



Monitoring Report

Elements of Propaganda, Information Manipulation, and Violation of Journalism Ethics in the Local Media Space

January 1 - March 31, 2019

This report is part of the “Media Enabling Democracy, Inclusion and Accountability in Moldova” (MEDIA-M) project, funded by the USAID, UK Aid, and implemented by Internews in Moldova, aiming to promote the development of independent and professional media and to make the media sector more resistant to political and economic pressure. The content of this material is the responsibility of the Independent Journalism Center, and it might not reflect the vision of UK Aid, USAID, or the United States Government.

GENERAL INFORMATION

From January 1 to March 31, 2019, the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) monitored 12 media outlets – news portals and TV channels – to identify whether the disseminated journalistic materials contained any breaches of deontological rules and elements of information manipulation. The monitoring team analyzed how the outlets covered events of public interest in politics, economy, foreign policy, and in other fields, whether they complied with professional and ethical standards such as verification of information through several sources, pluralism of opinions, balance in the news reports on conflicts, and so on. By using the Journalist's Code of Conduct and specialized academic works, they identified information manipulation procedures and techniques.

The analysis was based on the assumption that news is the main media product where people search information about daily reality. Therefore, regardless of the media owner's views on political or economic issues, news must contain exclusively facts and not journalists' opinions. Also, they should be written/presented in neutral and accessible language, and should reflect reality as accurately as possible, observing the balance of sources.

Purpose of monitoring:

The monitoring was aimed at determining whether the media observed professional ethics or used manipulation techniques in their coverage of topics of public interest. In particular, the monitoring sought to identify the mistakes made by journalists (intentionally or unintentionally) while reporting facts, so that case studies and monitoring reports could play an educational role. Another objective was to contribute to increasing consumer awareness of the risks of getting information from unsafe sources. Monitoring helps consumers understand how the media can manipulate and enables them to distinguish between a manipulative journalistic product and a product that presents reality impartially.

Criteria for selecting media outlets for monitoring:

- Coverage – national;
- Language – Romanian and Russian;
- Impact – circulation and audience.

Television: TV Moldova 1, Prime TV, Canal 3, Accent TV, NTV Moldova, Televiziunea Centrală (Orhei), Jurnal TV, TV8, PRO TV Chișinău.

Online media: Sputnik.md, Kp.md, Unimedia.info.

Methodology: The report focused on political, economic, and social events of major public interest that took place during the monitoring period, and analyzed how these events were covered by the media. The language and images used by journalists, their choice of events to be covered, the correctness of source quoting, and the tone of presentation were analyzed by referring to the Journalist's Code of Conduct¹, guidelines and recommendations in the sphere of responsible and high-quality media², and the notions of **manipulation** and **propaganda**, as defined in the Dictionary of Sociology³.

Manipulation is defined as: *“Action taken to make a social actor (a person, a group, or a community) think and act in a way that is compatible with the interests of the initiator and not with their own interests, by using persuasion techniques that intentionally distort the truth, leaving an impression of freedom of thought and decision.”*

¹ Moldovan Journalist's Code of Conduct, http://consiliuldepresa.md/fileadmin/fisiere/documente/cod_d_rom.pdf

² Guide of Style with Ethical Standards for Journalists, API, http://www.unicef.org/moldova/Ghid_Etica_Jurnalist_RO.pdf

³ Cătălin Zamfir, Lazăr Vlăsceanu, Dictionary of Sociology, Bucharest, 1998, p. 332., p. 457. <http://vignette4.wikia.nocookie.net/nccmn/images/1/1c/Dictionar-de-Sociologie-Catalin-Zamfir-Lazar-Vlasceanu.pdf/revision/latest?cb=20150813042511&path-prefix=ro>

Propaganda: *“Systematic activity of transmitting, promoting, or spreading doctrines, messages, or ideas from the position of a particular social group and ideology, in order to influence, change, or shape certain concepts, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, or behaviors. Propaganda is practiced in such a way as to achieve the goals and interests of the group it serves, so there is no neutral or objective propaganda.”*

The main topics monitored between January 1 and March 31, 2019:

- Asset declarations of political leaders (January 4-8, 2019);
- Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections (January 25, 2019);
- Preliminary results of the parliamentary elections (February 25, 2019);
- Indexing of pensions and social aid for Easter announced by Vlad Plahotniuc (March 7, 2019);
- The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament (March 21, 2019).

I. GENERAL TRENDS

The monitoring showed that journalists from some of the 12 monitored media outlets continue making news that are not in line with the standards of professional ethics. We have identified elements characteristic of propaganda and manipulation, as well as breaches of the Journalist’s Code of Conduct, such as:

Labeling – Canal 3, Prime TV, Unimedia.info (Asset declarations of political leaders); Prime TV (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Canal 3 (Preliminary results of parliamentary elections); Prime TV, Kp.md, Televiziunea Centrală (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Selective presentation/truncation of facts, opinions, and statements – NTV Moldova (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Sputnik.md, Prime TV (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Lack of the right to reply – Canal 3 (Asset declarations of political leaders); Prime TV, PRO TV Chişinău (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Prime TV, Televiziunea Centrală (Indexing of pensions and social aid for Easter announced by Vlad Plahotniuc); Prime TV (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Mixture of facts with opinions – Canal 3, Prime TV, TV8, Accent TV, Unimedia.info, Kp.md (Asset declarations of political leaders); Prime TV, Canal 3, PRO TV Chişinău, Jurnal TV, NTV Moldova, Televiziunea Centrală (Preliminary results of parliamentary elections); Canal 3, Televiziunea Centrală, Sputnik.md (Indexing of pensions and social aid for Easter announced by Vlad Plahotniuc); Prime TV, Accent TV, Sputnik.md, Kp.md, TV8, Televiziunea Centrală (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

References to sources that cannot be checked – Unimedia.info (Asset declarations of political leaders); Canal 3 (Indexing of pensions and social aid for Easter announced by Vlad Plahotniuc); Televiziunea Centrală (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Spreading of false information or statements – Televiziunea Centrală (Preliminary results of parliamentary elections); Accent TV (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Generalization – Canal 3, Kp.md (Asset declarations of political leaders); Televiziunea Centrală (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Irony – Canal 3, Prime TV (Asset declarations of political leaders); Unimedia.info (Preliminary results of parliamentary elections); Accent TV, Kp.md (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Suggestion – Accent TV (Asset declarations of political leaders); NTV Moldova (Start of the

electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Prime TV, Televiziunea Centrală (Preliminary results of parliamentary elections);

Omission – NTV Moldova, Moldova 1, Sputnik.md, Televiziunea Centrală (Asset declarations of political leaders); Sputnik.md (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); NTV Moldova, Accent TV, Kp.md (Indexing of pensions and social aid for Easter announced by Vlad Plahotniuc);

Blurring – Prime TV (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Accent TV (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

“Internal and/or external enemy” technique – Prime TV, Canal 3 (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Prime TV (Indexing of pensions and social aid for Easter announced by Vlad Plahotniuc); Televiziunea Centrală (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Priority information technique – Televiziunea Centrală, NTV Moldova (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Prime TV (Preliminary results of parliamentary elections);

“National savior” (“messiah”) technique – Canal 3, NTV Moldova (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Prime TV (Indexing of pensions and social aid for Easter announced by Vlad Plahotniuc); NTV Moldova, Accent TV (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Manipulation by means of video and/or audio – Canal 3 (Asset declarations of political leaders); Prime TV (Start of the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections); Prime TV, Accent TV (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament);

Negative image transfer – Canal 3 (Asset declarations of political leaders); Prime TV (The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament).

II. DATA ANALYSIS

Topic 1. Asset declarations of political leaders

***Background:** On January 4, 2019, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) began publishing the asset declarations of the candidates registered in the campaign for the parliamentary elections of February 24, 2019, both in the national electoral district and in single-member districts. We monitored the content published by the 12 media outlets referring to the asset declarations of the leaders of political parties and blocs, including Vladimir Plahotniuc, Maia Sandu, Andrei Nastase, Vladimir Voronin, Zinaida GreceaniI, and Ilan Shor.*

***General conclusion:** The majority of monitored media outlets presented the information in a subjective and selective manner, showing political preferences. Some outlets (**Canal 3, Prime TV**) used this topic to portray some politicians in a negative context, while others overlooked those persons. Still other outlets ignored the topic (**NTV Moldova, Moldova 1, Televiziunea Centrală, Sputnik.md**), and a third group of outlets took over and republished information without verifying it (e.g. **Unimedia.info**). However, the taking over and republishing of information does not free a media outlet from ethical mistakes or manipulation techniques used by the outlets that created that content.*

Canal 3 covered the topic of asset declarations of political leaders in a tendentious, unbalanced manner, lacking correctness and showing bias. This television admitted the following errors:

- **Manipulation by means of headlines:** “Sandu and Nastase, unemployed for about two years”;
- **Mixture of facts with opinions / Irony:** “In about two years they have not earned a single

leu, and now they are fighting for MP seats”;

- **Repetitive labeling:** “...we are talking about the leaders of the **PAS-PPDA binomial**, Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase, who have submitted their asset declarations to the CEC”; “...they decided to stand for the February 24 elections both in single-member electoral districts and on the list of the **PAS-PPDA binomial’s bloc**”;
- **Suggestion / Negative image transfer, implicitly labeling:** “...This list contains some controversial names. We are talking about the judges Domnica Manole and Gheorghe Balan, dismissed with a scandal from their offices. Meanwhile, the list of the bloc created by the PAS and PPDA binomial contains the liberal democrats Maria Ciobanu and Ion Terguta, who are close to the former prime minister Vlad Filat, convicted for acts of corruption”;
- **Failure to ensure the right to reply:** None of the people targeted and/or accused directly in the news (Domnica Manole and Gheorghe Balan) were asked to comment on the above.

At the same time, [Canal 3](#) aired a report based on the opinions of “*some*” ordinary people about the asset declarations of Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase. In this material, information was also presented in a tendentious and unbalanced manner, and the authors used the following techniques:

- **False information / mixture of facts with opinions and generalization:** “They are involved in dubious activities, engage in illegalities, or spend money from accounts in foreign banks. This is what the politicians who declared themselves unemployed in the asset declarations filed to the CEC get by on... At least this is what ordinary people think of those who are asking for their votes”;
- **Manipulation by means of headlines / Generalization:** “What people think about the unemployed MPs”;
- **Manipulation by means of context.** The television announced that the news will report on “MPs” in general, but the authors focused exclusively on the leaders of the ACUM Electoral Bloc. Thus, **Canal 3** manipulated by means of the fact that, although interviewees spoke about politicians in general, the report was built in such a way as to suggest that the people’s answers referred only to Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase and that these very politicians are the most corrupt;
- **Manipulation by means of video.** While people spoke about corruption among politicians in general, **Canal 3** included only video featuring Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase; the houses in Frankfurt which, according to some media, are the homes of Victor and Viorel Topa; as well as the Chisinau home of Andrei Nastase. Thus, the television suggested that the two politicians are corrupt and that they got their fortunes illegally/unfairly. At the same time, **Canal 3** showed footage where Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase are portrayed only in negative contexts – e.g., at past events, when they had verbal and physical disputes with some demonstrators;
- **Failure to offer the right to reply.** Neither Maia Sandu, nor Andrei Nastase were provided with the right to **opinion**.

Prime TV also covered the topic in two reports ([asset declarations of Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase](#) and [some citizens’ opinions about the asset declarations of politicians](#)). **Prime TV** had the same approach and the same scenario, and presented the same footage, as **Canal 3**.

[PRO TV Chişinău](#) and [TV8](#) covered the topic of asset declarations of political leaders in an objective and unbiased manner, providing all details in a way understandable to media consumers, without any violations of professional ethics nor using manipulation techniques in the coverage of the monitored topic.

Accent TV did not cover the monitored topic in news. However, [in the newscast of January 11](#), this television delivered a news report titled “*Sandu does not trust her own money to Moldovan banks*”, which was based on certain details from the asset declaration of the PAS leader. In fact, **Accent TV took out of context and distorted the information** made public by Maia Sandu [in](#)

[the “Fourth Power” program at the TV station N4](#). The report was tendentious and biased, and journalists sought to present the politician Maia Sandu in an exclusively negative light rather than to deliver objective information. **Accent TV** also committed the following violations:

- **Suggestion:** *“Two years before the theft of the century, Maia Sandu, who is running for an MP seat as part of the ACUM Electoral Bloc, did not trust the country’s banking sector”*;
- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** *“However, the politician, who returned to Moldova in 2012, had held an office in the Filat Government and used to say loud and clear that she had come back home to improve the living standards in the country. Despite promises and confidence in the prosperous future of Moldova, Sandu did not risk transferring money from the American bank to an account in a Moldovan bank”*.

Jurnal TV covered exclusively the information about the asset declaration of the PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc, and the report was based on the details mentioned in the official document submitted by the politician to the CEC. **Jurnal TV** had a **selective** approach to the topic, having spoken only about the asset declaration of the democrats’ leader, without mentioning the assets declared by other politicians.

Unimedia.info published two stories, providing details [about the asset declarations of the leaders of the ACUM Electoral Bloc](#), Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase, [and about the declaration of the PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc](#) (the content for which was mostly taken from **ZdG.md**). In its own reports and in the ones taken from other outlets and adapted, **Unimedia.info** committed:

- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** *“Thus, unlike the leader of the democrats, the two candidates for parliamentary elections cannot really boast of cars, luxury houses or salaries”*;
- **Labeling:** *“The controversial politician and businessman claims that between 2017 and 2018...”*;
- **References to sources that cannot be checked:** *“Vladimir Plahotniuc, considered by many the richest citizen of Moldova, in the last two years, 2017-2018, had income from dividends, interest, and the sale of a car”*.

Kp.md also published two articles. One of them was about the [asset declaration of the PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc](#), with information mostly taken from **ZdG.md**, and the second one was about the [Facebook message of the PCRM representative Inna Supac](#), where she expressed dissatisfaction with the CEC, which had taken the candidates’ income statements off its online platform. In the first article, **Kp.md** admitted one case of **generalization**: *“Vladimir Plahotniuc, considered by many the richest citizen of Moldova...”* (although the information was taken from **ZdG.md**, the journalist still had the obligation to verify it).

The televisions **NTV Moldova**, **Televiziunea Centrală (Orhei)**, **Moldova 1**, and the portal **Sputnik.md** did not cover this topic in any of their newscasts or in the online content published between January 8 and 11, 2019, which can be qualified as **omission**.

Topic 2. Start of the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of February 24, 2019

Background: *On January 25, 2019, the start of the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections of February 24, 2019 was launched. The CEC announced that eight parties and one bloc had been registered in the national electoral district by that time. For single-member electoral districts, 360 people submitted files for registration as candidates for MP seats: 246 candidates were registered, seven registration applications were rejected, and 107 were still being under examination.*

General conclusion: *Electoral campaigns can serve as a barometer for measuring the degree of political servility of the media, for testing the level of correctness and professional ethics, and for*

identifying manipulation techniques used by media outlets. Almost all monitored media committed at least one violation of professional ethics and/or manipulation technique. Among the most commonly used were labeling, irony, opinions instead of facts, suggestion, and the “internal enemy” manipulation technique.

Prime TV presented the information in a tendentious and disproportionate manner in all its three news reports. The report about the PDM launching in the electoral campaign was the longest (4.40 minutes), and this party was presented in an exclusively positive context. At the same time, in the report about the PSRM (2.02 minutes) and the one about the ACUM Electoral Bloc (2.10 minutes), **Prime TV** used negative connotation for both these political entities. Thus, while for **Prime TV** “the PDM entered the electoral campaign”, then “the representatives of PAS-PPDA met in front of the Parliament...”, and “socialists... were criticized by the “Shor” Party representatives”. So, **Prime TV** manipulated media consumers by using positive language for some parties (PDM) and negative language for other political entities (PSRM, ACUM Electoral Bloc). In addition, **Prime TV** committed:

- **Manipulation (tendentious selection) by means of images.** Plahotniuc’s words that “the opposition doesn’t have clear offers or governance programs” are accompanied by footage of the leaders of the ACUM Electoral Bloc and of the PSRM; and in the news about the ACUM Electoral Bloc, when its leaders spoke about the government and/or the PDM, the report features footage with Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase smiling.
- **Change of accents and blurring.** While the PDM presents the commitments it has in its electoral program (“The party’s electoral program is practically written by voters; it includes the problems and requests of citizens as well as solutions, which cannot be said about the opposition, Vlad Plahotniuc said”), the PSRM “...did not propose concrete solutions to the problems in Chisinau, but instead criticized the former administration of the capital...”, and the ACUM Electoral Bloc throws “...hateful messages and personal attacks”.
- **Failure to offer the right to opinion/reply / Failure to ask for opinion.** Prime TV failed to ensure the right to reply to the ones targeted in news (PSRM, PL).
- **Repetitive labeling.** “The aggressive speech of Maia Sandu was followed by an equally aggressive speech of his partner from the binomial, Andrei Nastase”; “The aggressive tone was set by the PAS leader Maia Sandu and taken over by the other candidates from the PAS-PPDA binomial”.
- **The demonization technique,** which is a way of polluting the public space by means of offensive language, change of accents and the demonization of the others. Thus, the PDM is presented as a progressive party which has “solutions to problems” (“national savior” technique), while the PSRM and the ACUM Electoral Bloc are presented as enemies of the country (“internal enemy” technique).

Canal 3 made two news reports about the start of the electoral campaign by the PDM and the ACUM Electoral Bloc, presenting information in the same manner and using the same footage as **Prime TV**, and changing only some phrases and grammar structures. In addition to the violations mentioned for **Prime TV**, **Canal 3** committed:

- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** “The meeting with Pavel Filip seems to have been good for locals...”;
- **“National savior” technique:** Vlad Plahotniuc and Pavel Filip were presented as people who come to save the situation in the entire country and in the electoral districts where they are standing for elections (Nisporeni, Straseni);
- At the same time, the ACUM Electoral Bloc is presented as an aggressive political entity, which inspires fear and is represented by people without political or governing experience (“internal enemy” technique).

Televiziunea Centrală (Orhei) covered the monitored topic in four news reports in the [newscast](#)

[of January 25, 2019](#). The launch of the PSRM's campaign was presented in an exclusively negative context, the one of the PDM – in neutral to positive context, and the one of the ACUM Electoral Bloc – in an exclusively negative context. **Televiziunea Centrală** used the **priority information technique**. It first aired a report in which the “Shor” Party comes up with accusations against the PSRM, placing it into a negative context, and then showed a report about the PSRM's launch of the electoral campaign.

NTV Moldova presented information in a tendentious and biased manner, having used several manipulation techniques:

- **Priority information technique.** Before the news about the PSRM's launch of the campaign, **NTV Moldova** aired a report about the opinion of President Igor Dodon regarding the upcoming elections. He urges citizens to make “*a conscious choice, a well-thought-out step*”, mentioning that “*we need a legitimate parliament*” and suggesting that so far the Parliament and the country governing in general were not legitimate (**suggestion technique**). Later, **NTV Moldova** aired news about the “*PSRM starting the campaign*” and the “*15 thousand campaigners of the PSRM*”, who began their work today;
- **Biased selection of sources.** While in reports about the PSRM and the PDM, **NTV Moldova** used direct videos with the leaders of these parties from their launching events, in the news about the ACUM Electoral Bloc it included only one video fragment with a member of the Bloc;
- **Biased selection and presentation of information and change of accents.** While “*The PSRM's MPs presented their social, economic, and political views...*”, the leaders of the ACUM Electoral Bloc “*...for an hour ... made speeches and promises*”;
- “**National savior**” **manipulation technique.** The PSRM, implicitly President Dodon, were presented in footage and according to a positive scenario as a party that comes to solve the problems that have piled up “*...in the ten years of the PDM, PLDM, and PL ruling*”.

Accent TV mostly covered the start of the electoral campaign in accordance with the same scenario, approach, and by using the same footage as **NTV Moldova**, so it used the same manipulation techniques and committed the same violations of professional ethics (having **omitted**, however, news and information about the ACUM Electoral Bloc's launch of the campaign). In addition, **Accent TV** committed:

- **Manipulation by means of headlines:** “*Turning from politician into meteorologist*”;
- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** “*Despite Candu's statements that the electoral campaign is a competition of ideas, his fellow party member Pavel Filip again spoke about the alleged achievements, not about future plans. Only vain promises and no concrete actions or decisions*”; “*While Filip does not guarantee a miracle, the leader of his party, Vladimir Plahotniuc... makes generous promises...*”.

PRO TV Chisinau covered the start of the electoral campaign for the three parties in a neutral and unbiased manner. The journalists of this television gave equal airtime to the three political entities, citing directly sources from each of them. However, there have been some violations, such as **mixture of facts with opinions/ironic accents:** “*...while Filip was speaking, Plahotniuc was warming up*”, “*Although the start of the campaign was kept secret, Plahotniuc spoke about transparent and fair elections*”, “*... socialists launched the flow of promises*”.

TV8 also covered the start of the electoral campaign in a neutral and unbiased manner. This television aired four news reports on the monitored topic, and the only violation by TV8 was **mixture of facts with opinions:** “*Party leaders held speeches, spicing them up with jokes; despite it being the first day of the campaign, Pavel Filip was sure that the PDM will get a high score*”. The same neutral and unbiased approach was seen on the public television **Moldova 1** and on **Jurnal TV**: violations of professional ethics or use of manipulation techniques were not noticed.

Unimedia.info published four news stories about the start of the electoral campaign: [one was of](#)

[general nature](#), and three were about the parties that launched electoral campaigns that day – [PDM](#), [PSRM](#), [ACUM Electoral Bloc](#). In all four materials, **Unimedia.info** presented the information in a neutral and unbiased manner, focusing on events and inserting statements made by relevant sources.

In the period of January 25 to 27, 2019, **Kp.md** published only one news story on the monitored topic, about the PSRM's launch of the campaign. The launching events organized by the other two parties (PDM and ACUM Electoral Bloc) were not covered by **Kp.md**, which can be considered as **omission and selective presentation of information**. **Sputnik.md** did not cover this topic in the information content published online between January 25 and 27, which can be seen as **omission**.

Topic 3. Preliminary results of parliamentary elections

Background: *On February 24, 2019, parliamentary elections took place in Moldova. For the first time, MPs for the future legislature were elected on the basis of the mixed electoral system. The turnout was a little over 49%. According to preliminary results, announced by the Central Electoral Commission on March 3, in the national electoral district the PSRM got 18 mandates, ACUM – 14 mandates, PDM – 13, “Shor” Party – 5. In single-member electoral districts, the PSRM and the PDM got 7 mandates each, ACUM got 12 mandates, and the “Shor” Party – 2. Three MP mandates went to three independent candidates.*

General conclusion: *Given the manner in which this topic was covered, it appears that for some media outlets the winners of these elections were the PDM and its representatives (**Prime TV**, **Canal 3**); for others the winner was the PSRM (**NTV Moldova**, **Accent TV**), while for the third ones (**Televiziunea Centrală**) the winner was the “Shor” Party. The main finding is that the media covered the results differently, depending on their political preferences. The violations of professional ethics and the manipulation techniques they used were also different: from mixture of facts with opinions to blurring, labeling, suggestion, and false information.*

Prime TV covered the results of the February 24 elections in a disproportionate manner, lacking neutrality, and showing bias, emphasizing the results obtained by the PDM and the “Shor” Party in the national electoral district and by their representatives in single-member electoral districts. The results of the other parties, PSRM and the ACUM Electoral Bloc, were presented in a tendentious manner, either in negative contexts or diminishing the importance of their results. For example, while “*the PDM leader Vladimir Plahotniuc, the initiator and promoter of the mixed electoral system, is one of the candidates who enjoyed massive support of the people in the district of Nisporeni... and Prime Minister Pavel Filip had the support of voters in his home district*”, and “*Ilan Shor won by a large margin in the district...*”, then “*Maia Sandu got nearly 81% of the votes*”. **Prime TV mixed facts with opinions:** “*The leaders of the PAS-PPDA Bloc, who had criticized the mixed electoral system, also benefitted from the new system. Unlike many other candidates, the two chose not to fight for MP seats in their home districts.*” In addition, the television used the techniques of **suggestion and priority information**. Thus, while the results for single-member districts were presented in the order of the percentage obtained by candidates, the results for the national electoral district were presented *in the order in which they appeared in the ballot papers*. **Prime TV** used the number/position of the parties in ballot papers, manipulating and suggesting to media consumers that the PDM (which was the first on the lists in ballot papers) got more votes than his competitors here, too.

Canal 3 presented the preliminary results of parliamentary elections using the same approach, scenario, footage, and text as **Prime TV**, emphasizing the results obtained by the PDM and its representatives. Also, **Canal 3** presented in a tendentious and biased manner the results of other political entities (PSRM, ACUM). Thus, **Canal 3** manipulated by means of the **blurring**

technique, limiting media consumers' access to accurate and unbiased information. In addition, the television used **labeling** ("*Ion Terguta, representative of the PAS-PPDA binomial*") and **biased selection of sources**: PDM representatives were presented with direct statements, while the representatives of other parties either were not included at all, or their statements were paraphrased.

NTV Moldova covered the preliminary results of the elections in a biased manner and lacking neutrality. This television massively and in great detail presented the results of the PSRM and its representatives, and covered less or not at all the results of the other electoral competitors (PDM, ACUM Electoral Bloc, "Shor" Party): "*PSRM, the highest electoral score...*"; "*...in electoral district no.1, Zinaida Greceanii had a categorical victory...*".

Accent TV covered election results by using the same scenario, text, footage, and approach as **NTV Moldova**. Also, it focused in detail on the results of the PSRM and very generally presented the results of the other parties (PDM, ACUM, "Shor" Party): "*...the other electoral districts were shared by the PDM, ACUM Electoral Bloc, and independent candidates*".

Televiziunea Centrală covered election results in a tendentious manner, lacking neutrality. The outlet admitted **false information** and several times **presented wrong figures**: for example, it mentioned – in word and graphic form – that the PDM got 34 mandates in the future Parliament, and the PSRM – 31 mandates, while in fact it was vice versa. Also, **Televiziunea Centrală** used generalization: "*It should be mentioned that, according to statistics, the 2019 parliamentary elections proved to be the most unpopular among citizens. Voter turnout was the smallest after the proclamation of independence of Moldova...*". **Televiziunea Centrală** also committed:

- **Suggestion**: "*According to the CEC, expatriates were not quite active, either. For example, in electoral district no. 50, where, according to preliminary data, Maia Sandu won, turnout was smaller than at the presidential elections of 2016. Although she got over 80%, this score is part of a very small number of voters*". Thus, **Televiziunea Centrală** suggested (**suggestion technique**) that Maia Sandu's score is not representative. Instead, "*Ilan Shor and Marina Tauber won, by a large margin, elections in the electoral districts in Orhei region. They overcame the candidates...*".
- **Selective presentation of information and data**: In the electoral districts where the "Shor" Party won, **Televiziunea Centrală** covered voting results in detail, and did not mention the winners in the localities where this party had modest results.
- **Mixture of facts with opinions**: "*By obtaining these results, the leader of the "Shor" Party once again confirmed people's trust and gratitude for all the successful projects accomplished over the last three years... It is a sign that all positive changes will have continuity, and the future will bring construction of new social housing, social shops, reconstruction of kindergartens, rehabilitation of roads...*".
- **False information**: "*Zinaida Greceanii got a little over 14%...*". In fact, in the single-member electoral district no.1 her score was 46.18%.

Jurnal TV had four news reports about the preliminary results of parliamentary elections, in which it presented the ACUM Electoral Bloc and its representatives in a positive way, while the other parties were presented in a neutral and/or negative way. This television **mixed facts with opinions**: "*The mixed electoral system adopted by the PDM and the PSRM brought electoral benefits to only one of the two political actors. The results of yesterday elections show that the only party that gained from the change of the electoral system is the PDM, which will get more MP seats than its score on the national list...*".

The public television **Moldova 1**, **PRO TV Chisinau**, and **TV8** covered the election results in a neutral and unbiased manner, without violation of professional ethics or use of manipulation techniques.

To monitor **Sputnik.md**, we analyzed 22 news reports about the preliminary results of elections

in the national electoral district and in single-member districts. In some reports, **Sputnik.md** mixed facts with opinions: *“[Tough defeat for Dorin Chirtoaca: He lost to the ACUM candidate Mihai Popsoi](#)”*; *“[The preliminary results presented](#) by the Central Electoral Commission clearly show that the mayor of Orhei, Ilan Shor, is leading by a large margin in the electoral district no. 18, in Orhei”*; *“[Thus, now we can agree with sociologists](#), who showed in opinion polls during the electoral campaign that the Orhei mayor would win in this electoral district. Political analysts and sociologists did not initially think that Valeriu Munteanu was likely to win; however, the ACUM candidate insisted to prove that he could defeat the Orhei Mayor Ilan Shor.”*

Kp.md referred to different figures when speaking about the number of MP seats obtained by the four political entities. While according to one of its articles the PSRM got 33 seats, in another one it mentioned 34 seats, and a third article reported about 35 seats won by this party. Publication of information without its prior verification may be seen as manipulation of media consumers. Also, **Kp.md** had cases of mixture of facts with opinions: *“[The names of 48 lucky MPs have become known](#)”*; *“[The right-wing opposition leaders are pulling hair off their heads...](#)”*. At the same time, many of **Kp.md** articles were not marked so as to show what category they are, opinion or news reports, for example, the article [written by Leonid Reabkov](#) and the one [by Tatiana Vladimirskaia](#).

In the 17 news reports on **Unimedia.info** we found positive coverage in favor of the ACUM Electoral Bloc and a slightly negative, and sometimes ironic, approach to the PDM, the “Shor” Party, and the PSRM. In addition, in the monitored news **Unimedia.info** used:

- **Tendentious and ironic headlines:** *“[A birthday present? The mayor of Hancesti won a seat in the Parliament in the electoral district no. 38](#)”*; *“[The ‘independents of Transnistria’, or how two politicians close to the governing circles won elections in the electoral districts on the left bank of the Dniester](#)”*; *“[Crushing defeat for Monica Babuc in Ialoveni! The ACUM candidate Liviu Vovc will represent electoral district no. 22 in the Parliament](#)”*;
- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** *“Election results seem even more unlikely if we look at the national elections statistics on the left bank of the Dniester. Here, the PSRM is winning, having gathered over half of the total number of votes, 16,401. In single-member districts, however, despite having presented candidates, it lost dreadfully”*; *“The rumors about their support by the governing circles from Chisinau in close connection with the ones in Tiraspol can have a touch of truth”* (the news *“[The ‘independents of Transnistria’, or how two politicians close to the governing circles won elections in the electoral districts on the left bank of the Dniester](#)”*); *“Surprise in electoral district no. 22. The Minister of Education, Culture, and Research Monica Babuc has definitely lost the elections. That is despite having had at her disposal all possible administrative resources during the campaign”* (the news *“[Crushing defeat for Monica Babuc in Ialoveni! The ACUM candidate Liviu Vovc will represent electoral district no. 22 in the Parliament](#)”*);
- **Irony:** *“[KO for Constantin Tutu: Andrei Nastase is leading in electoral district no. 33](#)”*.

Topic 4. Indexing of pensions and social aid for Easter announced by Vlad Plahotniuc

Background: At a briefing on March 7, 2019, the PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc announced that the Government intended to take responsibility for two projects, aimed at 1) indexing pensions with 5.3% beginning on April 1, and at 2) providing a 600 MDL aid to people with incomes smaller than 2,000 MDL on the occasion of the upcoming Easter. On the same day, the Government approved the draft law in the form announced by the PDM leader.

General conclusion: The majority of media outlets published or broadcast information about the two social initiatives announced by the PDM leader and executed by the Government, except **NTV Moldova, Accent TV, and Kp.md (omission)**. Almost all of those who did cover this topic (except **Jurnal TV**) presented only the official sources that launched these initiatives, without approaching

and/or including alternative sources that might comment on their importance, meaning, and impact (experts in economy). Among the violations of professional ethics and manipulation techniques used by the monitored media outlets, mixture of facts with opinions and the “national savior” v. “internal enemy” techniques were the most “preferred”.

Prime TV covered the initiative announced by Vlad Plahotniuc in a triumphant tone. The information was delivered to media consumers in a tendentious manner and exclusively through the prism of the government/the PDM. **Prime TV** used:

- **“Internal enemy” manipulation technique.** Opposition parties have been demonized, and thus it was suggested that they oppose to PDM’s social initiatives. For example, at the end of the news report **Prime TV** suggested that the reforms announced might be stopped by some political forces – from the context it appears that journalists refer to the opposition, which “...might file a motion of no confidence against the Government”. At the same time, the PDM and its representatives were presented as the only ones who are thinking about the people of the country (“**national savior**” / “**messiah**” **manipulation technique**);
- **Failed to ensure the right to reply to those targeted by other sources.** Vlad Plahotniuc, in his intervention, directly accused/targeted “*some opposition parties*” (even if they have not been named, it is obvious who the PDM leader is referring to), but the latter were not asked for opinion or provided with the right to opinion.

Canal 3 covered this topic in the same manner, with the same scenario and text, as **Prime TV**, committing the same violations of professional ethics and using the same manipulation techniques. In addition, **Canal 3 mixed facts with opinions**: “*The PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc has shattered the speculations of the opposition, which claims that the Government will no longer do the indexing. Plahotniuc treated these statements as weaknesses of opponents*”.

The public television **Moldova 1** covered the topic in a triumphant tone, presenting the governing forces and the PDM in an exclusively positive context: “*Pensions 5.3% higher from April 1. The Government took responsibility before the Parliament and adopted a new method of indexing allocations... Also, today the members of the Government decided that over 600 thousand people will get 600 MDL aid for Easter each*”; “*The decision about indexing was made at a meeting of the governing party*”; “*People welcome the indexing of pensions...*”. This tone shows that the public television presented the monitored topic in a tendentious manner.

Televiziunea Centrală (Orhei) presented the topic in a selective and tendentious manner, presenting information in a triumphant tone, from the perspective of the government/PDM. This television committed:

- **Mixture of facts with opinions**: “*The PDM will not waste time with the political ‘whims’ of the parties that don’t want to negotiate*” (caption/headline);
- **Failure to ensure the right to reply to those targeted in news.** The opposition parties (especially PPDA and PAS) were accused by one of the sources in the news, but were not offered the chance to reply/react.

PRO TV Chisinau covered the monitored topic in an unbiased and neutral manner, but **PRO TV** journalists still had one situation that might be interpreted as mixture of facts with opinions/irony: “*...in a pessimistic tone, Plahotniuc said he was waiting for an answer from the other parties about meeting for discussions*”. **TV8** and **Jurnal TV** presented the topic in an unbiased and neutral manner. The journalists of these televisions did not violate professional ethics, nor did they use manipulation techniques. At the same time, **Jurnal TV** is the only of the 12 monitored media outlets that asked for and presented the opinion of the parties mentioned in its report, as well as the opinion of the minister of economy.

Sputnik.md published two news reports: [one](#) was about the announcement made by Vlad Plahotniuc, [the second one](#) presented details based on the press release of the Government. Here, we found a single phrase of the journalists that could be qualified as **mixture of facts with**

opinions: *“Said and done: The Government assumed responsibility for a draft law adopted today, according to which about 600 thousand pensioners will receive 600 MDL each for Easter”.*

In all four of its news reports on the monitored topic, **Unimedia.info** presented the information in a neutral and unbiased manner, without violating professional ethics and/or using manipulation techniques. In their turn, the televisions **NTV Moldova** and **Accent TV**, as well as the portal **Kp.md**, did not cover this topic in any of their newscasts or online content in the period of March 7 to 9, 2019, which can be qualified as **omission**.

Topic 5. The first meeting of the newly elected Parliament

Background: *The first meeting of the new Parliament of Moldova, chaired by Eduard Smirnov of the PSRM, took place on March 21, 2019. At it, three parties (PSRM, PDM, “Shor” Party) announced they would be creating their parliamentary groups. The ACUM Bloc announced it would decide on creation of its parliamentary group or groups within ten days from the first meeting. The meeting lasted about one hour because of lack of parliamentary majority. On the same day, a protest against the sentences in the lawsuits of Gheorghe Petic and Sergiu Cebotari was organized in front of the Parliament building.*

General conclusion: *The emphasis on sensation was the read thread common to most media outlets in the coverage of this topic – 11 of the 12 monitored outlets were interested more in the “sensation” aspects of the event (“Marina Tauber and the parasol”; the language skills of Eduard Smirnov) than in presenting information that actually belongs in the news. In terms of professional ethics, this topic was one of the most subjected to violations and manipulation techniques. Nearly all of the 12 media outlets had at least one violation of ethics and/or used at least one manipulation technique (exceptions were **Unimedia.info** and **Moldova 1**).*

Prime TV presented information about the first meeting of the new Parliament in a tendentious and biased manner. The most important violations of professional ethics at **Prime TV** were:

- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** *“...We also need to say that the unity of those in the ACUM Bloc is questionable. An equally important element is that Maia Sandu, co-president of the ACUM Bloc, did not attend the first meeting of the Parliament” (please note that Andrian Candu did not attend the meeting, either, but this information was not in the news);*
- **Failure to ensure the right to reply/opinion.** Pavel Filip, in his speech, mentioned that ACUM does not want to meet and discuss possible alliance scenarios, thus suggesting that this party does not want to negotiate. To ensure neutrality, lack of bias, and fairness, **Prime TV** journalists had the mission and obligation to provide ACUM representatives with airtime for opinion;
- **Biased selection of statements.** While the statements of Igor Dodon and Pavel Filip were selected in connection with the context, for ACUM reporters included a short statement of Andrei Nastase about the gesture of Marina Tauber. Moreover, that statement, in addition to being non-representative, cannot be qualified as ensuring the right to reply;
- **Tendentious headlines:** *“ACUM protested against them”; “A protest with insults”;*
- **Manipulation by means of footage.** When one of the protesters in front of the Parliament was saying that *“bandits must leave”* – and it was obvious that they referred to parties other than those in the ACUM Bloc, – **Prime TV** included footage with the members of the Bloc, suggesting that protesters referred to them;
- **Negative image transfer/Labeling.** **Prime TV** journalists several times tried to suggest that the ACUM Bloc supports extremist movements: *“The demonstration was also attended by a representative of the extremist organization ‘Antifa’, the repeated offender Pavel Grigoriuc”;* *“it was also attended by people who are in trouble with law – we’re*

talking about one of the leaders of the extremist organization ‘Antifa’”;

- **Footage taken over without mentioning the source.** In one fragment, the journalist who interviewed sources was holding only the microphone with **Canal 2 logo** in his hand.

Canal 3 covered the topic of the first meeting of the Parliament almost in the same manner and following the same scenario as **Prime TV**, therefore, committing mostly the same violations of professional ethics. The major difference was that this television focused exclusively on events from the plenum, without including into the report the information about the protest in front of the Parliament building (as **Prime TV** did).

NTV Moldova broadcast two news reports about the first meeting of the Parliament. In the first one, **NTV Moldova** reported about the “*inaugural meeting*”. It was preceded by another one, which described in detail “*the message to MPs and citizens*” by Igor Dodon to the new Parliament and “*the five priorities of the president*”. The latter report was three times as long as the one about the event. Thus, **NTV Moldova** used the “**national savior**” (“**messiah**”) **manipulation technique**, presenting Igor Dodon as the only person who wants stability and wellbeing for the country and its citizens.

Accent TV presented information in a tendentious, selective, and disproportionate manner, underlining – like **NTV Moldova** – the personality of Igor Dodon and his statement in the Parliament (which was delivered almost entirely). **Accent TV** delivered **false information**: “*The first Parliament meeting was opened by the Moldovan President Igor Dodon, who addressed the representatives of the people and the nation. On behalf of all MPs and himself, the head of state congratulated citizens on the election of the new Parliament and thanked them for participating in elections*”. The one who opened the Parliament meeting was actually not Igor Dodon – the opening speech was given by the socialist Eduard Smirnov and the Constitutional Court President Mihai Polelungi. Thus, **Accent TV** brought Igor Dodon to the foreground and gave him greater importance (“**national savior/messiah**” **manipulation technique**). Also, **Accent TV** committed:

- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** “*The first results of the Parliament’s work cannot be qualified as successful*”; “*Before presenting its composition, the “Shor” Party decided to make a show, probably so it could stand out at least this way at this meeting*”;
- **Manipulation by means of headlines:** “*Three parliament groups were created. ACUM is at the crossroads*”;
- **Manipulation by means of audio:** “*Meanwhile, Ilan Shor rocked in his chair the entire meeting*”, and in the background a lullaby was playing.

In the 17 news stories on this topic, **Sputnik.md** presented the information about the first meeting of the new Parliament in a tendentious manner. **Sputnik.md** committed several violations of professional ethics, including:

- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** “*[Bizarre protest in front of the Parliament: Here is what ACUM supporters did](#)*”; “*[So far, there have been no clashes between the law enforcement and those who came to the Parliament, who did not even announce they would come to protest. However, we might have protests today, given that the day before the leaders of the ACUM Electoral Bloc called on people to come to the Parliament today](#)*”;
- **Presentation of truncated and selective information:** “*[Know your MPs: They haven’t been in an MP seat before, see who they are](#)*”. Although **Sputnik.md** suggests that it will present all MPs who joined the Parliament for the first time, the portal mentioned only the MPs from the “Shor” Party;
- **Suggestion:** “*Those several hundred people – mostly elderly – applauded the MPs from ACUM when they criticized the government and the socialist opposition...*”. **Sputnik.md** suggested that the ACUM Electoral Bloc is supported only by the elderly.

On **Kp.md** we analyzed three articles. One of them was about the [events in the Parliament](#), and outside of it (the case of Sergiu Sirbu and Pavel Grigoriuc). Although the author of this article is a columnist (Roman Vladimirov), it has not been marked as an editorial/opinion. The other two

articles by another author (Pavel Muntean) are tendentious and refer to Maia Sandu ([her not attending the first meeting of the Parliament](#); [Maia Sandu in the Parliament in the seat of Vlad Filat](#)), presenting her in an exclusively negative light and not offering her the right to reply/opinion. Both articles, not marked as editorials, are full of **accusations, negative image transfer, slander, irony, labeling, and mixture of facts with opinions**. Here are some of these:

- *“The first Parliament meeting was ignored by the ACUM co-chair. It is likely that other meetings will also be replaced by trips to Brussels. Currently, we know nothing about the future plans of Maia Sandu.”*
- *“While Filat is serving his sentence in jail for corruption and abuse of office, the ACUM co-chair took his seat in the Parliament.”*
- *“It seems that the mercury did actually affect the former oppositionist.”*
- *“The young lady was not called and was not personally invited to the first meeting, that is why she got upset and flew to Europe, not coming to work on the first day of the job.”*

The public television **Moldova 1** covered the topic in a neutral and unbiased manner, without violating professional ethics or using manipulation techniques.

[Televiziunea Centrală \(Orhei\)](#) covered the monitored topic in a tendentious manner, presenting the “Shor” Party and the PDM in a positive context, and the ACUM Bloc in a negative context. The violations of professional ethics committed and the manipulation techniques used by this television were:

- **Mixture of facts with opinions:** *“...however, the newly elected MPs did not manage to do a great deal”; “...and two MPs from the “Shor” Party undeniably won in the electoral districts where they stood for elections”;*
- **“Internal enemy” technique.** By the way of presentation (negative, as “not wanting to accept negotiations”, etc.) and by the short length of statements/opinions, **Televiziunea Centrală (Orhei)** presented the ACUM Bloc as opposing all discussions and initiatives;
- **Generalization/Quoting of and referring to sources that cannot be checked.** *“Earlier, experts said they doubted the integrity of the ACUM Bloc, because there was and still is competition”; “Sources in the ACUM Bloc told Actual.md that the heated debates that degenerated into quarrel took place yesterday, including in Brussels, where Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase were. For the same reason, Sandu preferred to stay in the capital of Belgium...”;*
- **Labeling.** *“Tempers are flaring in the ACUM Bloc. Maia Sandu allegedly refused to come to Chisinau to the Parliament meeting because of some disputes about the number of parliamentary groups that should represent the PAS-PPDA binomial”.*

[PRO TV Chişinău](#) covered the topic in a neutral and unbiased manner, offering to all actors airtime for statements. Also, **PRO TV Chişinău** included the relevant opinions of the people targeted (including separate news reports for and about each political entity in part). However, some statements by **PRO TV Chişinău** journalists could be qualified as **mixture of facts with opinions**: *“Plahotniuc and Shor kept rocking on their chairs, and Sandu and Candu were not there”; “The PDM leader ... did not make a display of himself, letting his fellow party members speak on behalf of the party. He kept rocking on the chair, arranging mobile phones on the table and giving orders.”*

[TV8](#) also covered the topic in a neutral and unbiased manner, approaching all the persons targeted in news for an opinion. However, **TV8** committed several violations of professional ethics that can be qualified as **mixture of facts with opinions**: *“...but there is still a long way until the Government is elected, because only three of the four parliament groups have been formed at today’s meeting”; “the Parliament building was guarded as if it was under siege”; “...the long speeches seem to have bored some MPs, who were seen rocking on chairs or looking into their phones.”*

[Jurnal TV](#) broadcast five news reports about the first meeting of the newly elected Parliament

and/or about related events (which took more than half of the airtime of the newscast – over 22 minutes). The focus was on the protest organized in front of the Parliament building and on the “*Security measures for Vlad Plahotniuc*”, all preceded by a report that “*The Parliament has been formed*”. By the way in which its messages and scenario were built, **Jurnal TV** presented the PDM in a negative light, PSRM – in neutral light, and the ACUM Bloc – in positive light. **Unimedia.info** had the most exhaustive and detailed coverage of the first meeting of the new Parliament and of the protest in front of the Parliament building in the 17 news stories we identified, providing room for opinion to all the persons involved. Also, **Unimedia.info** published news stories with political experts who commented on the events from the first day of the Parliament.

CONCLUSIONS

In the reporting period, January 1 – March 31, 2019, all 12 monitored media outlets committed at least one violation of professional ethics and/or used in their coverage of the five selected topics at least one manipulation technique. In the three months of monitoring, the violations of professional ethics grew in numbers, which was mainly due to the campaign for the parliamentary elections of February 24, 2019. The main violation committed by all 12 outlets – at least once in the content on the five topics – was mixture of facts with opinions. The second most frequent violation was failure to offer the right to reply to the people targeted and/or accused in news.

Labeling was also frequent (**Prime TV, Canal 3**). In some cases, the same labels were taken over and spread by other media outlets (**Televiziunea Centrală**). Furthermore, there were cases when the “internal enemy” manipulation technique was used, along with the “national savior” technique. Manipulation by means of images and video editing intensified (**Canal 3, Prime TV, Accent TV**). Negative image transfer and demonization of some politicians were also intensely used by some media outlets. Another manipulation technique that was resumed and used several times during the first three months of 2019 was the priority information manipulation technique.

In this period, several media outlets continued using generalization (**Canal 3, Kp.md, Televiziunea Centrală**), others truncated and/or presented selectively facts, opinions, and statements (**NTV Moldova, Prime TV, Sputnik.md**). Excessive politicization of topics and their presentation from the perspective of political preferences continued in this period, too. For example, the televisions **Prime TV** and **Canal 3** delivered mostly the same news content, favoring the PDM and its representatives and presenting in an exclusively negative light the ACUM Electoral Bloc. At the same time, **NTV Moldova** and **Accent TV** favored in their own news reports the PSRM and President Igor Dodon. **Jurnal TV** sometimes politicized topics, favoring the ACUM Electoral Bloc and certain politicians (Andrei Nastase, Maia Sandu) and disfavoring other parties (PDM and PSRM).

At **Kp.md** and **Sputnik.md** more violations were found than in other reporting periods. Among the most suggestive violations committed by both outlets are mixture of facts with opinions, failure to properly mark opinion articles, failure to provide the right to reply, labeling, and truncation of facts and statements.

The public television **Moldova 1** presented some Government initiatives in a triumphant and slightly tendentious manner, but overall it provided objective coverage of the topics. **TV8, PRO TV Chişinău**, and **Unimedia.info** covered topics mostly in a fair, neutral, and unbiased manner, with some violations: mixture of facts with opinions (**TV8, PRO TV Chişinău**); irony (**Unimedia.info**).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Audiovisual Council (AC), based on article 75 (*Responsibilities of the Audiovisual*

Council) and article 86 (*Cooperation with civil society*) of the [Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova](#), should take note of the findings and monitor the televisions, the content of which has been reported to deliver manipulating information, in order to identify violations of legislation and apply sanctions.

- The editors of TV stations are urged to supervise the editorial content so that it complies with the mission of the media to inform the public and correctly present the reality, and not with the desire of political circles to promote their interests and attack opponents.
- Journalists should become aware of the fact that taking information from other outlets and republishing it with reference to the primary source does not free them from responsibility, from violation of ethics, or from manipulation techniques used by those who generated that product. So, we recommend journalists to verify the truthfulness and accuracy of the information they take over.
- Reporters are encouraged to report all relevant facts on events in an unbiased manner and after verifying information, not selectively or unilaterally.
- Media consumers are advised to seek information in several media sources, in order to avoid the risk of receiving wrong and manipulating information.