



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

Report no. 4  
June 25 – July 1, 2021



Kingdom of the Netherlands

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## **General data**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CPA – central public administration

LPA – local public administration

AUR – Alliance for the Union of Romanians

CEC – Central Electoral Commission

BECS – Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists

BERU – Electoral Bloc Renato Usatîi

PACCC – Civic Congress Joint Action Party

PACE – Building Europe at Home Party

PAS – Action and Solidarity Party  
PDCM – Development and Consolidation Party from Moldova  
PDA – Democracy at Home Party  
PDM – Democratic Party of Moldova  
PLD – Party of Law and Justice  
PNOI – NOI Party  
PPDA – Dignity and Truth Platform Party  
PPPO – People Power Political Party  
PPPS – Party of Change Political Party  
PP Şor – Şor Political Party  
PUN – Party of National Unity  
PVE – Ecologist Green Party  
PMPSN – Hope Professional Movement Party

## **2. Methodology**

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

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

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

### **Language and images used:**

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

### **3. Monitoring data**



#### **Moldova 1**

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

Between June 25 and July 1, 2021, the public television station Moldova 1 paid particular attention to the coverage of the electoral campaign. In seven newscasts, Moldova 1 broadcast 58 materials of direct and indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 3,488 seconds (0.96 hours). They covered mostly the electoral statements of competitors, but also the activity of the CEC/electoral process, the results of opinion polls, civil society reports regarding the development of the electoral campaign, etc. Some of the materials were based on the debates organized by Moldova 1.

46 materials focused on electoral competitors, most of the times (30) covering their electoral priorities and promises, and in 12 cases they covered the accusations of some candidates against others. News stories about electoral objectives had similar formats – about one minute each, they only presented the candidates' statements.

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

Fifty of the 58 materials of direct or indirect electoral nature were objective and impartial, without violations of deontological standards or of the law. Eight other materials were biased, given the selection of topics/information included in the news. For example, on June 29, Moldova 1 reported on the IJC's monitoring report, from which it extracted only information that showed the station in a positive light, ignoring data that indicated its slight favoring of BECS. On June 25, Moldova 1 broadcast a news story based on the program *President Igor Dodon Responds*, which appears on social networks, in which the politician spoke of various topics, including the electoral views of the electoral bloc. The public station chose only passages in which Igor Dodon made premonitions about what will happen if right-wing parties come to power – *the value-added tax will increase by 2% and the prices will increase, respectively*. In another news story, on June 28, Igor Dodon said that if right-wing parties win the elections, the price of gas will increase, because these parties are anti-Russia, so the contract with Gazprom will not be negotiated. On June 29, one material was made from the same perspective: it was based on the BECS conference, in which a representative of the bloc talked about the measures they will take to stop the price increase, among other things, but the public station selected only the accusations launched against the Presidency, according to which *the chaos and price increases began after the president changed*.

The majority of electoral competitors were covered in a neutral tone, with the exception of BECS, which was presented positively in six cases, and PAS, presented negatively in one case. The tone in relation to President Maia Sandu was equally negative and neutral (three times each). The other competitors were covered neutrally.

During the reporting period, the public station informed about the results of two opinion surveys regarding the electoral preferences of voters, and both of them were in line with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021, in the media of the Republic of Moldova*<sup>1</sup>.

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

During the reporting period, the public station used 101 sources to document the 58 monitored news stories, which lacked diversity. Most of the time, they cited/mentioned electoral competitors and representatives of the CEC and of civil society.

Of the 23 competitors registered for elections, Moldova 1 offered airtime to 18. Most of the time, news stories targeted BECS representatives, who were cited 10 times and mentioned 5 times, on some days in two or three stories, followed by PAS, which was cited 6 times and mentioned 3 times.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>BECS</b>	15	497
<b>PAS</b>	9	293
<b>AUR</b>	4	274
<b>PPDA</b>	7	233
<b>PDCM</b>	4	186
<b>BERU</b>	5	113
<b>PPPS</b>	2	70
<b>PP Șor</b>	3	60
<b>PACCC</b>	2	60
<b>PRM</b>	1	60

The station also cited/mentioned PLD (twice, 57 seconds); PUN (once, 57 seconds); PDM (twice, 55 seconds); PMPSN (twice, 52 seconds); PVE, PDA, and PP „Noi” – twice and 50 seconds each. The independent candidate Veaceslav Valico was mentioned once. President Maia Sandu was targeted in six materials, usually controversial, and was mostly mentioned (4 times), rather than cited.

Out of all election-themed news stories, 10 were on controversial issues, where the balance of opinion was ensured evidently or apparently. In three cases, accusations made by BECS against PAS and Maia Sandu were partially balanced, and two other materials included only the

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

speculations of Igor Dodon about the intentions of right-wing parties to destroy many of the good things if they come to power. The public station informed in two news stories about the conference of the BECS candidate Bogdan Țirdea, in which he made various accusations against President Maia Sandu and PAS, claiming they were involved in the theft of the billion (June 30) and did not prevent the privatization of some state properties (June 25). There was also a news story in which BECS representative Petru Burduja accused the Presidency of raising prices (June 29). In all these cases, the station reported that President Maia Sandu's spokeswoman refused to comment on the statements of the electoral candidates, while the PAS representatives replied. Unbalanced or partially balanced were two materials in which PAS representatives accused Igor Dodon of not intervening to stop the privatization of the Codru Hotel when he was Minister of Economy (June 28), but also that BECS intimidated the young wing of PAS, suing them (June 29), mentioning that either the second party concerned did not answer the phone or refused to comment on the statements.

The ratio in terms of gender balance was clearly unfavorable to women, who were cited 17 times (24%), while men were cited/mentioned 52 times.

### **Language and images used**

During the reporting period, the newscasts of the public television Moldova 1 did not contain language discriminating or denigrating electoral competitors. No labels were used, and images were not manipulated.



### **Jurnal TV**

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

During the monitoring period, the television station Jurnal TV had five editions of the main newscast, which contained 21 news stories of direct or indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 2,746 seconds (0.7 hours). The station's journalists covered the campaign activities of electoral competitors in five extensive news stories (one per newscast), which appeared in the section of *Early Parliamentary Elections 2021*. Other news stories about the current activities of CEC, the financial reports presented by electoral competitors, the results of an opinion poll published during this period, lawsuits involving some electoral competitors, the case of polling stations to be opened abroad for the early parliamentary elections, and so on, appeared outside the section dedicated to elections.

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

During this reporting period, Jurnal TV covered the activities of electoral competitors mostly in a fair manner. The station did not openly favor or disfavor candidates. In most of the monitored news stories, journalists did not mix facts with opinion, treating electoral topics in a neutral and impartial manner. All five editions of the main daily newscast had one material titled "Elections 2021: Campaign Events." These materials covered the electoral events that happened over the respective day, presented several competitors in one material, and offered them nearly equal airtime, with small exceptions. At the end of each material, the station noted that other competitors did not organize public electoral events on that day.

One news story that appeared outside the electoral section was tendentious in relation to the independent candidate Veaceslav Valico, in the context when the CEC adopted the decision to appoint the businessman Veaceslav Platon as a trusted person to represent this competitor. Jurnal TV called Veaceslav Platon "*the controversial businessman*" and presented Veaceslav

Valico as a person who became famous during Vladimir Plahotniuc’s time, in June 2019, when he participated in the PDM protest against the ACUM-PSRM coalition. The independent candidate appeared on Jurnal TV in archive footage with some former representatives of PDM, giving speeches praising this political party and its former leader Vladimir Plahotniuc.

On July 1, Jurnal TV presented the results of an opinion poll, mentioning the political parties that would have entered the Parliament “*if parliamentary elections were held on Sunday.*” The material was made in accordance with the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021, in the media of the Republic of Moldova.*

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

In the 21 monitored news stories, Jurnal TV cited or mentioned 61 sources. The most often cited directly or indirectly from events, press conferences, posts on social networks, and so on, were electoral competitors.

From the perspective of the allocated airtime, PPDA benefited from 175 seconds, followed by PAS with 162 seconds and BECS with 112 seconds. The independent candidate Veaceslav Valico had 85 seconds of airtime in only one news story, the one about the CEC decision to give Veaceslav Platon the right to represent Veaceslav Valico in this electoral campaign. The 85 seconds included an excerpt from an archive speech of the independent candidate, as well as direct and indirect quotes of Veaceslav Platon.

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

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>PPDA</b>	7	175
<b>PAS</b>	8	162
<b>BECS</b>	8	112
<b>V. Valico</b>	2	85
<b>AUR</b>	3	67
<b>PUN</b>	2	67
<b>PDCM</b>	3	66
<b>BERU</b>	5	64
<b>PACE</b>	3	57
<b>PDM</b>	7	56

PP Şor had four appearances and 42 seconds, PRM – one appearance and 42 seconds, and PVE – one appearance and 39 seconds. The following electoral competitors were also mentioned in the monitored news stories, but without being offered airtime – PNOI (2), PDA (1), POM (1).

Of all news stories broadcast and analyzed during this monitoring period, nine covered controversial topics. Jurnal TV ensured the balance of sources or announced about the effort made to ensure the balance of sources in these materials.

During the reporting period, Jurnal TV did not ensure the gender balance of sources/protagonists in the monitored news stories. It cited/mentioned 51 male and 10 female sources (16%).

### **Language and images used**

The language and images used by Jurnal TV in the news analyzed during this reporting period were largely in line with deontological standards, except in one case on June 25, when the station resorted to labeling in relation to Veaceslav Platon, calling him “*the controversial businessman.*”



## **NTV Moldova**

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

During the monitoring period, the television station NTV Moldova broadcast 37 materials of direct and indirect electoral nature with a total volume of 6,237 seconds (1.7 hours). The main topics addressed were the CEC decisions on the preparation for the July 11 election, campaign activities of electoral competitors, accusations of some political parties against others. The station also produced three vox pop materials with citizens' opinions on issues directly or indirectly related to the electoral campaign. Outside the section of *Elections 2021*, there were several materials on various topics from the regions of Moldova, but also from Chisinau. A large part of the election-themed news stories targeted President Maia Sandu.

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

More than half of the news stories directly or indirectly related to elections (19 out of 37) covered topics in a biased manner, thus violating the provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, the Electoral Code, and the Moldovan Journalist's Code of Conduct. Bias appeared both in the selection of topics and in the approach to facts and events. Each of the five newscasts had between two and four materials whose protagonists were BECS representatives, and in most cases, they were presented in a positive manner. On the other hand, President Maia Sandu and PAS were targeted in 13 materials of direct and indirect electoral nature, mostly with a negative approach. News stories that covered the activities of other political parties running in the electoral race were usually neutral.

The materials targeting BECS representatives usually presented them in positive light, and other competitors in negative light. Thus, in the context of the Sputnik V vaccination marathon (June 28), when the interviewed citizens said that they chose to be vaccinated with this serum because “*it is the most effective*” and “*they trust it,*” Igor Dodon said that he is “*working to bring enough vaccines for all who wish.*” Also on June 28, the Socialist MPs were presented as promoters of “*the law providing that at least half of the production in retail chains be of local origin, a document that Maia Sandu refuses to promulgate,*” but also as “*authors of the legislative initiative providing for the reduction of the retirement age.*”

Accusatory materials were presented tendentiously, most of the time aiming to show President Maia Sandu in negative light. Thus, in a news story on June 25, it was mentioned three times that “*the PLDM government, of which Maia Sandu had been a part, made several attempts, in the years 2012-2013, to destroy the country's medical system.*” This statement was made by the PSRM MP Bogdan Țirdea, who “*presented several decisions from that period meant to liquidate dozens of hospitals and sell at no cost hectares of land belonging to these institutions.*” No other opinions were presented in the news. On June 30, the Socialist MP Bogdan Țirdea again accused President Maia Sandu of “*contributing to the theft of the billion as a minister in the governments of the Alliance for European Integration.*” A news story from June 28 was also biased. In it, the reporter said that “*since November and until now, prices in Moldova have risen sharply,*” citing the PSRM MP Petru Burduja, a representative of BECS, who said that these price increases came “*after the change of the country's president.*”



In another biased news story on June 28, when in the context of information about Japan offering a non-reimbursable grant of 19 million USD, the reporter also mentioned that the authorities prepared a water supply and sewerage project for Moldova, but *“the money was not obtained because of President Maia Sandu, who refused to promulgate the draft law to allow resigned ministers to sign external financing agreements. Because of this, dozens of thousands of people remain without access to drinking water.”* On July 1, Maia Sandu was again the protagonist of a biased news story in the context of a protest organized by farmers in front of the Presidency, in which the reporter said that according to the people, *“the dialogue with Russia has cooled after Maia Sandu became head of state.”* On June 25, BECS leader Igor Dodon made statements regarding the amendment of the Constitution (June 25), noting, *“All major crises in the modern history of Moldova were generated by the conflict between the President and the Parliament. With regard to AUR: look at what they incite to. They do it to destabilize the situation. I know that AUR promotes the pro-presidential party’s agenda (...). These parties that want the liquidation of the state must be banned.”* No other opinions appeared in the material.

Mixture of facts with opinions was noticed in two news stories on June 28 and 30. On June 28, the reporter announced, *“An MP from Bucharest is getting involved in the electoral campaign in Moldova in favor of AUR, which pleads for the liquidation of Moldova as a state,”* without attributing that quote to anyone. In the news, the reporter said the words *“the people brought by AUR (...),”* suggesting that the protesters cannot voluntarily support a political party, but are forced to come to AUR’s electoral events. On June 30, also through a mixture of facts with opinions, NTV Moldova announced that one of the priorities of BECS is to have *“the law by which large retail chains are required to put on the shelves at least 50% of domestic production”* return to the Parliament, as this initiative is *“supported by people.”* The reporter also mentioned, *“Last year the law according to which at least 50% of vegetables and fruits must get to shelves was amended by the Parliament at the initiative of the PSRM leader Igor Dodon,”* but *“as soon as it reached the Presidency, Maia Sandu refused to promulgate the document, giving priority to foreign products.”* The reporter also said, *“Previously, Maia Sandu blocked other initiatives that aimed to provide facilities for local producers, and several experts characterized that action as protecting the interests of large international companies.”*

During the reporting period, NTV Moldova also broadcast three biased news stories based on citizens’ opinions on topics directly or indirectly related to elections. Thus, on June 25, the station presented the opinions of citizens from Falesti district, regarding the president’s first six months in office. The intro of the material said, *“She did nothing but make promises in order to gain trust,”* and *“people are disappointed and say they have not felt any support from the head of state.”* The newscaster also said, citing people’s opinions, that *“they do not have even the minimum pension secured,” “the Presidency hired people with a dubious reputation,” “she visited more foreign capitals than villages in this country,” “she remembered of villages only in the context of elections and is visiting villages only to support an electoral candidate.”* All the opinions of the citizens inserted in the material form a generalized negative opinion regarding the six months of Maia Sandu’s mandate.

On June 29, NTV Moldova produced another vox pop material with appreciative opinions of the citizens regarding the *“BECS initiative to invest in the development of the province by relaunching the Moldovan Village program,”* which *“delighted the people.”* NTV Moldova did not say in which localities the survey was conducted or what questions people answered. Citizens were also asked to comment on information published by Telegraph.md, according to which *“on election day they will be spied on.”* In the intro to the story, the newscaster said, *“Citizens are outraged by the decision of the authorities to spy on them on the day of the*

*parliamentary elections. (...) They criticize the lack of reaction from President Maia Sandu.”* All opinions inserted in the material were negative, targeting the head of state.

None of the three materials of this kind, made by NTV Moldova, was accompanied by the note that *“the survey is not representative of public opinion and has no survey value,”* as provided by the Code of Audiovisual Media Services (CoAMS) in Article 13 (11), giving the impression that these are nationwide surveys and general opinions throughout the country.

The tone of coverage of the majority of electoral candidates was neutral. An exception was BECS, which benefited from a positive tone in 10 cases, while PAS was the protagonist of two materials with a negative connotation. At the same time, PAS was disadvantaged by the large number of negative news stories about President Maia Sandu – nine in total.

NTV Moldova presented the results of an opinion poll (June 30), which showed the most active politicians and the most active political entities, and the material was in line with the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021, in the media of the Republic of Moldova.*

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

To produce the 37 news stories of direct and indirect electoral nature, the station used 131 sources. Electoral competitors and citizens were cited most often. The news also mentioned/cited institutions such as the CEC, Government, Presidency, National Chamber of Social Insurance, Public Services Agency.

In terms of frequency and duration of appearances, BECS benefited from the largest number of appearances/mentions and airtime allocated to direct interventions (14 appearances and 1,448 seconds), followed by PPPS, PVE, AUR, PDM, PPDA, PLD, PPO, and PAS.

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

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>BECS</b>	14	1,448
<b>PPPS</b>	2	169
<b>PVE</b>	2	155
<b>AUR</b>	4	138
<b>PDM</b>	3	111
<b>PPDA</b>	3	95
<b>PLD</b>	1	85
<b>PPO</b>	1	70
<b>PAS</b>	4	64

Also, BERU and PP Șor were mentioned three times, and PDA only once. President Maia Sandu was mentioned nine times and had three direct interventions of 89 seconds.

Of the 14 news stories on controversial topics, 10 were unbalanced or partially balanced, and the balance of sources was not ensured. In most cases, the station made no effort to balance the news, noting that the person concerned did not answer the phone or refused to comment. At the same time, in four news stories, NTV Moldova did not say it had tried to ask for the opinion of the persons concerned.

In terms of gender balance, during the reporting period men were cited 63 times, and women were cited 52 times (45%).

### **Language and images used**

In election-themed news stories, NTV Moldova did not use discriminatory language in relation to electoral competitors. The footage included in the news was usually in line with ethical and professional standards. In one news story, on July 1, about protesters in front of the Presidency, the microphone of the Primul în Moldova station appeared on the screen.



### **Prime TV**

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

In the fourth week of monitoring, on Prime TV we analyzed four newscasts in Romanian at 21:00, and one in Russian at 18:00 (on June 28). The station covered the electoral campaign in 34 news stories, and materials indirectly related to the topic appeared in the section *Elections 2021*. The total volume of news was 3,559 seconds (one hour). The station focused on the electoral commitments of the parties registered for elections and accusations launched by some candidates against others, the process of preparation for the election (printing ballots, allocating the necessary money, the number of polling stations abroad), hearing of Veaceslav Platon at the Parliamentary Commission investigating the “Laundromat” case. Prime TV also reported extensively on the AUR protest in front of the Information and Security Service (ISS) and on its accusations against the ISS and broadcast several reports on infrastructure projects implemented in Orhei district.

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

Prime TV provided a neutral coverage of the activities of most of the electoral competitors for the early parliamentary elections, with the exception of PP Șor and BECS, which were favored, and AUR, whose events and statements were covered exclusively in conflicting news stories.

On July 25, 29, and 30, the station broadcast three biased reports about the infrastructure projects implemented in Orhei district, all of which contained footage from the Orhei District Council (including some with interviewed sources), indicating the source. The first one was about the construction of a “*strategic road*” between the villages Susleni and Jora de Mijloc. It cited the head of the district, Dinu Țurcanu, as well as some local people who praised the project, and the material was accompanied by a soundtrack. The second report informed, with a mixture of facts and opinions, about the fact that “*the summer vacation will be happier for hundreds of children from four villages in Orhei district, after the arrangement of some modern playgrounds was finished in their localities.*” The journalists noted that the project was carried out by the Orhei District Council and that the cited mayor was elected as a member of PP Șor. Dinu Țurcanu, representative of PP Șor, was cited, again. The third material, titled *Modernized Streets*, addressed the renovation of three roads in the town of Orhei, “*after years of being in a disastrous state.*” This time, again, it was mentioned that the mayor was elected from PP Șor, and the road infrastructure modernization program was launched by the Orhei District Council and Orhei Mayor’s Office. “*Over the past six years, investments in modernizing road infrastructure have increased at least four times,*” Prime TV journalists concluded.

Prime TV also informed in three news stories about the electoral promises of PP Șor that the party leader Ilan Șor spoke of at a show, as well as at briefings he organized in online format.

BECS was favored in several news stories in which journalists presented the opinion of Igor Dodon or PSRM on some events. On June 25, the station announced that Igor Dodon accused

AUR of intending to “destabilize the situation in the country through the actions of the last days in Râbnița and Varnița” and noted that one of the main objectives of BECS is to ban in the Constitution parties that threaten the integrity of the state. Only at the end, it said that the incident in Varnița was discussed in the Joint Control Commission, but without reaching a common denominator. On July 1, the station announced, “The request of the Minister of Agriculture Ion Perju for the Government to grant 246 million lei to farmers is supported by the Socialists. (...) The Socialists say that caring for the people of the country must be a priority for any government.” During the monitoring period, Prime TV did not broadcast news stories presenting the opinions of other electoral competitors on the two topics. Igor Dodon appeared in two other news stories about the visit of the world chess champion Anatoly Karpov, invited to Moldova at his initiative, and one of those stories mentioned that a chess school bearing the player’s name might be opened in our country.

AUR was targeted in Igor Dodon’s accusations over the incidents in Râbnița and Varnița, but also in three news stories about its protest in front of the ISS, which its representatives accused of being used as a “political baton” to remove the Alliance from the electoral race, and they did it at the orders of President Maia Sandu. On July 30, an extended news story of more than seven minutes spoke about the fact that the protesters slept overnight in front of the ISS building, in tents, and then went to protest in front of the Presidency. The series of accusations against the two institutions was resumed. The next day, the station cited the opinion of Ion Chicu (PDCM), who was outraged by this protest.

On July 1, Prime TV presented the results of an opinion poll about the parties that would enter the Parliament. The material was in line with all the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021, in the media of the Republic of Moldova*. The journalists informed about the name of the organization that carried out the survey, the time interval in which it took place, the size of the sample and the maximum margin of error, the source of funding, etc.

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

Prime TV documented its news stories by referring to or citing 97 sources – representatives of the electoral competitors, CEC, Government, ISS, law enforcement bodies, the Presidency, citizens, etc.

The station provided access to news for nine of the 23 candidates. AUR benefited from the most airtime for interventions (247 seconds), being followed at a short distance by PP Șor, BECS, and PPDA. The duration of the PAS appearance was 141 seconds. PDCM, BERU, and PACE appeared with interventions or mentions of less than 100 seconds, and PDA was mentioned in one news story.

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

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>AUR</b>	4	247
<b>PP Șor</b>	8	243
<b>BECS</b>	11	236
<b>PPDA</b>	5	203
<b>PAS</b>	7	141
<b>PDCM</b>	2	95
<b>BERU</b>	2	86

<b>PACE</b>	1	20
<b>PDA</b>	1	0

The presidential institution and/or President Maia Sandu were cited or mentioned six times, with 98 seconds of interventions. Five of these materials, in which the protagonists brought accusations against the president, concerned the electoral campaign indirectly.

News stories about the commitments of different candidates were short, based on a single source, and had no background information. Of the 34 monitored news stories, 11 were conflicting, but balanced, with visible journalistic effort to offer all those targeted/accused the right to reply.

More men than women were cited or mentioned in the station's materials, the numerical ratio being 48 to 23 (32%).

### **Language and images used**

Prime TV used appropriate and non-discriminatory language in most of its materials. In one case, in the Russian-language newscast, journalists labeled Veaceslav Platon a *controversial businessman*. In the June 25 news story about Maia Sandu's opinion on the number of polling stations in the diaspora, the station used archival footage of long queues at the 2020 presidential elections, without specifying their source. Also, in several cases, the reporter held in his hand the microphone with the Publika TV logo, but the source of the footage was not properly mentioned.



### **Primul în Moldova**

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

During the monitoring period, the station Primul în Moldova actively covered the electoral campaign. The five monitored newscasts had 37 materials of direct or indirect electoral nature, with a duration of 5,482 seconds or 1.5 hours. Thirty of the 37 materials appeared in the section *Elections 2021*. Seven other materials appeared outside that section.

The materials described the priorities that BECS intends to achieve immediately after the elections; announced the worsening of the socio-economic situation in Moldova if the right-wing forces reach the Parliament; presented in detail the solutions proposed by BECS to reform various areas. Some of the news stories referred to the activity of BECS members outside the campaign. Other materials covered the campaign events of other electoral candidates, informed about the conduct of the electoral process and the activity of President Maia Sandu.

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

Of the 37 monitored news stories, 15 were biased, indicative of the station's predilection for favoring or disfavoring certain electoral competitors. The lack of impartiality and objectivity was evident in the way in which topics relevant for this monitoring were selected and presented. All newscasts contained materials about the achievements and commitments of BECS and accusations against PAS and President Maia Sandu, which indicates the intention of the station to position BECS in a positive context and to discredit PAS and Maia Sandu.

For example, the June 25 newscast had one material in which "*Igor Dodon warns of a collapse if the right wing comes to power*" because "*anti-social projects*" will be promoted, and the only solution to stop these "*pseudo-reforms*" is the victory of BECS in the elections. According to Igor Dodon, "*this is possible, according to weekly measurements,*" which show that "*developments are quite interesting, spectacular (...) I can tell you that the right is decreasing,*

*and the left is increasing (...)*” In the background information, the reporter did not refer to the results of any opinion poll. The dramatic situation in which citizens will find themselves if “*the right wins in elections two weeks from now*” was also widely covered in a news story broadcast on June 28: growth of prices, increase of the retirement age, liquidation of villages and small districts, the state’s indebtedness to external partners. The story also said that Maia Sandu refuses to sign draft laws that would encourage local producers, and BECS “*is ready to take over a government that will quickly solve the problems of the people and the state.*”

Other examples of biased materials targeting the presidential institution: the news story about the sharp rise in prices for all product categories immediately after the 2020 presidential election and the BECS commitment, announced by Petru Burduja, to “*put an end to this outrage*” because, “*the president did this only to satisfy her own vanity and get a few more seats in the Parliament,*” while “*the country today needs stability*” (June 30); the news story about the farmers’ protest at the Presidency, “*dissatisfied with the fact that the authorities have found money to hold elections, but not to grant them subsidies,*” and that “*Maia Sandu has done nothing to reopen the Russian market.*” This news story is further supplemented by the statement that “*the head of state has not enacted the law by which retail chains are required to cover 50 percent of shelves with local goods,*” as well as voices of citizens condemning the inefficient use of the reserve fund intended for exceptional situations, and not elections (“*elderly people complain that they have been affected by hail (...) and we are grinning and saying we want early elections*”) (July 1). Another material announced that Moldova risks being unable to issue passports for its citizens because of two presidential advisers who allegedly put pressure on the Public Services Agency (July 1).

During the monitoring period, the station also broadcast two extensive materials about the previous activity of the Moldovan president and some PAS members. One referred to the attempts of the former PLDM government, “*of which Maia Sandu was part,*” to destroy the medical system, specifically, to close four hospitals in the country. The story mentioned that only the PSRM protests saved those hospitals, and at the end the BECS candidate Bodgan Țîrdea warned, “*Do not forget, every day, you, doctors, teachers are under the sword of Damocles, risking to be fired, optimized, to lose jobs. Maia Sandu is a representative of the World Bank, of transnational oligarchy, and she will always do everything these structures say and will never listen to the pain of simple doctors and teachers*” (June 25).

In the second material, Bodgan Țîrdea accused the PAS leaders (Igor Grosu, Dumitru Alaiba) of being “*participants in the financial and bank fraud.*” It contained background information that Maia Sandu had rejected the law voted by the Parliament at the proposal of PSRM, which relieved the “*shoulders of the citizens*” of the burden to recover the stolen billion (June 30).

Primul în Moldova also broadcast two materials (June 28 and 30) that reported on successful projects implemented in several localities due to the collaboration between mayors who ran in elections on the PSRM list (Vladislav Zloi in Donduseni village, Dmitri Ikizli in Congazcic village, ATU Gagauz-Yeri) and central authorities. The materials were accompanied by laudatory opinions of locals who expressed the hope that similar projects will be carried out in the future.

During the monitoring period, we noticed the partisanship of Primul în Moldova in favor of BECS, which was the protagonist in 12 news stories, five of which presented in detail the electoral priorities and commitments of this candidate. In three other materials, BECS representatives launched accusations against PAS and against President Maia Sandu.

In nine of the 12 materials, the tone of coverage in relation to BECS was obviously positive: it was presented as the electoral competitor that is worried about the “*chaos in the country,*” condemns price increases, comes to the aid of farmers, takes responsibility for the country’s



fate in the post-election period, reports the abuses committed by “PAS leaders, including Maia Sandu,” and takes care of citizens. For example, in the news story about the vaccination marathon (June 28) Igor Dodon was positioned as a politician who gives priority to citizens to be immunized with the “long-awaited serum” and has already initiated all necessary steps to bring another million doses of Sputnik V from Russia.

BECS was also the only electoral competitor to benefit from most news focused exclusively on the presentation of electoral priorities.

In relation to PAS, the station had a biased attitude, and the tone of its coverage was negative in five materials, showing its representatives as candidates with “doubtful integrity,” “involved in bank fraud,” or representatives of “the presidential party.”

In relation to President Maia Sandu, the station adopted a negative tone in 10 materials, the head of state being accused of getting involved in the electoral campaign, interfering in the justice sector, subordinating the Information and Security Service, participating in the bank fraud, being indifferent to the problems of citizens affected by natural disasters (“a president who cannot help us with anything, nothing is within her competence” - July 1).

A tone with negative accents was also found in the news story about the PDA candidate, made after his participation in an electoral debate and presenting him as a “candidate with undeclared income” (July 1). Another material that showed negative attitude concerned AUR, which, according to the news, violates the electoral legislation by involving foreign citizens in the campaign (June 28).

The other competitors who appeared in the newscasts of Primul în Moldova were presented in a neutral manner. Thus, Primul în Moldova did not comply with the provisions of the Electoral Code (Article 69 (1)), which stipulates that “broadcasters, in all their programs (...) have the obligation to respect the principles of fairness, responsibility, balance, and impartiality in the coverage of elections,” but also the provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, Article 13 (6), which provides for ensuring impartiality, balance, and favoring the free formation of opinions by presenting the main opposing points of view during the period when issues are in public debate.

On June 30, the station reported on the results of a new opinion poll. The material was made in line with the Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021, in the media of the Republic of Moldova.

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

To document the 37 news stories, Primul în Moldova consulted 103 sources. They included electoral candidates, the CEC, the Presidency, representatives of state institutions, and citizens.

From the perspective of appearances, the BECS representatives had the largest presence, with a volume of direct and indirect interventions of 1,008 seconds. They were followed by AUR, with a volume of appearances almost five times smaller (206 seconds), and PPPS, with 140 seconds for direct or indirect interventions.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>BECS</b>	12	1,008
<b>AUR</b>	3	206

<b>PPPS</b>	2	140
<b>PPDA</b>	3	96
<b>PVE</b>	2	87
<b>PAS</b>	7	70
<b>PLD</b>	1	64
<b>PDM</b>	1	52
<b>PUN</b>	1	50
<b>PPPO</b>	1	42

PDA had an appearance with 38 seconds. BERU and PP Şor were mentioned only once each. President Maia Sandu was mentioned 11 times, with three direct interventions of 73 seconds (taken from other media outlets).

Of the 37 materials, 11 were conflicting, and six of them were unbalanced. Four of these news stories that contained accusations against the Presidency and PAS mentioned no editorial effort to balance the materials in terms of the sources cited.

In another material concerning AUR, accused of involving foreign nationals in the electoral campaign, journalists did not announce whether they took action to balance the material. Another news story, in which AUR accused PAS of benefiting from protection from the Presidency, was partially unbalanced. The station claimed that PAS did not answer the phone, while the representatives of the Presidency said they do not comment on statements launched during the electoral campaign.

From the perspective of ensuring gender equality, male sources/protagonists were cited/mentioned 66 times, and women were cited/mentioned 21 times (24%).

### **Language and images used**

The language and images used in the newscasts of Primul în Moldova were in line with deontological standards, without violations or discriminatory elements. In one case, on July 28, in the news story about the vaccination marathon, the microphone of the NTV Moldova television station appeared in the footage.



**Pro TV**

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

During the monitoring period, Pro TV Chisinau broadcast, in the seven editions of the main daily newscast, 27 news stories of direct and indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 3,666 seconds (just over an hour). The relevant stories were not included in a separate section dedicated to elections. Five of them addressed the current activity of the CEC, such as printing ballots or details on requesting a mobile ballot box. Others referred to appeals to court over the number of polling stations to be opened in the diaspora and the Transnistrian region, accusations between competitors, protests and incidents involving representatives of some parties. Also, in each newscast, the station informed about the organization of debates “You vote on Pro TV,” with the announcement of the invited competitors, and newscasts on the following days included news about the debates that took place the previous evening.

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



Pro TV Chisinau informed about the progress of the electoral campaign neutrally, treated electoral competitors in a fair and balanced manner in most of the monitored news stories. On July 26, the station broadcast a news story about Igor Dodon’s presence at the vaccination marathon at the Palace of the Republic, with slightly tendentious elements. In the material, the reporters noted that Igor Dodon came there “*in the midst of the electoral campaign,*” stood in the long line of hundreds of people “*without wearing a mask,*” and “*left unvaccinated.*” “*Last summer, Dodon offered to be the first citizen to be vaccinated with Sputnik V. (...) Although he does not hold any public office, the PSRM leader announced that Moldova intended to purchase up to one million doses of Sputnik, which could arrive in Chisinau in the coming weeks,*” said the newscaster.

On July 1, the station broadcast a news story about an opinion poll on the parties that would enter the Parliament. The material did not fully comply with the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021 in the media of the Republic of Moldova*. It informed about the name of the organization that conducted the survey, the date or interval in which it took place, the sample size and the maximum margin of error, the source of funding. The material did not mention whether the CEC was informed about the conduct of the survey, as required by the Regulation.

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

The station cited or mentioned 88 sources in the monitored news stories, most often the parties participating in the elections, the representatives of the CEC, the justice sector, citizens.

The television provided access to 15 electoral competitors during this week of monitoring. The most cited was the independent candidate Veaceslav Valico and his representative Veaceslav Platon (175 seconds). They appeared in two news stories, one of which reported extensively that V. Platon had been appointed as V. Valico’s trusted person and cited him directly with explanations of how the two reached this agreement.

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

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>V. Valico</b>	2	175
<b>AUR</b>	5	106
<b>BECS</b>	7	85
<b>PPDA</b>	3	80
<b>PRM</b>	2	76
<b>PNOI</b>	2	58
<b>PDA</b>	3	55
<b>PAS</b>	4	51
<b>PPM</b>	2	51
<b>PLD</b>	1	51

In addition to the candidates mentioned in the table, Pro TV also cited in the news PUN, PVE, PDCM, PDM, PP “NOI”. It should be noted that the news stories based on the debates that took place the previous evening offered almost equal airtime for interventions to their participants.

Six of the 27 monitored news stories were conflicting, and the journalists offered all those targeted/accused the right to reply.

During the reporting period, we notice imbalance from the perspective of ensuring gender equality, with 46 men and 9 women (18%) being cited or mentioned in the news.

### **Language and images used**

The language and images used in the newscasts of Pro TV Chisinau largely complied with deontological standards, without violations or discriminatory elements, except for two cases on June 25 and July 1, when journalists resorted to labeling. The first news story referred to the “*controversial businessman Veaceslav Platon,*” and in the second one, based on the debates conducted by the station the night before, the newscaster labeled the former leader of the Democratic Party, Vlad Plahotniuc, as “*fugitive oligarch.*”



### **Publika TV**

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

During the reporting period, Publika TV produced 34 materials of direct or indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 3,183 seconds or 0.8 hours. Reporters informed about the electoral priorities and commitments of competitors, announced during the campaign events and not only; provided information from the CEC on the preparations for July 11; reported on the campaign expenses, the profile of the competitors registered for elections, and so on. The newscasts also covered the controversial situations involving some electoral competitors (the incident in Bălți with the involvement of the PACE representative, the protests initiated by AUR). Publika TV broadcast a news story about the results of an electoral poll.

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

Most of the materials of direct or indirect electoral nature broadcast by Publika TV were made in a neutral and fair manner, without violation of deontological standards, and facts were separated from opinion. A certain predilection was noticed in relation to BECS, PPDA, and PP Șor, which were favored by the topics chosen for coverage by Publika TV. The station broadcast three materials that strictly refer to the electoral promises and commitments of the three competitors, the tone being both neutral and positive. These formations were also protagonists in other materials indirectly related to elections.

A positive tone was noticed in the news about the vaccination marathon in which participated one of the BECS leaders, Igor Dodon, announced as a politician who gives priority to citizens (“*I am going to stand in line. I will not get vaccinated until all of you do*”) and who can help them (“*I will keep asking our partners in Russia to make sure that it [the vaccine] is enough for everyone. We have already requested one million doses, and we have money in the budget. The first 200-300 thousand should arrive in the nearest weeks*”).

AUR appeared only in news stories of conflicting nature (protests at the Information and Security Service, at the Presidency) or in the context in which another candidate launched accusations against it.

The tone of coverage of other electoral candidates was neutral.

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

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

Publika TV provided access to news to less than half of the electoral competitors (nine candidates out of 23). To document the 34 news stories, the station consulted 88 sources: electoral candidates, CEC, representatives of state institutions.

From the perspective of the allocated airtime, the representatives of PPDA had the largest presence, with the highest volume for direct or indirect interventions – 259 seconds. In second place was BECS with 196 seconds, followed by BERU with 134 seconds.

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

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>PPDA</b>	8	259
<b>BECS</b>	11	196
<b>BERU</b>	4	134
<b>PAS</b>	8	132
<b>PP Șor</b>	6	132
<b>AUR</b>	5	122
<b>PDCM</b>	2	104
<b>PACE</b>	2	42

PDM was mentioned only once.

Out of all monitored news stories (34), 10 were of a conflicting nature, and one of them was unbalanced in terms of the sources cited. It was about the findings made by the PDCM candidate Ion Chicu against AUR, in the context of the protests organized by AUR at the Information and Security Service: *“Any action directed against any state is a crime and it must be punished accordingly. Separatism, unionism are of the same kind and mean the destruction of the state.”*

In other materials of this kind, reporters ensured the balance of the cited sources.

The editorial staff consulted mostly men (38), while women (11) had a smaller presence (22%).

### **Language and images used**

Both the language and video images used in Publika TV newscasts were in line with deontological standards.



### **RTR Moldova**

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

Between June 25 and July 1, 2021, RTR Moldova broadcast 50 election-themed materials in the five newscasts at 20:00, with a total duration of 3,190 seconds (0.88 hours). Most of the news stories (40) referred to the electoral priorities and objectives of competitors, five (broadcast outside the section dedicated to elections) covered the activities of local public authorities in Orhei, and another four informed about the electoral process (printing of ballots, CEC meetings). A news story of indirect electoral nature covered farmers' protests in front of the Presidency. The station did not address conflicting issues, except for the report on the protest, and the journalists focused only on citing the electoral statements of the candidates.

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

Most of the materials (45 out of 50) broadcast by RTR Moldova were impartial, separated facts from opinion, and did not have violations from the provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services or the Moldovan Journalist's Code of Conduct. The station had an objective approach to all competitors, informing about them regardless of whether they organized campaign events. The news cited excerpts from the public statements made at press conferences, public events, in interviews for other media, or on Facebook. In some cases, the station referred to the electoral programs of the competitors or to information from their electoral spots.

Five materials showed a biased approach in relation to PP Șor. They were reports made in different localities in Orhei district, showing representatives of the local public administration (part of PP Șor) who talked about their achievements and successes. These reports, one per day, appeared outside the section dedicated to elections, and the logo on the microphone was covered. These five reports were of an advertising and laudatory nature, showing PP Șor candidates in positive light. The other electoral competitors were presented neutrally.

During the reporting period, RTR Moldova did not present the results of any election-themed opinion poll.

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

The 50 analyzed news stories were documented from 72 sources. The station failed to ensure the diversity of sources, featuring mainly electoral competitors, CEC, and citizens.

The station provided access to news to 19 of the 23 candidates registered for elections. The most appearances and allocated airtime went to PP Șor, whose representatives were cited in 10 news stories, benefiting from the most airtime for direct and indirect appearances.

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

<b>Cited/mentioned subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds</b>
<b>PP Șor</b>	10	470
<b>BECS</b>	5	297
<b>BERU</b>	5	271
<b>PAS</b>	3	221
<b>PPPOM</b>	2	127
<b>PCDM</b>	5	110
<b>PPDA</b>	2	106
<b>PLD</b>	2	100
<b>PDM</b>	2	90
<b>PACCC</b>	1	80

The station also cited once the representatives of PPM, PVE, AUR, PUN, PACE, PRM, PPPS, PP "Noi", and the independent candidate Veaceslav Valico.

Of the 50 news stories broadcast, only one referred to controversies: the material about the farmers' protest in front of the Presidency, which was balanced with the opinion of the institution's representatives.

The ratio of sources from a gender perspective was clearly in favor of men: 52 men versus 13 women (20%).

## Language and images used

The language used by RTR Moldova in the news about the electoral process, but also about the candidates for membership in the Parliament of Moldova, was neutral, in an informative style, without appreciations or labels. No editing tricks were noticed.



## Involvement in the coverage of the electoral campaign

Between June 25 and July 1, 2021, TV6 broadcast five editions of the *Ora știrilor* newscast, which included 31 materials of direct or indirect electoral nature, with a volume of 3,793 seconds (just over one hour). Of these, 21 appeared in the section *Elections 2021* and 10 outside this section. Almost half of these news stories covered the activity of PP Șor representatives during the electoral campaign, but also outside it. TV6 also reported on the current activity of the CEC, accusations of some electoral competitors against others, the financial reports of the candidates, the activity of President Maia Sandu, etc.

## Impartiality and objectivity. Political partisanship

Contrary to the provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, the Electoral Code, and the Moldovan Journalist's Code of Conduct, 23 out of the 31 materials analyzed during this monitoring were biased. On TV6, the lack of impartiality and objectivity could be noticed in the selection of topics and in the angle of approach. In 10 news stories, facts were not separated from opinions.

Tendentiousness mostly appeared in the fact that journalists brought to the fore the achievements and commitments of PP Șor representatives. For example, five of the 21 news stories in the section *Elections 2021* covered the commitments of PP Șor, presented exclusively by the party's leader, Ilan Șor, and it made him appear as an electoral competitor who proposes solutions: creation of state-owned gas stations, revolution in economy, business support, the transformation of Moldova into a "*thriving garden*," punishments for politicians who do not respect their electoral commitments, etc. Ilan Șor appeared in TV6 newscasts every day, being presented in an obviously positive light. In one news story (June 28), which appeared in the section dedicated to elections, PP Șor representatives were presented at the patron saint holiday of Pohrebeni village, where Ilan Șor addressed a congratulatory message online. In one material (July 1), TV6 cited another representative of PP Șor, Denis Ulanov, who claimed that the Prosecutor's Office refuses to hear certain people in the case of the theft of the billion, without mentioning that this candidate had been given the status of accused in bank fraud lawsuit.

Eleven materials in the section *Elections 2021*, broadcast between June 25 and July 1, placed other competitors in a negative context, accusing each other or in conflict situations. For example, representatives of PACE were not allowed to attend a football match in Balti because they wore T-shirts with the party's logo, which caused an altercation (June 28). In the story, the journalists cited these representatives of the party, who claimed that Renato Usatii (BERU) was at the match, and there were BERU flags at the entrance to the stadium. PACE also accused PAS of hindering an electoral meeting (June 29), but also of the fact that one of its supporters destroyed an electoral banner (July 1). According to PACE, a BERU representative allegedly stole an electoral banner (July 1).

Materials on controversial topics, which were usually biased, featured some other electoral competitors. For example, TV6 reported that the businessman Veaceslav Platon had been appointed as Veaceslav Valico's trusted person, and V. Valico had previously accused V. Platon of involvement in illegal schemes (June 25); Vasile Costiuc, PDA leader, was assaulted in

Ungheni (June 28); the conflict between an AUR representative and a PDA representative at electoral debates, in a news story titled “Who is more Romanian than a Romanian” (June 29); AUR protest in front of the Information and Security Service headquarters (June 30); BECS representatives accusing representatives of PAS and President Maia Sandu of participation in the theft of the billion (June 30); PPDA protest at the Chisinau Court of Appeal (July 1); the CEC obliged, at the request of BECS, to verify whether Maia Sandu does electoral campaigning for PAS (July 1).

Another biased news story, on July 1, was about the financial reports of electoral competitors submitted to the CEC. TV6 used the caption “*Millions thrown in the campaign,*” emphasizing in the intro to the story that BERU “*wasted almost nine million lei.*” After presenting PAS as being among the parties with millions of expenses, in the same news story TV6 reminded that the party representatives asked voters for support, citing the party leader Igor Grosu, who said, “*We currently have only 8,000 lei in the electoral fund. We need donations to continue the campaign.*” In the same context, the station claimed that the CEC had identified 169 people with zero income or income smaller than the donations they made for electoral candidates, and “*most, i.e. 18, are from PAS.*”

Outside the section *Elections 2021*, TV6 broadcast six appreciative materials about the achievements of local public authorities affiliated to PP Șor: inauguration of playgrounds for children from several villages in Orhei district, renovated roads in rural areas, testing a special purpose vehicle in Orhei, etc. In all these news stories, TV6 directly cited LPA representatives. In most of these stories, the station did not separate facts from opinions. For example, in the material about the inauguration of playgrounds, journalists defined the project as “*ample.*”

After airing a material about the repaired roads in the village of Tabăra in Orhei district (June 28), TV6 made indirectly a parallel with the city of Balti, whose mayor is the leader of BERU, Renato Usatii. TV6 broadcast a material titled “*The jungle in Balti,*” and in the intro the journalists emphasized, “*Like a jungle in the wild, this is what a park in Balti looks like, abandoned.*” Although they noted that the park belongs to the Episcopate of Bălți and Fălești, TV6 left in the quote from a civic activist the mention that among those who do not take action is the mayor, without granting him the right to reply.

The activity of Maia Sandu as the president of Moldova was targeted in three materials on controversial topics, all three being produced in a biased manner, presenting the head of state in negative light: the promotion of Ștefan Țăbuleac to the position of head of the Service of the Supreme Security Council of the Presidency, using the caption “*Dodon’s Man Got Promoted*” (June 25); three associations from Romania accusing Maia Sandu of interference in the justice system (June 30); farmers who protested at the Presidency headquarters (July 1).

During the reporting period, TV6 was clearly partisan in favor of PP Șor, which was the protagonist of 13 biased materials, in 11 of which the representatives of PP Șor were presented in positive light. At the same time, the attitude was clearly biased in relation to PAS (five news stories with a negative tone) and President Maia Sandu (five news stories with a negative tone), as well as to BERU and its leader Renato Usatii (four news stories with a negative tone).

Thus, TV6 did not comply with the provisions of the Electoral Code (Article 69 (1)), which stipulates that “*broadcasters, in all their programs (...) have the obligation to respect the principles of fairness, responsibility, balance, and impartiality in the coverage of elections,*” but also the provisions of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, Article 13 (6), which provides for *ensuring impartiality, balance, and favoring the free formation of opinions by presenting the main opposing points of view during the period when issues are in public debate.*

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



Between June 25 and July 1, 2021, to document news stories, TV6 cited/mentioned 101 sources in the materials analyzed during this monitoring, most of them being electoral competitors, local public authorities, citizens, minors, etc.

PP Șor benefited from the most airtime, being allocated dozens of times more airtime than other competitors (594 seconds). Other electoral competitors were mentioned once when TV6 informed about the financial reports of the electoral competitors (PDM, PDCM, PLD, POM, PUN, PACCC, PMPSN, Veaceslav Valico).

President Maia Sandu was mentioned five times. In this context, Sorina Ștefăruță, the spokesperson of the Presidency, was cited twice with an indirect intervention of 23 seconds.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>PP Șor</b>	13	594
<b>AUR</b>	4	101
<b>BECS</b>	3	92
<b>PDA</b>	4	92
<b>PACE</b>	4	86
<b>PPDA</b>	4	23
<b>BERU</b>	4	17
<b>PAS</b>	6	15

During the reporting period, TV6 broadcast 16 news stories on controversial topics, nine of which were unbalanced. Seven targeted PAS, the Presidency, or BERU. In unbalanced materials, formal attempts were made to balance the news from the point of view of sources.

Most of the monitored news stories were made with reference to a single source or to sources expressing the same point of view, without being supplemented with background information.

Thus, TV6 did not comply with Article 13 (4) of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, according to which “*in audiovisual news programs, for which accuracy and correctness are essential, reports must come from reliable sources, sufficiently documented factually, with a credible and impartial approach to events, with a balanced presentation of different opinions.*”

During the reporting period, TV6 did not ensure the gender balance of sources/protagonists in the monitored news. The station cited/mentioned 66 male and 35 female sources (34%).

**Language and images used**

The language and images used in the monitored newscasts on TV6 during the reporting period were in most cases in line with deontological standards.



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

Between June 25 and July 1, 2021, TV8 broadcast seven newscasts that included 24 materials of direct and indirect electoral nature, with a total volume of 3,994 seconds (1.1 hours). News stories directly related to elections (20) appeared in the section *Elections 2021*. The station informed about the fact that the CEC ordered the printing of ballots for the elections and

requested additional funds for the conduct of the elections; reported on the activity of electoral competitors and presented the statements they made during the electoral debates on TV8; analyzed together with the Expert-Grup Association the electoral programs of the political entities registered for elections; and made an extensive report about the fact that electoral tents were banned in Orhei. TV8 also announced the results of an opinion poll on voter preferences before the elections of July 11, 2021.

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

For the most part, electoral topics were covered correctly and impartially, facts being separated from opinion, without any apparent predilection for certain actors registered for the elections. News stories directly related to the elections (20 out of 24) were presented in an unbiased manner. In three stories, all the 23 electoral competitors participating in the July 11 elections were mentioned, and their electoral logos were shown on the screen.

The tone of the coverage of most electoral competitors was neutral, except for BECS, in relation to which the station had a slightly biased approach in three news stories. For example, on June 25, TV8 broadcast a material announcing that “*within a few days Igor Dodon had two visits to the Russian Federation,*” noting that “*last night the politician returned from a new trip from Moscow.*” The reporter also announced, “*The former head of state, who currently does not hold any public office, was caught as he hurried out of the Airport building through the VIP area.*” Throughout the story, the caption “*An ‘electoral’ visit to Moscow?*” was on the screen. The topic was developed in a report broadcast on June 26, when the reporter asked Igor Dodon at a public event, “*On what money did you go to Moscow? You have no position now.*” Igor Dodon answered that he is the leader of PSRM and has a salary there, to which the reporter asked, “*Is it enough to go to Moscow whenever you decide?*”

In another news story, on June 29, the station broadcast a material in which the BERU leader Renato Usatîi presented a video showing “*how Igor Dodon is drawing the fishing net at Condrîța.*” While Usatîi claimed that “*this happened before he left Condrîța after losing the elections,*” Igor Dodon said that “*the video is from around 2017, when he ordered the pond to be cleaned and other fish brought.*” Finally, the reporter showed images that at the end of Igor Dodon’s term, “*the magnificent house remained deserted, and in some rooms there was no furniture at all. The cellar remained empty, too, with only a few cans left.*” The biased approach of the station leads the viewer to think that Usatîi saying that “*Igor Nikolaevich Dodon, being a thrifty man, (...) takes all the fish out of the pond so that nothing remains,*” is actually true.

During the reporting period, TV8 also broadcast the results of an electoral poll (July 1), respecting the provisions of the *Regulation on the coverage of the electoral campaign for the early parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021, in the media of the Republic of Moldova*. Voter preferences were presented in a neutral manner, with no tendency to favor or disfavor any electoral competitor. The story also contained data about the institution that conducted the survey, the period of its conduct, the sample size and the margin of error, the person who ordered it, and on what resources it was conducted. The station also announced that the CEC was informed about the conduct of the opinion poll.

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

During the monitoring period, TV8 mentioned/cited 111 sources in the 24 news stories related to elections. Electoral competitors, experts, and citizens were most often cited. Several institutions, such as the CEC, the Information and Security Service, the Government, OSCE, the Court of Appeal, or the Supreme Court of Justice were mentioned in the news, too.



In terms of duration of appearances, the top three were BECS, PUN, and AUR (which had between 152 and 78 seconds of airtime, respectively), followed by PPDA, PDA, BERU, PAS, PNOI, PDCM, and PVE.

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

Cited/mentioned subjects	Frequency	Duration of direct and indirect appearance, seconds
<b>BECS</b>	11	152
<b>PUN</b>	2	95
<b>AUR</b>	6	78
<b>PPDA</b>	4	73
<b>PDA</b>	3	70
<b>BERU</b>	3	55
<b>PAS</b>	7	54
<b>PNOI</b>	1	40
<b>PDCM</b>	3	31
<b>PVE</b>	1	20

Also, PDM and PP Şor were mentioned three times, while PLD, PPPR, and PACCC – once. The Presidency was cited only once with a 20-second intervention, and President Maia Sandu was mentioned twice.

Controversial news stories (7 out of 18) were balanced, except in two cases. On June 28, TV8 broadcast a news story, announcing, “*The Information and Security Service confirms that Veaceslav Platon was the beneficiary of a company involved in the theft of the billion and in the Laundromat scheme.*” A document allegedly proving it was published by Inga Grigoriu, the chairwoman of the Parliamentary Investigation Commission on the Laundromat, who is a member of PPDA. In the end, the reporter said, “*Neither Platon nor his lawyer have commented on this information yet,*” suggesting that the journalists did not try to find out their opinion, but waited for them to react. In another case, the balance of sources was ensured partially. On July 1, in the context of the protest organized in front of the Presidency by a group of people against the inaction of President Maia Sandu in relation to farmers, which was allegedly organized by PSRM, the reporter announced, “*The PSRM spokeswoman Carmena Sterpu did not answer the phone or messages,*” without trying to identify other sources to balance the news.

Regarding gender balance, the most cited/mentioned sources were men – 55, while women were cited 22 times (28%).

**Language and images used**

In the news stories related to the electoral campaign, TV8 generally used neutral language. The images broadcast during the reporting period were in line with deontological and professional standards.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Between June 25 and July 1, 2021, the main newscasts of the 10 monitored television stations showed the following trends in the coverage of elections:

- The public television station Moldova 1 provided access to news to the vast majority of electoral competitors, presenting them in a fair and impartial manner. Most of the electoral competitors appeared in neutral light, with the exception of BECS, towards which the station showed selective attitude. The bloc was favored both by the frequency and airtime of appearances, as well as by the positive tone. PAS was presented mostly neutrally, but at the same time it was disadvantaged by image transfer in materials on negative topics about President Maia Sandu, former PAS leader. In the monitored materials, facts were separated from opinion, the language and images used were appropriate. The pluralism of sources was not ensured, and the gender balance of sources was tilted towards men to the detriment of women.
- NTV Moldova and Primul în Moldova provided airtime to less than half of the electoral competitors. These stations had a biased and partisan behavior in relation to BECS, which benefited from the most airtime for interventions, the tone of coverage being positive and neutral. The electoral competitor PAS was disadvantaged, being mostly mentioned rather than cited in the news, and the situation with President Maia Sandu was similar. Most of the time, the tone adopted by NTV Moldova and Primul în Moldova in relation to PAS was negative. More than half of controversial news stories were unbalanced. The gender balance was tilted towards male sources.
- The television stations Jurnal TV, Pro TV, and TV8 covered the electoral campaign for the most part in a fair and impartial manner and did not visibly favor or disfavor any electoral competitor. These outlets provided access to news to the majority of candidates, often adopting a neutral tone in relation to them. Most of the monitored news stories were impartial, separated facts from opinion, and controversial stories usually ensured the balance of sources. The monitored materials were unbalanced from the perspective of gender equality.
- RTR Moldova covered the electoral campaign in a fair and impartial manner, providing access to news to the majority of electoral competitors. Most of the materials were objective and unbiased, facts were separated from opinion, and the language and images used were neutral. The tone of coverage of electoral competitors was neutral for the majority of them, except PP Șor, which was favored by the large number of appearances, the airtime given to its coverage, and the positive tone. The station did not ensure the diversity of sources or their gender balance.
- Prime TV and Publika TV provided access to news to less than a half of electoral competitors, treating the majority of them in an impartial and neutral manner. In terms of the airtime for interventions, selection of topics for coverage, and the angle of approach, these stations gave priority to PP Șor and BECS, which in several cases appeared in positive light. Publika TV also showed some preference for PPDA, given the topics it chose. The two stations ensured the right to reply to all the people accused. Most of the news stories were based on one source. The stations did not ensure gender balance among sources/protagonists.

- TV6 provided access to news to less than half of the electoral competitors. It clearly favored PP Șor, both by the frequency and airtime of interventions and by the positive tone. In several news stories, the station had a negative tone in relation to PAS and President Maia Sandu, as well as for BERU. Some of these materials were unbalanced. Sources were not sufficiently diverse, and some conflicting news stories were unbalanced or partially balanced. The station did not ensure gender balance, which was tilted towards men.

**Recommendations:**

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