



Amplification of potential disinformation narratives in YouTube comments

This report is part of the project supported by Sweden “Media Literacy Advancement and Support to Moldovan Media” and implemented by Internews, which aims to contribute towards the growth of a diverse, independent and financially viable media landscape in Moldova, and to empower Moldovan youth to navigate their complex information environment.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, YouTube has become an increasingly relevant platform in the online information architecture of the Republic of Moldova, strengthening its role not only as a source of entertainment, but also as a space for shaping public opinion on major socio-political events.

According to the latest research conducted by the Independent Journalism Centre (IJC), the platform ranks second in terms of recognition among the most popular social networks in the country. [*The Media Audience Study in the Republic of Moldova*](#), published by the IJC in June 2025, shows that YouTube is one of the main sources of information for the majority of the population: 85% of respondents say they use the platform constantly, with more than half (52%) accessing it daily. The YouTube audience is predominantly young (18–24 years old), professionally active, with a medium or higher level of education and income above the national average, concentrated in urban areas, especially in the southern and northern regions and Chisinau municipality.

Moreover, [monitoring](#) of 15 YouTube channels during the parliamentary election campaign of September 2025 (29 August – 28 September) showed that the platform is a source of dissemination of disinformation, particularly relevant in the electoral context by amplifying manipulative messages.

Consequently, continued monitoring of the platform outside electoral exercises becomes necessary to observe the extent to which YouTube functions as a space for the accumulation and normalization of manipulative narratives in the long term. At the same time, this allows for an analysis of the platform's potential to shape perceptions and attitudes of the general public before those messages are amplified in periods of crisis or during the exercise of the voting right. In this context, the comment section is particularly relevant, since observations documented in the previous monitoring show that the messages shared by users on various video platforms are not just simple spontaneous reactions, but rather active spaces for the production, reiteration and coordination of messages.

MAIN TRENDS

Monitoring of the comment section on 57 YouTube channels, published during the period 1 December 2025 – 15 January 2026, mainly highlights the following findings:

1. YouTube comments actively contribute to the spread and reinforcement of narratives with potential for disinformation, frequently going beyond the original topic of the content.

2. Almost half of the comments published during the monitoring period contain problematic messages, including manipulative, alarmist or hostile content, which suggests a high level of vulnerability of comment sections.
3. A significant share of comments explicitly violates YouTube Community Guidelines and Standards.

METHODOLOGY

As part of the monitoring, the **comment sections of 57 YouTube channels** were analyzed with the aim of assessing the dynamics of the most visible narratives with potential for disinformation related to the economic situation and the energy crisis in the region. The analysis was carried out using a digital artificial intelligence-assisted tool that monitored channels with publicly available content and mapped the narratives exclusively based on user-generated messages in the comment sections. The tool enabled the examination of the volume and frequency of comments, as well as the patterns of interaction and amplification of messages. At the same time, comments that explicitly violate YouTube community guidelines and standards were identified.

The **object of the monitoring** is user-generated content published in Romanian and Russian in the comment section of the YouTube platform. The analysis does not target the actual video content of the channels, but the public speech in the comment section, to the extent that it reflects relevant political and social topics. The narratives were identified using a predefined list of keywords, selected according to the research topic.

The **disinformation narrative** means a coherent, repetitive and recognizable discursive construction intended to systematically distort reality in order to manipulate the perceptions, attitudes or behaviours of the target audience. According to EUvsDisinfo of the European External Action Service, a disinformation narrative is ‘a coherent set of statements and talking points that are repeated over time and support a manipulative interpretive framework, often in opposition to democratic values, international institutions or social cohesion’. Such narratives may be deliberately spread by states, non-state actors or informal networks.

Monitoring subject. The YouTube channels were selected exclusively as a point of access to their comment sections and did not aim to access or analyze the editorial content published by them. The channels were selected based on a set of cumulative criteria relevant from both a quantitative (audience) and a qualitative perspective (presence of problematic discourse in the comment section). The list includes popular channels, which are active on socio-political topics, selected based on publicly available, albeit incomplete, data provided by digital analytics platforms such as SocialBlade and VidiQ, which were used as a guide to estimate the visibility and activity of the channels. Only channels that publish regularly updated content and maintain a constant presence on the platform were included. The list also includes the official channels of the most popular television stations and news websites, according to the [Media Audience Study](#)

published in 2025 by the Independent Journalism Centre, as well as channels known for problematic content and channels popular in the information spaces of Gagauzia and the Transnistrian region.

Channel	Source	No. of followers
TCB Tiraspol	https://www.youtube.com/@tsvtiraspol	727000
TV8	https://www.youtube.com/@TV8Moldova	174000
Первый Приднестровский	https://www.youtube.com/@PervyPridnestrovsky	165000
ProTV Chişinău	https://www.youtube.com/@protvchisinau5284	158000
Jurnal TV	https://www.youtube.com/@jurnaltv	145000
Europa Liberă Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@europa-libera-moldova	134000
Ziarul de Gardă	https://www.youtube.com/@Ziarul de Garda	90300
TRM	https://www.youtube.com/@TRMMDChannel	76700
Morari Live	https://www.youtube.com/@morarilive	76000
TV6	https://www.youtube.com/@tv6md	75500
NewTVmd	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOvSvdpakTdLTsT5E2si-Nw	73700
Canal 5	https://www.youtube.com/@Canal5md	72300
Nicolae Chicu	https://www.youtube.com/@nicolaechicu	71500
Newsmaker	https://www.youtube.com/@NewsMakerOriginal	50800
Nokta	https://www.youtube.com/@noktamd	44500
Primul în Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@PrimulInMoldovaTvTranslation	44300
AVA TV	https://www.youtube.com/@AndreiAndrievski	43300
Internetu' Grăieşte	https://www.youtube.com/c/InternetuGr%C4%83ie%C8%99te	36300
Puterea a 4a	https://www.youtube.com/@puterea_a_patra	35800
TVR Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@tvrmdova4729	33400
TVC21	https://www.youtube.com/@tvc21channel/featured	29400
Nordnews	https://www.youtube.com/@Nord-News	26700

GRT	https://www.youtube.com/@grt_md	24500
Newsmaker Știri	https://www.youtube.com/@NewsMakerȘtiri	23300
Gabriel Calin	https://www.youtube.com/@calinlive	22000
Gonța media	https://www.youtube.com/@GheorgheGonta001	21500
Realitatea Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@RealitateaMoldova	20100
Moldova.org	https://www.youtube.com/@moldovaorg	18500
Exclusiv TV	https://www.youtube.com/@Exclusiv_tv	15800
Vocea Basarabiei	https://www.youtube.com/@vocea.basarabiei	15300
Agora Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@AgoraMoldova	15400
One TV	https://www.youtube.com/@OneTV_md	14900
RISE Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@risemoldova9279	13600
TV Bălți	https://www.youtube.com/@TVBalti	13600
Moldova Online	https://www.youtube.com/@moldovaonline1991	13300
Tv Nord	https://www.youtube.com/@TVNordMoldova	13100
IPN	https://www.youtube.com/@agentiadepresaipn	11800
Бендерское Телевидение	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQu1jJ1cnt9bS2WMs5HUSdw	10700
Radar Politic	https://www.youtube.com/@RadarPolitic/featured	10200
Cinema 1	https://www.youtube.com/@CINEMA-e12zb	10100
TEMA	https://www.youtube.com/@esti_tema	9330
N4	https://www.youtube.com/@n4moldova	7140
СП Новости	https://www.youtube.com/@GazetaSP	6700
Unimedia	https://www.youtube.com/@UnimediaVIDEO	5540
Late Buimistru	https://www.youtube.com/@LATE_BUIMISTRU	4890
Союз Россия-Молдова	https://www.youtube.com/@soyuzmdru/featured	4540
GagauzMedia	https://www.youtube.com/@Gagauz_Media	4220
Star TV	https://www.youtube.com/@STARTVMOLDOVA	3170

1TV Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@1tvmoldova	2570
Costa Tatiana	https://www.youtube.com/@COSTA_moldovanca	2210
24Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@24moldova	2090
Global 24	https://www.youtube.com/@Global24MD	1980
Главное. Молдова	https://www.youtube.com/@glavmoldova	1800
Moldova Pulse	https://www.youtube.com/@MoldovaPulse	1690
Premiera TV Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@PREMIERATVMOLDOVA	708
Telegraph Moldova	https://www.youtube.com/@telegraphmd/videos	646
Kristian Grăiește	https://www.youtube.com/@Kristiangr%C4%83ie%C8%99te.official/featured	502

The analysis is **exploratory and descriptive in nature** and is aimed at identifying recurring narrative patterns rather than assessing the intentionality of the actors analyzed. This exercise is based exclusively on publicly available data and does not allow for the assessment of the actual intentions of the content creators or the way the audience internalizes the analyzed messages. The findings should therefore be interpreted as indications of the dynamics of the narratives and the associated informational risks, rather than as definitive attributions of responsibility or intent. The identification of narratives with potential for disinformation within this analysis should not be interpreted as a finding of the commission of disinformation within the meaning of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services, a competence that falls exclusively to the Audiovisual Council.

Monitoring objectives:

- Identification and assessment of the main narratives with potential for disinformation disseminated in YouTube comment sections;
- Assessment of the role of comments in reinforcing, diversifying and amplifying narratives with potential for disinformation;
- Identification of the volume of messages that explicitly violate YouTube Community Guidelines and Standards.

Monitoring period: 1 December 2025 – 15 January 2026

Monitoring object: comment section of 57 YouTube channels

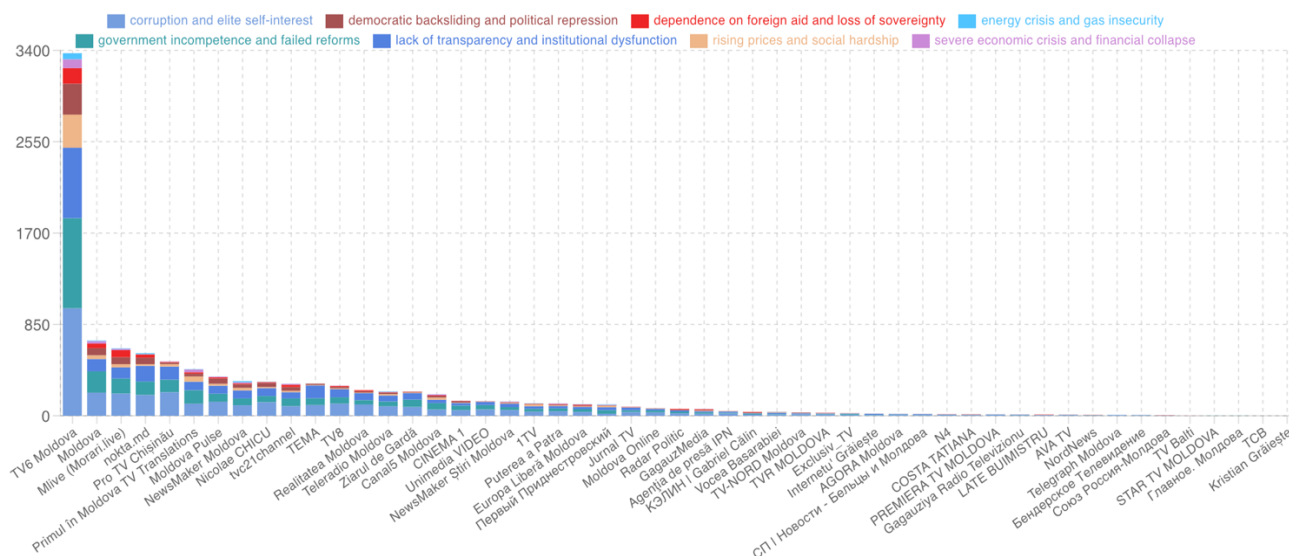
Monitoring subject: narratives with potential for disinformation on the economic situation and the energy crisis in the region

MAIN MESSAGES

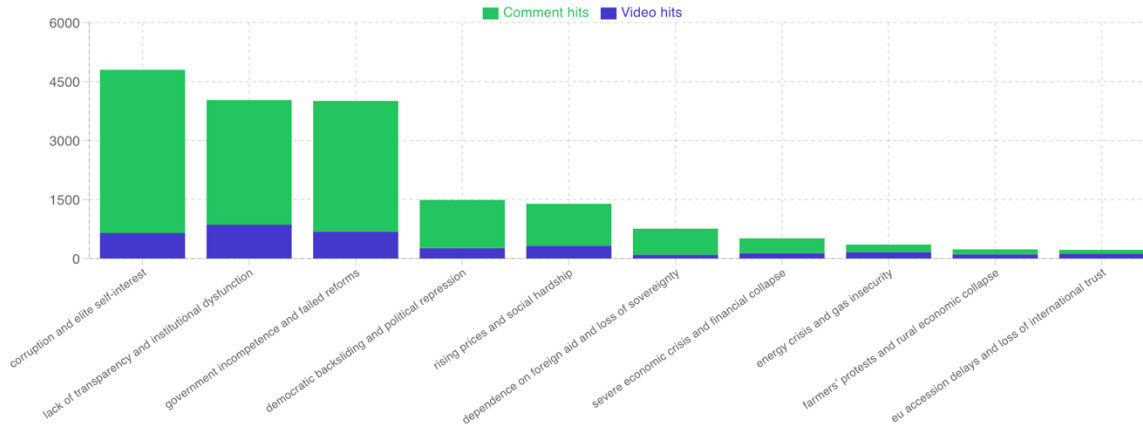
Between 1 December 2025 and 15 January 2026, the 57 channels published 6,811 videos that collected 14,421 comments. **44% of them (about 6,350 comments) disseminated narratives with potential for disinformation.** The data indicate that the trend observed in the [previous monitoring](#) is maintained: comments play a crucial role in the significant expansion and consolidation of disinformation on YouTube.

Most narratives with potential for disinformation (over 4,500) were identified in the comments left by users under videos on the **TV6 Moldova** channel. The messages left mainly referred to: *corruption and reproduction of corrupt practices by Moldovan elites* (1,000); *incompetence of the Government and failed reforms* (839); *lack of transparency, bureaucracy and institutional dysfunction* (655); *rising price and failure to protect vulnerable citizens* (308); *democratic backsliding and political repression* (288); *dependence on foreign aid and loss of sovereignty* (145).

In significantly smaller proportions, messages in the same register and with a similar distribution were also found under videos of other channels: **Moldova** (965 cases identified), **Mlive** (901 cases), **Nokta.md** (835 cases), **ProTV Chişinău** (675 cases), **Primul în Moldova** (636 cases). It should be noted that a part of the total number of analyzed comments (1,391) contained two or more narratives in the same message.



Distribution of narratives identified in the comment sections of the analyzed channels



Video-comment ratio in the dissemination of narratives

A total of 3,071 comments out of those analyzed included content that violates the platform's policies and is reportable according to YouTube standards, and will be reported/moderated.

These include:

- hate speech;
- harassment and intimidation;
- offensive or abusive content;
- messages that incite violent, harmful or dangerous actions.

Such comments contribute to the consolidation and re-dissemination of already established narratives, which target, among others, sexual minorities; the issue of reunification with Romania; the alleged risks of integration into the European Union; accusations regarding the allocation of gas compensations; the necessity and impact of state financing from external funds; attacks against the President Maia Sandu, as well as alarmist references to Maidan, the war in Ukraine, slavery or genocide.

Observations show that many comments initially relate to the topic of the video under which they are posted, for example, topics related to justice, the evolution of some legal cases, the problem of heating in Chisinau municipality, the provision of gas compensations, the energy crisis in the Transnistrian region, the supply of electricity, rates or calls by the authorities on energy saving. Subsequently, however, the initial framework of the discussion is exceeded and turns into generalized accusations against 'everyone' and 'everything' and a mixture of several distinct topics in a single discourse. Commentators make negative associations between unrelated facts and events, ignore the factual context and resort to an alarmist tone encouraging different interpretations.

According to its [community rules](#), YouTube prohibits promotion of pornography, incitement to violence, harassment or hate speech, etc. on its platform. Comments that violate these provisions are to be reported through a combination of automated detection and manual reporting. At the same time, the [Code of Ethics of Journalists of Moldova](#) stipulates that ‘media institutions, in administering websites, as well as pages/accounts on social networks, do not allow and do not accept from the public, in reactions (comments), derogations from legal and ethical norms. To this end, media institutions properly moderate reactions/comments to media products’.

Maia Sandu s-a iubit cu Plahotniuc și cu Filat, apoi la Închisoare i-a băgat, unul a ieșit cu ajutorul Procurorilor, altul stă închis la doriința Judecătorilor. Maia, Plahotniuc, Filat, miliardul au furat, au dat banii suținitorilor lor și au rămas cu curul gol. Miliardul acesta a fost cel mai însemnat, au furat și s-au trădat, au mai furat și alte miliarde, dar nu se trădau pe la spate. Multă lume râde, plânge, stă șocată. Președinta asta-i tare proastă, taie mii de locuri de muncă psihopata, vrea Unirea cu România și gata. Destralabații-LGBT din Turma PAS, nu mai au rușine la obraz, au lucrat pentru suținitorii din România și din Europa, au obținut toți oamenii din Republica Moldova. (10 Ianuarie 2026) Silvia Carazan (Deleu)

Надоели уже эти молдавские власти с румынскими паспортами!!! Двурушники, которые выпрашивают деньги у МВФ, чтобы разложить евро по своим карманам.

Эти ГЛАВНЮКИ врут, что в Молдове всё в порядке и они так "много" работают и делают для страны... а на самом деле они много делают только на свой карман. Они ободрали страну, а народ довели до нищеты - вот это их заслуга. Где эта преславутая борьба с коррупцией ?! Да её нет и не будет потому что рука руку моет... коррупционер на коррупционере сидит оттого и богатеют. Коррупция как плесень проникла абсолютно во всё от мелких чиновников до судов и власти.

Где селы вымирают там срочно надо менять власть так как эти крахоборы не справляются . арестовать всех конфискацией имущества и отправить за Чаушеску иначе эти твари погубят страну.

До давки ментов тракторами в первую очередь нужно заниматься с теми, кто голосом своим привёл этих пидаррасов PASовских во власть. Но а дальше нужно расправляться с шорами-ворами, ментами и прокурорами, социалистами-капиталистами и всеми пидарастами т пидаррасами в в чёрных мантиях как смерть с косой судьями пидаррасми судебных инстанций.

ТАКАЯ ТАКТИКА ПРАВИТЕЛЕЙ МОЛДОВЫ ПРЕЖДЕ ВСЕГО НАЦЕЛЕНА НЕ ТОЛЬКО НА ЛИЧНОЕ ОБОГАЩЕНИЕ ЧИНУШ МОЛДОВЫ И ВЛАСТИ МОЛДОВЫ, А ПРЕЖДЕ ВСЕГО СДЕЛАТЬ БЕЗИСХОДНО БЕНИМ НАРОДЫ МОЛДОВЫ , ЧТОБЫ ПОМИРАЛИ С ГОЛОДУ ИЛИ ПОДНИМАЛИ БУНТЫ.-А СВОЛОЧИ ВЛАСТИ СДЕЛАЮТ НА ЭТОМ МАЙДАН КАК НА УКРАИНЕ И ВОЙНУ!!! ГРАБЕЖ И УНИЧТОЖЕНИЕ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ МОЛДОВЫ - ВОТ ДВЕ ГЛАВНЕ ЗАДАЧИ ТАКИХ СТРАТЕГИЙ САНДУ И ЕЁ ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННОЙ ВОРОВСКОЙ ШАЙКИ....

Avocatura e parte al sectei teroriste justitiei religioase-schizofrenice escroace! Secta asta nu face altceva, decât debilizare și jaf. Și avocații joacă un rol - de adormire pentru jertvele candidate pentru jaf. Avocatul, procurorul și judecătorul, împreună această grupare criminală câștigă bani indiferent de rezultatele așa numitei judecate. Ceia ce faceți, adică jaf sistemic sub diferite pretexte escroace legalizate, este mai grav ca robia și genocidul! Și neapărat vine timpul nu doar de răspundere, dar de răzbunare cu deposedarea tuturor bunurilor furate prin șantaj, manipulare, minciuni și alte metode escroace!

Она обрабатывает соросовские методички и планомерно уничтожает Молдову в угоду западу.О её адекватности даже речь не нужно вести,там её нет!

Nemernicii astia din toate etajele de conducere a primariei in frunte cu tradatorul rusofon Ceban, Dodon Usati Stoianoglu si alte lepre rusesti, trebuie cit mai repede scosi din circuit si bagati dupa gratii. Cei din conducerea tarii trebuie sa inteleaga , ca acesti nemernici tradatori folosesc democratia pentru a o darima si a aduce din nou tara sub cizma rusilor, unde numai lor le va fi bine.

Maia..ii o Mare Spurcaciune!!.. a vindut Americanilor ..poporul Mpldava!!! Doar D...I daca o va ierta!!!!? A bagat poporul..intro saracieeeeeee enorma!!!! Fa frumos strazile?? Dar staziile de epurare a apelor sint deeamut uitate!!! Ce apa beau..cetateniiii??? Maia ..iti dai seama ca uciziiiiii SANTATEA POPULTIEI?? Maaai...un program...maai nimic. !!! In SANATATEA!! PoPULTIEI MOLDAVEI???? Doar.. Viaggi al Estero ti interessa??... Caci esti ca o spurcata..vinduta!!.. la americani..RUSINE!!!!!! Sati FIE!! IDIOATO!!!!

Да ну нахуй! Сейчас пришло счет на свет и я ахуела сколько пришло ! Чтобы Майя Санду згорела в Аду с ее счетами на электроэнергий

Народ не не избрал, она гауляйтер фондерляйн и америки, тифозная вошь на теле молдавского государства и народа. Нас от нее только Господь освободит, выборы это фикция, ширма евродемократии, голос народа никакой роли не играет. Раньше при громких скандалах всем составом в отставку подавали, а теперь? Смотрите что делает фондерляйн? По ней пожизненная плачет как и по Саурону с меркелем и мерцем с военным трибуналом и что? Полицию запускают как собак на заключённых в гитлеровском концлагере и санду от хозяев не отстает с пасом.

Не будьте наивными...зря что ли Санду столько лет облизывает жопу Урсуле фонДерляйн...Санду ждёт тёплое местечко а европарламенте, мелким клерком...а молдова - это как домашнее задание, довести до нищеты...объявить банкротом и продать за дешёво соседней стране...чем быстрее сдаст нас...тем быстрее свинтит.. Боюсь,не зря она заговорила о референдуме....значит результаты уже готовы...

Selection of comments.

These comments were kept in their original form to show the content that does not comply with YouTube standards

Analysis of user activity suggests **intentional and, in some cases, coordinated distribution of messages** with potential for disinformation. During the monitoring period, 2,881 users posted comments containing problematic narratives or messages with potential for disinformation. Of these, 251 users stood out due to a high level of activity, each posting at least five comments. Together, they generated 2,791 comments, indicating a significant concentration of problematic content around a relatively small number of accounts. At the same time, 205 of these users commented on at least three different channels, thereby expanding the visibility of the same messages across multiple YouTube communities.

Another relevant indicator is that ten of the most active commenters were active for only one or two days, during which they posted 57 comments, a pattern that may suggest a certain intentionality. Furthermore, 271 comments with entirely identical copied text were identified, reinforcing the hypothesis of a coordinated action or the reuse of standardized messages for the artificial amplification of certain ideas and opinions.

CONCLUSIONS

The monitoring shows that YouTube comment sections are not only spaces where users express their opinions, but can become important channels for the dissemination and amplification of messages with potential for disinformation.

At the same time, the behaviour of a relatively small number of highly active users, the repetition of identical messages, fully copied comments and the presence of the same accounts on multiple channels may indicate an intentional amplification of certain ideas. This can influence the public perception of sensitive topics in society and carries the risk of normalizing hostile discourse at the expense of a discourse that would promote social cohesion.

In the absence of effective moderation by both the platform and channel administrators, comment sections risk remaining a vulnerable space, with a direct impact on the quality of public debate.

The monitoring was made possible with the support of the Society 22 organization's disint.ai platform, by accessing publicly available YouTube data: channels, videos, and comments. The processing, analysis and interpretation of these data were carried out entirely by disint.ai and the Independent Journalism Centre and do not reflect the position of YouTube.

