA IN THE MEDIA

In 2020, we continued to support media outlets carrying out campaigns against disinformation and propaganda. In a [contest](#) at the end of 2019, we selected outlets Cu Sens and Ager Media to verify and dissect false, truncated, and manipulative statements by officials, to analyze false information distributed to the public, and to shed more “light” on the social network Ok.ru. In addition to helping media consumers “separate the wheat from the chaff,” their campaigns allowed the outlets to increase their audiences and visibility in the media market in Moldova.

In a [contest](#) at the end of 2020, we chose two new outlets to fight propaganda and disinformation in the media during 2021. The outlet Tuk.md from Taraclia will increase the level of critical thinking among Russian speakers in the region by exposing falsehoods, manipulation, and propaganda, and the film production studio Deleu Delev Film will make the documentary film “#FAKENEWS: A small electoral campaign manual” to expose the mechanisms for spreading fake news, rumors, and conspiracy theories.

We trained new messengers for critical thinking

The ability to analyze information critically became even more necessary and relevant in 2020. Despite the circumstances and new challenges, we promoted the thoughtful consumption of information, and teachers and students continued their media education lessons.

MEDIA EDUCATION IN MORE AND MORE SCHOOLS

In the academic year 2020–2021, 74 educators have been teaching this optional subject to almost 2,500 students in 65 schools throughout Moldova. This is the fourth year in which Media Education has been taught in Moldovan schools and the second year in which this course has been offered in primary, middle, and high schools. The geographical distribution includes 24 districts and municipalities: Chisinau, Rezina, Hincesti, Ialoveni, Anenii Noi, Sangerei, Soroca, Drochia, Telenesti, Straseni, Orhei,

Calarasi, Criuleni, Falesti, Basarabeasca, Glodeni, Cahul, Causeni, Floresti, Balti municipality, Ung-heni, Comrat municipality, Taraclia, Grigoriopol, Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia, and the Transnistrian region.

During 2020, we offered 7 training sessions for trainers both offline and online: 1 for 23 primary school teachers and 3 for middle and 3 for high school teachers for a total of 108 (102 women and 6



Primary school teachers from the south of Moldova improving their skills in teaching Media Education. February 14–16, 2020, Cahul

”

The Media Education course helps us develop children’s critical thinking skills. We teach them how to distinguish between true and false, between truthful information and disinformation. These competencies are also necessary for us, the teachers, for personal and professional development.”

Tatiana Terzi, Gymnasium of Sofievca Village, Comrat District

”

Students spend a lot of time online, so they should learn to use media products rationally for their personal development. After completing the training, I asked the administration of the lyceum where I work to promote media education in our institution so as to train responsible media consumers in critical thinking.”

Olga Oprea, Mihai Eminescu Lyceum, Sipoteni Village, Calarasi District

men). The teachers teach in Romanian and Russian in different regions of the country and developed skills to influence students’ media awareness.

A new cycle of lessons on media education moderated by journalist Dumitru Stoianov developed better media skills in 205 students in 4 schools teaching in Russian. The students from several universities in Moldova were also involved in

discussions about disinformation and the quality of information they consume with journalist Diana Raileanu, media researcher Aneta Gonța, and Viorica Zaharia, the president of the Press Council. The four media education workshops (two offline and two online) were attended by a total of 130 students from the University of European Studies, Alecu Russo State University in Balti, the Technical University of Moldova, and the Academy of Economic Studies.



Media Education platform and the “tools” for critical thinking

For teachers, students, and all consumers of information who want to keep up with media innovations and be vigilant, the [Media Education](#) platform remained an important resource—a portfolio of new tools, reference articles, quizzes, and video material. Here you can also find all the resources for teaching and learning the Media Education course.

“MEDIA EDUCATION: A PRIORITY IN MY SCHOOL”

EDUCAȚIE
PENTRU
medi@

For the first time, we launched the contest “Media Education: a priority in my school” in pre-university educational institutions teaching Media Education in at least one educational level in 2020–2021. In the first stage, we [designated](#) 12 winners from the 20 schools participating. The institutions selected have six months and a grant of 300 euros to carry out media education activities such as debates; video contests; or creating school blogs, flashmobs, or quizzes to encourage teachers to educate students in critical thinking.



The first edition of the contest “Media Education: a priority at my school.”

MEDIA EDUCATION WEEK, AN IJC TRADITION

Media Education Week (MEW) has already become a tradition at IJC. [The third edition](#) of MEW was held from October 19 to 25 and involved over 1,200 students and teachers in debates; public lessons; round tables; meetings with parents; contests; and exhibitions of posters, photos, games, quizzes, and online safety lessons.

In the context of this event, we announced poster and photo competitions for students on the topic “I in the media world” for primary school students, and a video competition on the topic “Disinformation during the pandemic” for middle and high school students. In total, we received 75 entries from 106 students. In two online award events, seven prizes [were given](#) to primary school students or classes and six went to middle and high school participants. Before the results were announced, Natalia Gribineț, head of the Media Education program at the Youth Media Center, offered over 40 participants tips for making impactful photos, posters, or videos.



Media Education Week, third edition.
October–November 2020

IJC Founding Assembly

- Alexandru Canțir
- Angela Sîrbu
- Nicolae Negru

Members of IJC Board

- Mariana Rață
- Ana Gherciu
- Galina Vasiliev
- Ilie Chirtoacă

- Ion Preașca
- Tatiana Savva
- Ruslan Mihalevschi

IJC Team 2020

Nadine Gogu	<i>Executive Director, IJC</i>
Anastasia Nani	<i>Deputy Director, IJC</i>
Ina Grejdeanu	<i>Strategic Development Director, IJC</i>
Maia Metaxa/Aneta Gonța	<i>Director, School of Advanced Journalism</i>
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Cristina Zavatin	<i>Program Coordinator, Media Campaigns and Publications Program</i>
Vasile Gancev	<i>Reporter, www.media-azi.md, Media Campaigns and Publications Program</i>
Denis Tkaci	<i>Camerman / Image Editor, Media Campaigns and Publications Program</i>
Andrei Rusu/Natalia Chivriga	<i>Social Networks Manager</i>
Tatiana Corai	<i>Editor</i>
Cristina Durnea/Zinaida Gheață	<i>Lawyer, Media Policies, Law, and Research Program</i>
Eugenia Garbuz/Rita Rusu	<i>Financial Director</i>
Elena Grigor	<i>Accountant</i>
Vasile Lașco	<i>Driver-Administrator</i>

Projects Implemented in 2020 and Donors/Partners

- 1. “Media Enabling Democracy, Inclusion and Accountability in Moldova (MEDIA-M)”** funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom, implemented by Internews in Moldova. Activities: training programs for journalists; promoting media education; grants for new opportunities; media monitoring and research. Implementation period: May 2017–April 2022.
- 2. “Strengthening media education skills”** funded by Deutsche Welle Akademie and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany. Activities: contests for students organized for Media Education Week, training programs for teachers, promoting Media Education in schools in Moldova by organizing the contest “Media Education - a priority in my school”. Implementation period: March–November 2020.
- 3. World Press Photo Exhibition** organized in Chisinau with the financial support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Implementation period: September–December 2020.
- 4. “Strengthening Independent Media in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia”** implemented by IJC and Internews. Activities: producing national, local, and regional multimedia packages. Implementation period: November 2016–December 2020.
- 5. “Audience Understanding and Digital Support (AUDS)”** funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency through Internews. Activities: training of representatives of media outlets who want to increase their audiences; online consultations for four media partners; small grants for audience growth provided to four media outlets to develop tools and strategies for growing their online audiences. Implementation period: January–November 2020.
- 6. “Support for Independent Russian-Language Media Outlets and Education for Media Efforts”** funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Activities: training Russian-speaking teachers from the northern and southern districts of Moldova including from the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia in education for media; education for media lessons for the students from the same regions and Chisinau. Implementation period: 1 September 2019–1 May 2021.
- 7. “Support for Education for Media Activities in Moldova to Fight Misinformation”** funded by the US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova, implemented in partnership with Internews in Moldova. Activities: launching a video and a theatre play promoting critical thinking. Implementation period: 15 November 2019–28 May 2021.
- 8. “Strengthening Civil Society by Supporting the Professional Growth of Communicators in Civil Society Organizations”** funded by the Soros Foundation-Moldova. Activities: training of civil society representatives in charge of communications and in-house consulting programs to develop/update the communication strategies of organizations. Implementation period: 1 June 2020–31 January 2021.
- 9. “Strengthening Media Capacity to Produce High-Quality, Local, Creative, and Informational Content”** funded by the US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova. Activities: training students at the School of Advanced Journalism and interested parties who joined classes additionally. Implementation period: 1 July 2019–1 July 2021.
- 10. “Strategic Communication and Support for the Media in Moldova”** funded by the European Union. Activities: media education lessons; managing a platform for reporting violations by broadcasters.
- 11. “Monitoring social networks during elections”** funded by the US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova. Activities: monitoring the behavior of

journalists and media institutions on the Facebook social network as well as other monitoring activities. Implementation period: July 2020–January 2021.

- 12. Media monitoring activities** financially supported by the OSCE Mission. Activities: monitoring of ten media outlets on both banks of Nistru River. Implementation period: May–November 2020.
- 13. “Innovative media education tools for well-informed citizens”** funded by the Embassy of Finland in Bucharest. Activities: producing podcasts; maintaining the T(V)E Priveste! Platform; production and distribution of high-quality, diverse content to promote media literacy and resistance to misinformation through the Medi critica portal. Implementation period: 1 July 2020–30 June 2021.
- 14. “The crisis cell for journalists: increase the transparency and promote robust access to information”** supported by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. Activities: notification about cases restricting press rights, launching a petition on access to information of public interest, conducting a campaign promoting transparency within institutions, launching a document on standards for the proactive publication of information of public interest. Implementation period: 21 April–15 June 2020.
- 15. “Support for independent media institutions in response to the crisis caused by Covid-19”** funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Activities: grants offered to independent media institutions for accurate, balanced reporting on current events during the crisis caused by Covid-19. Implementation period: June–December 2020.
- 16. The Vibrant Information Barometer (VIBE) 2020**, funded by IREX. Implementation period: April–June 2020.

2020 Financial Statement

PROJECTS	2020				
	Balance 2019	Received	Spent	Balance	Funding
	\$	\$	\$	\$	
Strengthening media education skills	-	36 532	34 418	2 114	Deutsche Welle Akademie / Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
Organization of World Press Photo Exhibition 2020	-	16 259	12 145	4 114	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Chisinau
Support for Independent Russian-Language Media Outlets and Education for Media Efforts	1 860	22 259	21 624	2 495	Internews / Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Media monitoring activities	-	15 180	18 744	-3 564	OSCE Mission
Innovative media education tools for well-informed citizens	-	23 469	15 332	8 137	Embassy of Finland in Bucharest
The crisis cell for journalists: increase the transparency and promote robust access to information	-	4 402	4 402	-	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
Moldovan-German Project 'Europe in Sight: The Moldovan-German Journalist Network Goes Online!'	-	1 554	1 554	-	Germany's Federal Foreign Office
Support for independent media institutions in response to the crisis caused by Covid-19	-	242 927	240 119	2 808	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
Strategic Communication and Support for the Media in Moldova		14 043	14 043	-	European Union
Audience Understanding and Digital Support (AUDS)	-1 403	71 909	70 789	-283	Internews / Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

PROJECTS	2020				
	Balance 2019	Received	Spent	Balance	Funding
	\$	\$	\$	\$	
Media Enabling Democracy, Inclusion and Accountability in Moldova (MEDIA-M)	-8 473	234 202	213 151	12 578	Internews / United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / UK Aid
Strengthening Independent Media in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia	-12 550	157 705	145 655	-500	Internews
Support for Education for Media Activities in Moldova to Fight Misinformation	-2 220	13 054	9 913	922	Internews / US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova
Strengthening Civil Society by Supporting the Professional Growth of Communicators in Civil Society Organizations	-	11 800	11 800	-	Soros Foundation-Moldova
Strengthening Media Capacity to Produce High-Quality, Local, Creative and Informational Content	5 700	37 581	31 518	11 763	US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova
Monitoring social networks during elections	-	28 000	20 313	7 687	US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova
The Vibrant Information Barometer (VIBE) 2020	-	4 722	4 722	-	IREX
Video services / Conduct of events at the Media HUB	-	335	335	-	Services provided by IJC
Percentage Designation 2%	325	98	-	423	Ministry of Finance
Reserve Fund	69 618	45 190	28 879	85 929	IJC Funds
TOTAL	52 857	981 222	899 457	134 622	



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