



**Monitoring Report**

**Media Coverage of the Transdniestrian Settlement Process**

**Chisinau, 2020**

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## Methodology

This monitoring report analyzes the ways in which the Transdnestrian settlement process is covered in the media in order to determine the extent to which the various aspects of relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol are mirrored, which issues are the most prominent, and whether there are significant variations in *who* and *what* is covered and *how* it is done.

**Objectives:** To assess the ability of the media to cover relevant topics in a professional manner and to encourage the media to cover these topics correctly and responsibly, taking into account professional ethics and standards.

**Monitoring period:** 1-30 April 2020 and 1-30 June 2020

**Media outlets selection criteria:**

- ✓ form of ownership (public and private)
- ✓ area of coverage / online presence
- ✓ audience
- ✓ language (Russian and Romanian)

**List of monitored media outlets:**

National TV stations: *Moldova 1*, *Jurnal TV*, *NTV-Moldova*

Left bank of Dniestr River TV stations: *Pervyy Pridnestrovskiy [First Transdnestrian Channel]*, *TSV [Free Choice Television]*

Online: *Deschide.md*, *Unimedia.md*, *Agora.md*, *Newsmaker.md*, *Novosti PMR [News of PMR]*

**Object of monitoring:** Analysis covered one daily newscast in prime time on each TV station and the entire content of online media, focusing on materials related to the negotiation process and relations between the two banks of the Dniester.

The methodology is based on the analysis of quantitative indicators, such as the frequency and size of materials, the number of protagonists and sources of information, and the evaluation of qualitative indicators – media impartiality, accuracy, and balance of sources.

The materials were analyzed from the perspective of their placement on the page/in the newscast, the space allocated, journalistic genres, accents, topics covered, protagonists/sources, and gender.

Quantitative indicators measured:

- ✓ Number of relevant materials disaggregated by journalistic genre
- ✓ Number of relevant materials disaggregated by the size of materials
- ✓ Number of relevant materials disaggregated by the topic covered
- ✓ Number of relevant materials with primary or secondary accent
- ✓ Number of sources/protagonists cited or mentioned, disaggregated by sex

Qualitative indicators measured:

- ✓ Tone of presentation of protagonists/sources (neutral, positive, negative)
- ✓ Balance of sources in controversial materials (balanced, unbalanced)
- ✓ Tendentiousness/Separation of facts from opinion

## Abbreviations

CPA	Central public administration, Chisinau
RPA	Left bank of Dniestr River public administration, Tiraspol
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
JCC	Joint Control Commission
WHO	World Health Organization
RPO	Reintegration Policies Bureau
RoM	Republic of Moldova

## **General trends**

In April and June 2020, topics related to the Transdniestrian settlement process and the realities on both banks of the Dniester were not a priority for most national media subjected to monitoring. Overall, the ten media outlets published 364 materials relevant to this monitoring, and about half of them (186) were published by three Transdniestrian media.

The vast majority of these materials were news reports, and online media sometimes published other types of materials – analyses, commentaries, long reads, interviews, and podcasts. Most of the time, the materials were of medium size; large and very large materials were rare, and they mostly appeared in Left bank of Dniestr River media.

Many of the topics addressed were of political nature (170 materials), most of which (101) appeared in Transdniestrian media. They were followed by materials on health/COVID-19 topics (119, including 55 in Left bank of Dniestr River media).

Half of the materials broadcast/published in April and June (179) launched accusations against certain actors from both banks of the Dniester, but the parties accused were not offered the right to reply. Respectively, the context in which those actors appeared in such news stories was mostly negative.

Most of the protagonists cited or mentioned were representatives of the central public administration (324) and Left bank of Dniestr River public administration (343), but representatives of foreign institutions, including OSCE, citizens and experts, civil society representatives were cited, too. In most cases (60%), CPA representatives appeared in the materials of Transdniestrian media outlets, usually mentioned in a negative context, without being offered the right to express their opinion. At the same time, Transdniestrian authorities were mostly cited/mentioned by Left bank of Dniestr River media (65%), while national media referred to the RPA less often. Some of the national media outlets inserted Tiraspol's opinions into their materials, while other outlets failed to present its position when it was necessary.

## MONITORING DATA<sup>1</sup>

Period: 1-30 April 2020

### The main topics covered by the media

- ✓ *Establishment of the state of emergency in Chisinau and Tiraspol due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences*
- ✓ *Tiraspol blocking access roads to localities in the security zone under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova and installing mobile checkpoints in the security zone / Chisinau's reaction to these actions*
- ✓ *The decision of Tiraspol authorities to restrict the access of workers, including doctors from the region, to the localities on the right bank of the Dniester, where they are employed*
- ✓ *Postponement of the meetings of the Joint Control Commission*
- ✓ *Chisinau's request to urgently convene a meeting in the 5+2 format in order to discuss issues related to the restrictions imposed by Tiraspol in the context of the pandemic*
- ✓ *Separate discussions between the Transdniestrian authorities and the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Cristina Lesnic with the head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova Claus Neukirch and with the OSCE Special Representative for the Transdniestrian settlement process, Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting, about the current situation in the security zone*
- ✓ *Replacement of the special representative of the Russian Federation in the negotiation process*
- ✓ *Tiraspol inviting the World Health Organization to assess the situation in the Left bank of Dniestr River*
- ✓ *Tiraspol accusing Chisinau of exerting pressure on the region's authorities and wanting to reintegrate the region by force*
- ✓ *Detention and release of two citizens of the RoM, ambulance drivers in Dubasari, sentenced to 15 days in detention for failing to comply with the measures imposed by the state of emergency*
- ✓ *Retention of some medical equipment transports to Tiraspol at the Moldova-Ukraine border*
- ✓ *Chisinau accusing Tiraspol of not providing exact data on the number of patients treated and deceased*
- ✓ *Training of doctors and opening of a COVID-19 testing laboratory in Tiraspol*

## BROADCASTING

### Jurnal TV

<i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i>	<i>4 news stories: 3 large, 1 medium 3 with primary accent</i>
<i>Topics addressed</i>	<i>Political – 2, social – 1, other – 1</i>
<i>Actors cited or mentioned</i>	<i>CPA – 4, RPA – 2, experts – 3, citizens – 1, politicians – 2, other sources – 2 10 male sources/protagonists, 2 – female</i>

<sup>1</sup> Media outlets presented in alphabetical order

	<i>2 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>7 cited directly, 4 paraphrased, 3 mentioned without being cited</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 12 times, negative – 2 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>1 unbalanced news story; all materials separated facts from opinion</i>

In April, the private television station Jurnal TV covered the analyzed topic sporadically, publishing four news stories relevant to this monitoring, one of which addressed the topic tangentially. These materials referred to protagonists/official sources in Chisinau and Tiraspol, but also included alternative sources, such as experts.

The analyzed news stories informed about the installation by Tiraspol of barriers in the security zone and the restriction of movement for the RoM citizens who live in the Transdnistrian region and work on the right bank of the Dniester; about Chisinau's request to urgently convene a meeting in the 5+2 format in the context of the pandemic; the arrest of a Grigoriopol resident for allegedly violating the self-isolation regime. One material tangentially referred to the region's economic agents. The news stories were not diverse and were unbalanced from the gender perspective, as the number of female sources/protagonists was smaller than the number of male sources. The tone in which the Transdnistrian authorities were presented was neutral (1) and negative (1).

Examples of unbalanced news stories:

- ✓ *April 11: The story “Chisinau demands urgent convocation of the 5+2 format on the issue of the pandemic” included only the opinion of the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Cristina Lesnic, who stated that Moldovan citizens who live in the region are restricted in access to reimbursed medicines and medical services. Tiraspol's opinion on this issue is not presented.*

## **Moldova 1**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>7 news stories: 3 very large, 3 large, 1 medium All with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 4, social – 2, health – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 7 times, RPA – 5, experts – 5, OSCE – 4, citizens – 2, others – 1 6 male sources/protagonists, 5 – female; 13 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>6 cited directly, 10 paraphrased, 8 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 22 times, negative – 2 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>4 unbalanced news stories; all materials separated facts from opinion</i>

In April, the monitored topics were not a priority on the agenda of the public television station Moldova 1, which broadcast seven news stories relevant to this monitoring. The monitored topics were covered in large materials, which mostly addressed political issues. Materials were based on direct or indirect citing of official sources from both banks of the Dniester and on alternative sources, and the gender balance of sources/protagonists was ensured.

The public television informed, among other things, about the arrest of two ambulance drivers and their release after the intervention of Chisinau and OSCE; about the request of the Reintegration Policies Bureau from Chisinau to convene a meeting in the 5+2 format in the context of the pandemic; about Transdnistria imposing traffic restrictions for doctors. Sources/protagonists from the left bank of the Dniester were presented in a neutral context and negative context (2 and 2 times, respectively), especially in controversial news stories.

Examples of unbalanced news stories:

- ✓ *April 10, April 12: In the story about Chisinau's request to convene a meeting in the 5+2 format, the only source of the material was Cristina Lesnic, Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration. The Transdnistrian side was accused of blocking the actions aimed at saving human lives, but their opinion was not included*
- ✓ *April 17, April 19: The unilateral material about restriction of the access of doctors who work on the left bank of the Dniester but live on the right bank, and vice versa, due to the self-isolation regime imposed by Tiraspol. Materials were broadcast twice each.*

#### **NTV- Moldova**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>5 news stories: 2 very large, 3 large 3 with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Health – 3, political – 1, economic – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 7 times, doctors – 1 4 male sources/protagonists, 4 – female</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>8 cited directly</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 7 times, positive – 1</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>All materials were balanced and separated facts from opinion</i>

In April, the private television station NTV-Moldova covered the monitored topics sporadically. In the 21 newscasts placed on the NTV-Moldova website, we identified five materials relevant to this monitoring. Three of them focused on COVID-19 (information that Transdnistrian patients could be brought to Chisinau for treatment; information about the training of the region's doctors in Chisinau; President Igor Dodon's statement about Chisinau's readiness to provide the necessary help to the region), and one material addressed the country's reintegration plan. The absolute majority of materials cited official sources from the central public administration and were gender-balanced. It should be noted that two materials were inserted in the beginning of newscasts, and both of them addressed a tangential topic: one story referred to the situation with COVID-19 in Moldova and mentioned the situation in the Transdnistrian region; and one report covered the Government meeting where Prime Minister Chicu mentioned economic agents from the Transdnistrian region.

#### **Pervyy Pridnestrovskiy [First Transdnistrian Channel]**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>41 news stories: 14 very large, 20 large, 7 medium 38 with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 21, health – 12, social – 7, economic – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 41, RPA – 50, international institutions/OSCE – 28, citizens – 8 52 male sources/protagonists, 3 – female; 72 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>42 cited directly, 8 paraphrased, 77 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 85 times, negative – 34 times, positive – 8 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>35 unbalanced news stories; 28 materials failed to separate facts from opinion</i>

The television station Pervyy Pridnestrovskiy, funded by the Transdnestrian administration, paid great attention to bilateral relations, which it presented mostly from the perspective of the pressures that Chisinau exerted on Tiraspol. Most news stories were large and cited representatives of Transdnestrian authorities, while the central public authorities from Chisinau were usually mentioned in a negative context, without being cited. The relevant materials had a strong gender imbalance, with female sources being cited/mentioned only in a few materials.

The topics covered were mostly political, followed by COVID-19. They included the talks of the Transdnestrian leader Vadim Krasnoselsky with OSCE representatives; Tiraspol's reaction to the request of the Reintegration Policies Bureau to convene a meeting in the 5+2 format; address to the World Health Organization to send a mission to the region to assess the situation with COVID. The station reported extensively on the blocking of medical equipment on the border between Moldova and Ukraine; blocking of international cards for the region's residents, who are forced to travel to the right bank of the Dniester to get their money and pensions; etc.

The vast majority of news stories were controversial and based on sources that presented a single perspective. Furthermore, unbalanced news stories usually failed to separate facts from opinion, and journalists commented on them or presented their own opinion on the topic covered.

It should be noted that several materials about the pandemic were politicized, serving as a reason to accuse Chisinau of pressure. Several stories contained direct invectives against Chisinau, which was accused of using the pandemic to “assimilate the region,” “control it politically,” saying that Ukraine closed borders at Moldova's request for this very reason, etc. The situation on the right bank of the Dniester was often presented in grim light, with stories about localities closed due to the quarantine and about the military patrolling streets, about the fact that the situation got worse because authorities failed to take measures on time, about every fourth doctor being infected. In contrast, the same materials contained information about the measures taken by the Left bank of Dniestr River administration to fight the pandemic – providing doctors with everything they need, the aid that the region's citizens will receive from the administration, etc. – and infographics showing that the situation in the region is much better than on the right bank.

Examples of unbalanced news stories / failure to separate facts from opinion:

- ✓ April 1: “New problems”
- ✓ April 1: “Pressure during the pandemic”

- ✓ April 1: “Blocked shipments”
- ✓ April 2: “Moldova confesses. Thank you, Moldova!”
- ✓ April 3: “Despite humanism”
- ✓ April 3: “Isolated villages”
- ✓ April 10: “Diversion”
- ✓ April 10: “Neighborly fight with COVID”
- ✓ April 11: “Untimely measures?”
- ✓ April 13: “Antihumanitarian actions”
- ✓ April 14: “Unconstitutional aid”
- ✓ April 19: “Doctors and the coronavirus”
- ✓ April 23: “Moldova is worried?”
- ✓ April 24: “Special operation ‘Pension’”

### TSV [Free Choice Television]

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>18 news stories: 7 very large, 10 large, 1 medium 11 with primary accent, 7 with secondary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 4, health – 6, social – 4, economic – 2, other – 2</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 14, RPA – 10, international institutions/OSCE – 2, doctors – 6, citizens – 3, other sources – 2 17 male sources/protagonists, 3 – female; 17 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>18 cited directly, 4 paraphrased, 15 mentioned without being cited</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 28 times, negative – 6 times, positive – 3 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>6 unbalanced news stories; 3 materials failed to separate facts from opinion</i>

In April, the private television TSV from Tiraspol addressed topics relevant to this monitoring mostly in news stories about COVID-19, followed by those of a political and social nature, some of the materials referring to the topic tangentially. The analyzed materials cited/mentioned both the representatives of authorities from Chisinau and Tiraspol, as well as doctors and citizens. The central authorities from Chisinau were presented both in a neutral and negative context, mostly in materials where they were mentioned and which failed to offer their opinion on the topic in question. In half of the unbalanced news stories authors mixed facts with opinion, giving a biased nature to news.

The topics addressed include continued work of the metallurgical plant despite the pandemic; partnership with the Moldovan railway state company; temporary suspension of freight train traffic; the return of money for previously purchased train tickets.

TSV reported in several news stories about the situation regarding COVID-19, in some cases without referring to sources. The topics addressed include the opening of a laboratory that will perform tests for COVID-19 in the region and the help offered by doctors from the right bank of the Dniester (a doctor from Chisinau is cited in the news); Tiraspol administration’s address to doctors in the context of the pandemic; discussions with the head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova Claus Neukirch in the context of the pandemic. Several stories focused on Chisinau



being allegedly guilty for the spread of the pandemic and accused the CPA of exerting pressure on Tiraspol, but did not include the opinion of the accused party.

Examples of unbalanced news stories / Failure to separate facts from opinion:

- ✓ April 1: The story “The virus of political pressure” talks about some goods being blocked at the border because of the state of emergency. Sources accuse Chisinau authorities of bureaucracy and of exploiting the pandemic for political purposes, but the reply of Moldovan officials is missing.
- ✓ April 2: The story “Moldova has called for the closure of Cuciurgan” refers to a statement by Cristina Lesnic, Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration, according to which the closure of the Transdnestrian border with Ukraine is a good opportunity for the region to join (integrate with) the Republic of Moldova. In the context, the author mentions several trucks with goods for Tiraspol blocked at the customs and makes accusations of cynical political games.
- ✓ April 2: The material “They can’t get home” informs about the fact that several residents of the region cannot return home because of the pandemic. Its authors claim that “the Moldovan side further complicates matters,” demanding everyone to buy the health insurance policy upon entering the country.

## WEB PORTALS

### Agora.md

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>9 news stories: 5 large, 4 medium All with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 3, health – 3, social – 3</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 11, RPA – 6, international institutions/OSCE – 6, experts – 5, citizens – 5, other sources – 2 5 male sources/protagonists, 8 female; 22 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>10 cited directly, 3 paraphrased, 22 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 28 times, negative – 8 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>6 unbalanced news stories; 1 material failed to separate facts from opinion</i>

In April, the monitored topics were not a priority for the news portal Agora.md. It published a relatively small number of materials relevant to this monitoring (9), which mainly followed the developments in the case of detention of two Moldovan citizens in the Transdnestrian region – ambulance drivers from Dubasari – for allegedly violating the quarantine regime; and restrictions imposed by Tiraspol on doctors who are employed on the right bank of the Dniester. The portal also wrote about Chisinau accusing Tiraspol of lack of transparency regarding the real statistical data on COVID-19 and about the request to convene a meeting in the 5+2 format. Most of the materials were signed by the editorial staff, and one was taken from other sources. Gender balance was ensured, with female sources/protagonists being cited/mentioned more than men.

Protagonists from Tiraspol were presented mostly in a negative tone, being cited or mentioned 5 times in a negative context. The relevant news stories were based mostly on the official

sources from the right bank of the Dniester, while protagonists from the Transdnestrrian region were mostly mentioned, without being cited.

Examples of unbalanced news stories:

- ✓ *April 4: The story “Two ambulance drivers were detained by the separatist administration from Tiraspol” is based on a single source of information (Promo-LEX) and does not contain the opinion of the region’s authorities regarding this case.*
- ✓ *April 21: The story “The head for integration admits that Tiraspol has a ‘black number’ of Covid-19 cases” presents only the opinion of Cristina Lesnic, without including a reply from Tiraspol.*
- ✓ *April 28: The story “OSCE refuses to convene an emergency meeting on the 5+2 format. The Government requests the WHO to make a visit to the Transdnestrrian region” refers to the OSCE in the headline, but the only source of the text is a press release from the RPB, which disagrees with the OSCE’s position of not supporting Chisinau’s attempts to organize an emergency meeting in the 5+2 format. Respectively, the story lacks balance, and the OSCE appears in a negative context.*

### **Deschide.md**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>19 news stories: 6 large, 13 medium All with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 7, health – 6, social – 2, economic – 1, other – 3</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 14, RPA – 8, international institutions/OSCE – 5, experts – 6, other sources – 6 12 male sources/protagonists, 12 – female; 15 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>10 cited directly, 17 paraphrased, 12 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 30 times, negative – 7 times, positive – 2 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>4 unbalanced news stories; 1 material failed to separate facts from opinion</i>

The information portal Deschide.md is the only portal of those monitored that included relevant news into the “Transdnestrria” section, dedicated to materials about and from the Transdnestrrian region. 11 of the 19 news stories published in the reported period were signed by authors, and the rest – by the editorial office. Many of the materials were based on the press releases of the Reintegration Policies Bureau, referring to the actions taken by this institution and the Deputy Prime Minister Cristina Lesnic to ensure the rights of citizens in the security zone during the pandemic. The portal wrote in separate stories about Chisinau’s request to convene a meeting in the 5+2 format and the position of the OSCE, which did not support this attempt, and Tiraspol’s opinion on this subject; about the movement restrictions for doctors; about the detention and conviction of two ambulance drivers who are citizens of the RoM; etc. Relevant materials were documented from official sources from both banks of the Dniester, and also contained references to alternative sources. Sources were cited directly or indirectly, and the gender balance was ensured.

Sources/protagonists from the Transdnestrrian region appeared in both neutral and negative light (6 and 5 times, respectively).

Examples of unbalanced news stories:

- ✓ *April 1: The material “Former Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration: The pandemic will pass, but the restrictions imposed by Tiraspol in Dubasari district will remain” presents the opinion of a former deputy prime minister for reintegration, who makes post-pandemic forecasts. This controversial material is based on a single source, without attempts to include the opinion of those referred to by the cited source.*
- ✓ *April 28: The material “5+2 // Anatol Taranu: OSCE possibilities end where the funding from Moscow begins” contains only the opinions of some analysts regarding the OSCE refusal to convene the meeting in the 5+2 format, and accusations against the international organization and central authorities were published without being balanced by the reply of those concerned.*
- ✓ *April 30: The news story “Promo-LEX: Transdnistriean penitentiaries are focal points of COVID-19” informs about the alleged focal points of COVID-19 in the region’s penitentiaries, and it does not contain the opinion of the competent authorities, but only the opinion of the Promo-LEX Association.*

### **Newsmaker.md**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>36 materials: 33 news stories (27 short and 6 medium), 2 long reads, 1 interview; 35 with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Health – 27, social – 7, political – 2</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 7 times, RPA – 31, experts – 3, citizens – 3, doctors – 3, other sources – 12 13 male sources/protagonists, 9 – female; 37 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>14 cited directly, 39 paraphrased, 6 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 58 times, negative – 1 time</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>1 unbalanced news story; all materials separated facts from opinion</i>

In April, the web portal Newsmaker.md had a large number of materials that informed about the realities of the Transdnistriean region: 36 materials, all signed by the portal’s reporters. The news stories mainly followed the dynamics of the spread of the pandemic in the region and the consequences of the state of emergency (30 materials), informing about the number of the infected and of deaths, situation in hospitals, traffic restrictions, quarantine being enforced at some companies, sanctions imposed on the people who failed to comply with the self-isolation regime, etc.

The portal also published news about the arrest of the two ambulance drivers, citizens of RoM, and about the request of the Reintegration Policies Bureau to organize discussions in the 5+2 format in the context of the pandemic. When documenting materials, the portal referred to sources from the Transdnistriean region, who were cited directly and indirectly, and ensured a relative gender balance. The relevant actors were presented in a neutral tone, with a single case in which the Transdnistriean administration appeared in a negative context.

Examples of unbalanced news stories:

- ✓ *April 4: The material about Chisinau's request to convene urgent negotiations in the 5+2 format due to the isolation and reluctance of the Transdniestrian authorities to participate in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus contained only Chisinau's opinion.*

### **Novosti PMR [News of PMR]**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>30 materials: 19 news stories, 6 analyses, 4 editorials, 1 interview; 7 very large, 10 large, 13 medium; all with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 15, health – 8, social – 4, economic – 2, other – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 27, RPA – 31, OSCE – 6, experts – 4 30 male sources/protagonists, 8 – female; 30 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>18 cited directly, 10 paraphrased, 40 mentioned without being cited</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 38 times, negative – 25 times, positive – 5 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>27 unbalanced news stories; 6 materials failed to separate facts from opinion</i>

In April, the news agency Novosti PMR published a large number of materials of various journalistic genres, which focused on the realities on the right bank of the Dniester and relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol. About half of the materials were signed by authors, while eight were taken from other sources, mainly from Pervyy Pridnestrovskiy. Many of the materials were based on official sources from Tiraspol, while the representatives of the central public administration from Chisinau were usually mentioned, almost every time in a negative context.

The topics covered in April include the Moldovan customs officers blocking a transport of medical equipment at the border with Ukraine; Moldovan officials visiting peacekeeping posts without coordination with JCC; Tiraspol granting pensions to the residents of the villages that are “temporarily under the jurisdiction of Moldova.” The portal informed about the discussions between the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Thomas Mayr-Harting and the head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova Claus Neukirch; about the fact that Moldovan authorities use the situation with COVID-19 for the “forced reintegration of Transdniestria”; that Moldova continues exerting pressure on the region despite the pandemic; about the restriction of movement of doctors on both banks of the Dniester; about the opening of its own laboratory for coronavirus testing. In contrast to the right-bank media, Novosti PMR reported that the situation in the security zone is under control and shows no signs of tension. The agency resorted several times to the comparative presentation of the COVID-19 situation, food prices, electricity tariffs, etc., pointing at the very bad situation on the right bank of the Dniester versus the better situation on the left bank.

The vast majority of the materials that spoke about the central public administration had a negative tone, with various accusations against the CPA representatives. The agency had several materials in which facts were not separated from opinion, mainly the ones taken from the TV station Pervyy Pridnestrovskiy.

Examples of unbalanced news stories / Failure to separate facts from opinion:

- ✓ April 1: *“The self-sufficiency of Transdnistria and pressure from Moldova”*
- ✓ April 9: *“Electricity tariffs for the population in Transdnistria are lower than for the neighbors”*
- ✓ April 3: *“Moldova has acknowledged that it is using the pandemic to put pressure on Transdnistria”*

### Unimedia.info

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>15 news stories: 2 large, 4 medium, 7 short, and 2 very short; 13 with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Health – 9, political – 3, social – 2, other – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 11, RPA – 5, international institutions/OSCE – 5, experts – 2, doctors – 2, citizens – 5, other sources – 7 9 male sources/protagonists, 9 – female; 19 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>13 cited directly, 7 paraphrased, 17 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 29 times, negative – 5 times, positive – 3 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>3 unbalanced news stories; all materials separated facts from opinion</i>

In April, the news portal Unimedia.info addressed the relevant topics mostly in materials regarding COVID-19 and the consequences of the state of emergency in the region. The portal followed the subject of detention and release of the two ambulance drivers from Dubasari; the reaction and actions of Chisinau to the situation in the region, particularly restriction of doctors’ access in localities in the security zone; Chisinau’s request to convene a meeting in the 5+2 format and OSCE’s refusal. The portal published separate news stories about the deaths caused by COVID-19 in the region, about the training of the region’s doctors, and other issues. The Transdnistrian administration was presented mostly in a negative light (4 times), and the central public administration from Chisinau – in neutral and positive light (8 and 3 times, respectively).

Examples of unbalanced news stories:

- ✓ April 6: *The material about the two ambulance drivers detained by the law enforcement bodies on the left bank of the Dniester, who were given 15 days of administrative arrest, is based on a statement issued by the Promo-LEX Association, without including the opinion of the Transdnistrian side.*
- ✓ April 10: *The news story in which Chisinau’s representative for Transdnistrian settlement Cristina Lesnic announces that the Reintegration Policies Bureau denounced Tiraspol’s abusive actions of blocking access to rescue actions for Moldovan citizens and access to information and requested a meeting in the 5+2 format to be convened.*
- ✓ April 28: *The material “The Government requests the WHO to make a technical visit to the Transdnistrian region” is based on a single source of information, without background information on this topic.*

**Period: June 1-30, 2020**

**The main topics covered by the media:**

- ✓ *President Igor Dodon' discussion with the Transdniestrian leader Vadim Krasnoselsky and the unblocking of access to some localities in the security zone, which are under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova*
- ✓ *Ordinary meetings of the Joint Control Commission*
- ✓ *Meetings of mixed groups of experts in the fields of banking, railway transport, and education*
- ✓ *Incident involving four residents of Cocieri village at one of the mobile checkpoints installed by the Transdniestrian side in the security zone in March*
- ✓ *Visit of the OSCE Special Representative for Transdniestrian settlement, Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting, to Chisinau and Tiraspol*
- ✓ *Reactions of the civil society and parties to the illegal checkpoints in the security zone*
- ✓ *Chisinau accusing Tiraspol of violating freedom of movement, freedom of expression, right to personal data protection, right to liberty and security of person*
- ✓ *Both banks of the Dniester marking the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the armed conflict in Tighina*
- ✓ *Tiraspol accusing Chisinau of continuing pressure on the region*
- ✓ *The WHO report on the epidemiological situation in the region, presented by Chisinau and Tiraspol in a debatable manner*
- ✓ *Data on the COVID-19 pandemic on both banks of the Dniester*
- ✓ *Tiraspol accusing Chisinau authorities of worsening the pandemic situation*

**BROADCASTING**

**Jurnal TV**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>4 news stories: 3 large, 1 very large All with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 4</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 5 times, RPA – 4, police/army – 5, experts – 3, other sources – 3 12 male sources/protagonists; 8 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>8 cited directly, 4 paraphrased, 8 mentioned without being cited</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 16 times, negative – 4 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>1 unbalanced news story; all materials separated facts from opinion.</i>

In June, the television station Jurnal TV covered topics related to the Transdniestrian settlement and relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol sporadically. In the four relevant news stories of political nature, the station informed about President Igor Dodon's reaction to the criticism from the Dubasari-1992 Association of War Veterans for the authorities' lack of action in relation to the Tiraspol regime, which installed illegal checkpoints in the security zone; about veterans

making accusations against the head of the Dubasari district, who said at a television station that three localities of the RoM are currently under the control of the Tiraspol regime; about the reaction of the RoM delegation in the Joint Control Commission to the retention of several farmers by the Transdnistrian militia near Cocieri village; and about appointment of a Russian general as a defense adviser to the Transdnistrian leader.

The materials were documented based on official sources from Chisinau and on other sources, while Transdnistrian authorities were only mentioned, without being cited. The context in which they appeared was both neutral (3 times) and negative (2 times). News stories were totally unbalanced from the gender perspective.

Examples of unbalanced news stories:

- ✓ *The news story “Chisinau accuses Tiraspol of defying the previously agreed arrangements” does not present the opinions of the Transdnistrian administration.*

## Moldova 1

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>11 news stories: 5 very large, 3 large, 4 medium All with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 6, social – 4, other – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 11 times, RPA – 8, international institutions/OSCE – 2, experts – 6, doctors – 2, citizens – 4 24 male sources/protagonists, 6 – female; 3 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>16 cited directly, 13 paraphrased, 4 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 32 times, negative – 1 time</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>3 unbalanced news stories; all materials separated facts from opinion</i>

In June, the public television Moldova 1 had 11 news stories that were directly related to the topic of monitoring, mainly of political nature. The station followed the meeting of the OSCE Special Representative for the Transdnistrian settlement, Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting, with Igor Dodon; annulment of movement restrictions for the residents of Dubasari district after the president’s discussion with the Transdnistrian leader; Promo-LEX report on the worsening of the human rights situation in the region during the pandemic; Chisinau’s request that Tiraspol comply with WHO recommendations on the pandemic. Some of these news stories were broadcast twice, being included in the summary newscasts of the week.

The cited/mentioned sources and protagonists represented mainly the central and Left bank of Dniestr River public authorities, which were cited directly or paraphrased the most often. The number of women among sources/protagonists was smaller than the number of men.

The Transdnistrian administration was presented mainly in a neutral context (6 times), but also in a negative context (2 times), in unbalanced stories that failed to include Tiraspol’s opinion on the covered topic.

Examples of unbalanced materials:

- ✓ April 5, April 7: The news story on the findings of the Promo-LEX report on human rights in the region after the declaration of the state of emergency cited sources that supported the report conclusions of numerous human rights violations, but lacked the reaction of the Transdniestrian side.

### NTV-Moldova

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>5 news stories: 2 large, 2 very large, 1 medium All with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 3, health – 1, social – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 5 times, RPA – 5, international institutions/OSCE – 3; 9 male sources/protagonists, 1 – female 3 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>3 cited directly, 5 paraphrased, 5 mentioned without being cited</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 11 times, positive – 2 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>All relevant materials were balanced; facts were separated from opinion.</i>

In June, in the 20 newscasts posted on the website of NTV-Moldova we found five news stories relevant to this monitoring. The topics addressed were mainly of political nature, mostly regarding the actions of the Moldovan president. The news stories spoke about Igor Dodon's discussions with the head of the Dubasari district and the president's promises to help solve traffic difficulties; discussions with the Transdniestrian leader Vadim Krasnoselsky to lift traffic restrictions for some localities in the security zone; the president's meeting with the OSCE Special Representative Thomas Mayr-Harting, who was on a visit to Chisinau, and talks with the head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova; Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Cristina Lesnic inviting Transdniestrian authorities to collaborate in the health sector. The president mainly appeared in a positive and neutral context (twice each), and the tone of presentation of the Transdniestrian authorities was always neutral.

### Pervyy Pridnestrovskiy [First Transdniestrian Channel]

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>40 news stories: 11 very large, 18 large, 11 medium 34 with primary accent, 6 with secondary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 20, health – 15, social – 5</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 42, RPA – 46, international institutions – 8, OSCE – 6, citizens – 3, other – 10 54 male sources/protagonists, 8 – female; 53 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>42 cited directly, 8 paraphrased, 65 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 80 times, negative – 27 times, positive – 8 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>28 unbalanced news stories; 15 materials failed to separate facts from opinion</i>



In June, the TV station Pervyy Pridnestrovskiy covered the bilateral relations in a big number of news stories, usually large, which presented in most cases the position of the Left bank of Dniestr River administration on certain topics. The topics addressed most often focused on political and health issues. In most cases, materials were documented from sources in the region, especially from the RPA, who were cited directly and indirectly. Materials were unbalanced from the gender perspective. The representatives of the central public administration from Chisinau were mostly mentioned, usually in a negative context (27 times), in materials that contained various accusations against them. The majority of the controversial news stories contained the opinion of only one side – Tiraspol, and journalists often mixed facts with opinion.

The topics addressed by Pervyy Prindestrovskiy in June referred to the telephone conversation between President Igor Dodon and the Transdnestrian leader Vadim Krasnoselsky about the unblocking of traffic to some localities under the jurisdiction of RoM; RPA representatives' meetings with the OSCE Special Representative for the Transdnestrian settlement; the meetings of JCC and mixed groups of experts on banking and health issues; the uncoordinated visit of Moldovan officials to a mobile checkpoint in the security zone; the intention of the People's Assembly of Gagauzia to convene the congress of people's representatives at all levels to discuss the fate of the autonomy in the composition of Moldova. The station reported extensively about the incident in the security zone that involved a group of Cocieri residents, which it described as a provocation by Chisinau.

In June, Pervyy Prindestrovskiy also broadcast several news stories about the critical epidemiological situation in the RoM. Thus, out of the 15 materials on the pandemic, 13 were about the situation on the right bank of the Dniester, presenting details about *the number of deaths, overcrowded hospitals, disastrous conditions in hospitals, infected and exhausted doctors, and asymptomatic patients who are treated at home without being included in statistical data*. Some news stories were based on anonymous sources, taken from social networks, claiming that people aged over 60 are not treated from COVID-19 in Moldova. In contrast, materials presented data from the region, where the situation is allegedly much better, without referring to concrete sources.

Some topics related to the pandemic were politicized, accusing the RoM of information attacks on the Transdnestrian region, claiming that no proper measures are taken to combat the pandemic in the region. For example, in the news story about the WHO findings presented by Cristina Lesnic, Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration, it is said that Lesnic tried to present in a "different light" the recommendations made to Tiraspol by the WHO representative in the fight against COVID-19. According to the material, Tiraspol has a correct approach to this problem, there are ten times more patients in RoM than in the region, and Tiraspol has long ago sent to Chisinau recommendations on how to stop the wave of infection.

Examples of unbalanced news stories / Failure to separate facts from opinion:

- ✓ June 4: "New provocations"
- ✓ June 5: "Who are the trolleybuses for?"
- ✓ June 8: "Moldova&Coronavirus"
- ✓ June 9: "Politicization of problems"
- ✓ June 16: "COVID statistics"
- ✓ June 19: "Quote of the day: It is dangerous to trust Moldova"
- ✓ June 21: "The Red Zone: Moldova is blocked!"
- ✓ June 24: "A new emergency situation"

- ✓ June 24: “Atmosphere in Gagauzia”
- ✓ June 25: “COVID at neighbors”
- ✓ June 28: “The right to self-determination”
- ✓ June 29: “COVID – situation in Moldova”

### **TSV [Free Choice Television]**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>24 news stories: 11 very large, 5 large, 9 medium 15 with primary accent, 9 with secondary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 14, health – 5, social – 3, other – 2</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 17, RPA – 25, OSCE – 6, army/police – 5, citizens – 4, business people – 4, other sources – 9 34 male sources/protagonists, 6 female; 30 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>23 cited directly, 20 paraphrased, 27 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 57 times, negative – 13 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>13 unbalanced news stories; 9 materials failed to separate facts from opinion</i>

In June, TSV covered the monitored topic in news stories with primary, as well as secondary/tangential, accent. Most of the materials were of political nature, followed by the health and social topics. The relevant sources and protagonists were diverse, and they were in most cases cited directly or indirectly. From the perspective of gender equality, materials were less diverse, and male sources were cited/mentioned much less. In the majority of cases actors appeared in a neutral context, while cases of presentation in a negative context mostly targeted Chisinau authorities (9 times).

The relevant materials broadcast during the reporting period informed about the discussion of Vadim Krasnoselsky with Igor Dodon, discussions with the head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova Claus Neukirch, the visit of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to Tiraspol, problems in the operation of the postal service, and the resumption of flights in Chisinau.

Many of the controversial news stories presented the opinion of only one side, and on several occasions the authors included their own opinion on the events described in news.

Examples of unbalanced news stories / Failure to separate facts from opinion:

- ✓ June 1: “A point of view from Russia” – TSV is citing the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, according to which Chisinau wants to break relations with Tiraspol. TSV claims that Chisinau does not recognize the documents issued by Tiraspol authorities, without including the opinion of Chisinau.
- ✓ June 5: “Four behind the wheel” – The material is saying that the Moldovan authorities have created new provocations in the security zone (near Cocieri village), referring to four people who were caught in the front seat of a minibus, the driver being fined.
- ✓ June 5: “Moldova creates problems” – The Tiraspol administration accuses Moldova of using the pandemic as a tool for pressure, including by restricting imports, blocking international bank cards, refusing dialogue, etc.

- ✓ June 9: “‘Treatment’ by Cristina Lesnic” – Moldovan authorities, despite the difficult situation due to the spread of Covid-19, continue offering recommendations to the Left bank of Dniestr River authorities on how to manage the spread of the virus.
- ✓ June 10: The material “Moldova is shattering security” refers to an article in the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, which reported on the incident with four farmers fined for going on the front seat of a minibus near Cocieri village.
- ✓ June 12: “The shocking dynamics of Moldova” reports on the spread of Covid-19 in Moldova, referring to the big numbers announced by authorities.
- ✓ June 19: “Bender: 28 year later” – A report of over 5 minutes with details about shooting in Bender in 1992. In this context, reference is made to the current relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol. Journalists say that politicians in Chisinau have not apologized for the events of 28 years ago.

## WEB PORTALS

### Agora.md

<b>Frequency and prominence of materials</b>	8 news stories: 2 large, 6 medium All with primary accent
<b>Topics addressed</b>	Political – 3, social – 3, health – 1, other – 1
<b>Actors cited or mentioned</b>	CPA – 7 times, RPA – 7, international institutions/OSCE – 3, police/army – 3, experts – 2, citizens – 1, politicians – 1, other sources – 1 3 male sources/protagonist, 3 – female; 19 public institutions, local and international organizations
<b>Voice of actors</b>	3 cited directly, 4 paraphrased, 18 mentioned
<b>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</b>	Neutral – 19 times, negative – 6 times
<b>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</b>	4 unbalanced news stories; all materials separated facts from opinion

In June, the news portal Agora.md had eight relevant news stories, of which seven addressed topics directly, and one – tangentially. The topics covered include the incident involving the four residents of Cocieri, retained at one of the makeshift checkpoints in the security zone; the WHO report on the pandemic situation in the Transdnistrian region; the Promo-LEX report on human rights violations in the Transdnistrian region in the context of the pandemic. Agora also informed about the planned visit of the OSCE Special Representative for Transdnistrian settlement, Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting, to Moldova and about the lifting of traffic restrictions for some localities in the security zone.

Most of the materials were signed by authors or the editorial office, and in one case the news story was taken from other sources. Half of the materials analyzed failed to ensure the balance of sources, mainly lacking reaction from Tiraspol. Given that various accusations were made against the Transdnistrian authorities, they appeared most of the times in a negative context (5 times).

Examples of unbalanced materials:

- ✓ June 6: “Four residents of Cocieri village were stopped by the so-called Transdnistrian militia.” The news story reports about an incident at a checkpoint installed abusively in the security zone in March, citing the Promo-LEX Association.
- ✓ June 9: The news story “The WHO conclusions after the visit to Tiraspol: Medical staff must be trained and treatment protocols need revision” presents the information offered by Cristina Lesnic, Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration. Tiraspol is criticized, and, according to authors, Chisinau authorities had previously called it for dialogue in order to manage the epidemiological crisis, but the invitations were rejected.
- ✓ June 25: In the material “The DA platform is asking the Government to intervene: illegal Transdnistrian checkpoints are installed in several localities of Dubasari district” the Tiraspol administration is accused of flagrant violation of the rights of people residing in the localities subordinated to Chisinau, and the Chisinau government is criticized for inadequate measures to settle the conflict, but their right to reply was not ensured.

### Deschide.md

<b>Frequency and prominence of materials</b>	25 news stories: 3 very large, 5 large, 12 medium, 5 short All with primary accent
<b>Topics addressed</b>	Political – 15, health – 2, social – 5, economic – 1, education – 1, police/army – 1
<b>Actors cited or mentioned</b>	CPA – 22 times, RPA – 13, international institutions/OSCE – 10, experts – 4, other sources – 7 26 male sources/protagonists, 6 – female 24 public institutions, local and international organizations
<b>Voice of actors</b>	8 cited directly, 41 paraphrased, 7 mentioned
<b>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</b>	Neutral – 43 times, negative – 12 times, positive – 1
<b>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</b>	7 unbalanced news stories; all materials separated facts from opinion

In June, Deschide.md continued covering extensively the topics related to Transdnistrian settlement and realities in the Transdnistrian region. Most of the materials were of political nature, referring mainly to information from official sources, strongly unbalanced from the gender perspective. Materials informed about the June meetings of the Joint Control Commission; about the incident at the mobile checkpoint in the security zone involving four residents of Cocieri village; about the WHO recommendations after the visit to the region and Tiraspol’s reaction; about the online discussion between President Igor Dodon and the leader of the Transdnistrian administration Vadim Krasnoselsky. The portal also reported about the meetings of mixed groups of experts in health and banking sectors, about the Promo-LEX report on human rights in the region, and so on. Deschide.md also covered the visit of the OSCE Special Representative for the Transdnistrian settlement Thomas Mayr-Harting, who visited Chisinau and Tiraspol.

The tone in which sources/protagonists from the left bank of the Dniester appeared was equally neutral (6 times) and negative (6 times), mainly because they were not offered to reply.

Examples of unbalanced materials / Failure to separate facts from opinion:

- ✓ *June 27: The material “Shadow of separatist revisionism in Moldova” presents an analysis of how the Transdniestrian authorities marked the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Transdniestrian conflict. The material is a commentary, but it is not labeled as such.*
- ✓ *June 26: The news story “JCC meeting: It was decided to send military observers to the security zone; Tiraspol insists that illegal checkpoints are anti-COVID” was also written as a commentary and signed by the editorial office, but it appeared in the News section.*
- ✓ *June 4: The material “Dodon arranged with Krasnoselsky to resume traffic in the security zone, but the separatists set up a new illegal ‘border guard’ post” refers to a press release of the Reintegration Bureau on the incident involving residents of Cocieri village in the security zone. It presents a single opinion and confusing information about the incident.*

### **Newsmaker.md**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>21 materials: 17 news stories, 2 analyses, 1 long read, and 1 podcast (3 very large, 5 large, 8 medium, 5 short) 20 with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 12, social – 8, health – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 11 times, RPA – 21, international institutions/OSCE – 6, experts – 8, citizens – 12, opposition politicians / police / other sources – 11 times 33 male sources/protagonists, 8 – female; 28 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>19 cited directly, 32 paraphrased, 18 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 68 times, negative – 1</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>1 unbalanced news story; all materials separated facts from opinion</i>

In June, Newsmaker.md addressed several political and social issues. The portal informed about the postponement of the Joint Control Commission meeting of June 4 because of disagreements between the delegations of the two sides; about the annulment of traffic restrictions for the residents of several villages on the left bank of the Dniester; about the visit to RoM of the OSCE Special Representative Thomas Mayr-Harting. The portal also published a podcast of about 10 minutes on the human rights situation in the Transdniestrian region, particularly regarding freedom of expression.

The materials were based on various sources. They lacked gender balance, but had no serious violations of professional ethics. Most of the times, in the relevant news stories Newsmaker referred to sources/protagonists from the Transdniestrian region, who appeared in a neutral context.

Examples of unbalanced news stories:

- ✓ *June 10: The news story about the draft law initiated by the Transdniestrian leader Vadim Krasnoselsky on temporary restriction of the exit of local residents from the region and entry of foreigners does not present the position of Chisinau*

*authorities in this regard, but only mentions that the Reintegration Policies Bureau has not commented on this initiative so far.*

#### **Novosti PMR [News of PMR]**

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>47 materials: 33 news stories, 5 analyses, 8 commentaries, 1 interview; 14 very large, 10 large, 23 medium; 41 with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 27, health – 9, social – 5, education – 5, economic – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 55, RPA – 62, OSCE – 7, international institutions – 12, experts – 4, other – 7 74 male sources/protagonists, 12 – female; 59 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>37 cited directly, 29 paraphrased, 79 mentioned</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 103 times, negative – 35 times, positive – 7 times</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>33 unbalanced news stories; 4 materials failed to separate facts from opinion</i>

During the reporting period, the news agency Novosti PMR had a large number of materials that targeted the relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol, mostly produced by the editorial staff, and nine materials were taken from other sources. The coverage followed the same trend as in April – the vast majority of materials were politicized, criticizing Chisinau for continued pressure and failure to comply with the previously concluded agreements. The agency published materials that compared the situation on both banks of the Dniester, presenting the situation in the region in positive light and the situation on the right bank – in grim light. The sources and protagonists that appeared in negative light were, usually, the representatives of the central public administration, who were accused and not offered to reply.

The agency published several news stories about the Transdnistrian leader’s meetings with the OSCE Special Representative for Transdnistrian settlement, with the head of the OSCE Mission, and with President Igor Dodon. It also provided coverage of the JCC meetings in June and the Transdnistrian side’s accusations against the Moldovan delegation, including the one that it allegedly blocked a meeting in the attempt to include on the agenda an issue that other participants did not agree with. There were also materials about the online meetings of the mixed working group on rail transport and telecommunications and the group on education, and about the appointment of a new representative of the Russian Federation in the negotiation process. A number of news stories focused on the alleged pressure from Chisinau, which “blocked imports of essential goods by closing the checkpoints at the border with Ukraine.”

Novosti PMR also had materials that presented data on the situation with the COVID-19. The majority of them were structured to show positive developments in the region and negative on the right bank of the Dniester. The information was selected in a biased manner, presenting grim scenarios of the collapse of the health system on the right bank of the Dniester, with details of the number of infections and deaths among doctors, police, etc.; and information showing that things are going well in the region due to proper management of the situation by the local administration.

The report included data about materials covering the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fights in Bender, which were directly related to the monitored topic (as they had references to the current situation).

The majority of the controversial materials were unbalanced, lacking the opinion of both sides, and in four cases, facts were not separated from opinion, mostly in materials taken from Pervyy Pridnestrovskiy.

Examples of unbalanced materials / Failure to separate facts from opinion:

- ✓ *June 1: “MFA of PMR: Moldovan authorities have resumed blocking measures against Transnistria”*
- ✓ *June 4: “Oleg Beleakov: Chisinau is trying to destabilize the security zone by means of primitive provocations”*
- ✓ *June 4: “How Moldova used COVID-19 against Transnistria. Facts and statistics”*
- ✓ *June 4: “A directed incident. RoM is blocking peacekeeping mechanisms and organizing provocations in the security zone”*
- ✓ *June 5: “Moldova against stability in the security zone?”*
- ✓ *June 11: “The Transnistrian delegation in JCC called on Moldova not to resort to provocation in the security zone”*
- ✓ *June 19: “Constantin Zatulin: The Transnistrian people do not capitulate under any pressure”*

### Unimedia.info

<b><i>Frequency and prominence of materials</i></b>	<i>6 news stories: 3 large, 3 medium All with primary accent</i>
<b><i>Topics addressed</i></b>	<i>Political – 5, social – 1</i>
<b><i>Actors cited or mentioned</i></b>	<i>CPA – 6 times, RPA – 4, international institutions/OSCE – 2, other – 1 2 male sources/protagonists; 13 public institutions, local and international organizations</i>
<b><i>Voice of actors</i></b>	<i>3 cited directly, 7 paraphrased, 5 mentioned without being cited</i>
<b><i>The tone of presentation of sources and protagonists</i></b>	<i>Neutral – 11 times, negative – 3 times, positive – 1</i>
<b><i>Balance of sources and separation of facts from opinion</i></b>	<i>2 unbalanced news stories; all materials separated facts from opinion</i>

The information portal Unimedia.info covered the topics relevant to this monitoring in six news stories, mostly of political nature. The materials focused on discussions between President Igor Dodon and the Tiraspol leader Vadim Krasnoselsky on the situation in the security zone, in districts adjacent to the Dniester, particularly the villages of Cocieri, Vasilievca, Molovata Noua, Roghi, Copanca. The portal also informed about four residents of Cocieri village being fined at one of the blocking points installed in mid-March, and about the fact that the residents registered in the villages of Varnita, Copanca, Molovata Noua, Cocieri, Pohrebea, Dorotcaia, Cosnita, and Piritia can move freely through several points at the administrative line. Other

materials referred to accidents in the region. It should be noted that Tiraspol representatives appeared in negative context, while Chisinau representatives – in positive contexts.

Examples of unbalanced materials:

- ✓ *June 4: The news story “Some locals from Cocieri, fined by Transdnistrian forces because they wanted to work their farmlands” refers to the statement of the RoM delegation in the Joint Control Commission about the fact that Tiraspol defied agreements and the documents of the peacekeeping mission on the Dniester. The material was not balanced by the position of Tiraspol’s delegation.*
- ✓ *June 5: The news story “Four people from the Transdnistrian region, retained while going to work. Chisinau authorities asked for the involvement of the OSCE mission” informs about a group of Cocieri residents being fined at one of the blocking points installed in mid-March based on the press released of Promo-LEX and the Reintegration Policies Bureau, lacking Tiraspol’s position regarding the accusations.*

## **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

- The media covered the relevant topics from different perspectives. Some outlets focused either on topics related to the relationship between the two riverbanks or on topics regarding the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, while others allotted time and space to addressing both kinds of topics.
- Most national media covered the monitored topics briefly, by broadcasting/publishing relevant materials sporadically. Materials on such topics rarely cited the Tiraspol authorities, who were often presented in a negative context, in particular with accusations of human rights violations in the region by setting up mobile checkpoints, blocking access roads to localities in the security zone that are under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova, restricting the movement of doctors in the region.
- The monitored Left bank of Dniestr River media used the same approach to the topics relevant to this monitoring: they presented events from the perspective of the Transdnistrian authorities, which often launched accusations against the central authorities in Chisinau. Controversial materials accused the CPA of putting pressure on Tiraspol and pursuing the forced integration of the region by closing borders with Ukraine and blocking various essential transports; of resorting to provocation in the security zone; of using the pandemic to assimilate the region; and so on. The central public administration from Chisinau was mentioned in most cases in a negative context, without being given the right to reply.

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

- As institutions that create public opinion, the media should realize their social accountability and become more actively involved in the coverage of relations on both banks of the Dniester, by presenting realities in a correct and unbiased manner, giving voice to all parties involved in negotiations.
- Journalists should give up the practice of commenting or including their own opinions in materials.



- Materials should not only present official sources, but also make additional efforts to supplement them with background information and opinions from other relevant sources that would shed more light on the issues addressed.
- Journalists should strictly abide by the code of ethics regarding the correctness and balance of sources in news, giving the accused parties the right to reply whenever necessary.