



Monitoring Report

MOLDOVA 1

Period: March 9 – 15, 2020

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Between March 9 and 15, 2020, the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) monitored the public television station Moldova 1 in order to identify whether the journalistic materials it broadcast contained elements of disinformation or violations of professional ethics. We analyzed how the public television covered events in the political, economic, social, and other fields, as well as how it complied with professional and ethical standards, such as verifying information in several sources, pluralism of opinions, ensuring balance in case of conflicting news, and so on.

The monitoring covered the main daily newscasts, as well as the most important program of each day of the week. We started from the assumption that the newscasts and programs of the public media outlet should contain exclusively facts, and not the opinions of journalists, that they should be prepared and/or moderated in a neutral and accessible language, and must reflect reality as accurately as possible, respecting the balance of sources.

Purpose of monitoring

The monitoring aims to determine whether the public television station Moldova 1 is journalistically fair, neutral, and impartial when it informs the public about the government's activity in relation to the political opposition in moments of tension and/or crisis. This assessment was based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of newscasts and talk shows, which were evaluated from the perspective of compliance with the principles of correct information as provided by the code of conduct of this public media outlet and by the Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova. We focused especially on the coverage of the activities of political actors and/or entities (particularly official/governmental ones).

Methodology

Given that the research aimed to assess the extent to which Moldova 1 complies with the principles of equity, impartiality, fairness, and political neutrality, as well as the hypothesis that Moldova 1 tends to adjust its media content to the messages delivered by the government, it is imperative to perform a quantitative and qualitative analysis of newscasts and news round-up programs that have the potential to influence the public opinion. Therefore, the methodology of this study combined two methods of research of the media product: *quantitative* and *qualitative/comparative*. At the same time, newscasts and the other programs were analyzed from the perspective of manipulation and disinformation techniques, in order to help consumers see whether a journalistic product is manipulative or whether it covers reality impartially.

By means of the **quantitative analysis**, we explored the trends in the coverage of topics of public interest in the selected period. It is a research method that involves monitoring, sampling, and coding (via a coding sheet) journalistic materials so as to identify political affiliation, if it exists (the number of materials casting positive light on certain political actors); extent of implementation of the principles of fairness and impartiality in informative and analytical materials (number of fair and impartial materials); whether the balance of sources is ensured (number of balanced materials); what sources are given priority in newscasts (number of sources cited or mentioned); provision of airtime to political actors and entities (amount of airtime provided, in seconds); as well as other aspects. By means of **qualitative/comparative methods**, we sought to interpret data and information obtained from the quantitative analysis. The media

content was examined in depth in order to determine whether Moldova 1 complies with the principles of equity, impartiality, fairness, and political neutrality.

Period of monitoring: March 9 – 15, 2020

The main media products of Moldova 1 subjected to monitoring:

- 7 editions of the main newscast *Mesager* [Messenger] (March 9 – 15, 2020)
- The program *Vector European* [European vector] (March 9, 2020)
- The program *Moldova in Direct* [Moldova on air] (March 10, 2020)
- 2 programs of electoral debates for the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti (March 11 – 12, 2020)
- The program *Buna seara* [Good evening] (March 13, 2020)
- The program *O seara in familie* [An evening with the family] (March 14, 2020)

General trends

The monitoring data show that in the main newscast Mesager:

- COVID-19 was the prevailing topic. News about it represented about 30-40% of the total number of materials in each monitored edition of *Mesager*.
- Authorities/officials are among the entities most often addressed in Moldova 1 newscasts. About half of all news stories in *Mesager* were about central authorities and/or official state institutions (Presidential Administration, Government, Parliament) or had them as direct sources.
- The persons who were the most often mentioned and cited, directly or indirectly, in Moldova 1 newscasts were President Igor Dodon; Prime Minister Ion Chicu; Health, Labor, and Social Protection Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu; President of Parliament Zinaida Greceanii; and Mayor of Chisinau Municipality Ion Ceban.
- Moldova 1 committed some violations of professional ethics, such as *change of accents; generalization; lack of the right to reply; "National Savior/Messiah" disinformation technique.*
- From a political point of view, Moldova 1 favored the Party of Socialists (PSRM) and its representatives by means of the large number of news stories about them; by citing them a lot as direct sources; by the manner in which these stories were prioritized in newscasts (most of the time they appeared in the first part of *Mesager*); by presenting the PSRM, its initiatives, and representatives mostly in a positive light.
- On the other hand, Moldova 1 disfavored opposition parties and politicians (PAS, PPDA, Shor Party) by means of the small number of stories about them and of their appearances in newscasts, as well as by the manner in which stories with and about them appeared in newscasts (usually in the second part of the newscast, closer to the end).

Monitoring data showed that Moldova 1 programs:

- Addressed various topics of discussion/debate (medicine, gender equality, politics, electoral campaign).
- Presented information in a neutral and impartial manner.
- Moderators/hosts did not favor any particular institution, person, political party, or politician.
- Ensured or tried to offer the right to reply to those targeted/accused.

- Did not resort to hidden advertising.

II. DATA ANALYSIS

Mesager newscast

Mesager: March 9, 2020

Quantitative analysis

On March 9, 2020, the main newscast of the public television Moldova 1, *Mesager*, contained 18 news stories, except those in the Sports and Weather sections. Two of the 18 stories appeared in the Culture section.

The first six stories in the newscast covered the topic of COVID-19: the first case of coronavirus registered in Moldova; information about the situation in Romania and in the world; travel conditions; distribution of patients in hospitals; and a conflicting story in which Corneliu Furculita, MP representing the PSRM, asked opposition parties and politicians (Maia Sandu of PAS, former Health Minister Ala Nemerenco) not to do political PR on account of the new infection. Seven of the 18 stories targeted officials from central authorities, and four referred to Moldovan politicians.

Six of the 18 stories did not refer to direct sources (four of them appeared in the News in Brief section). Four stories had only one source each, three had three sources each, and three had six sources each (two of them appeared in the Culture section). The most frequently cited and mentioned was President Igor Dodon, who appeared in three stories with four direct interventions that totaled 136 seconds of airtime. Prime Minister Ion Chicu was targeted in two stories (he was only mentioned and cited indirectly). Health, Labor, and Social Protection Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu was the source of one news story, with two direct interventions totaling 57 seconds of airtime. Anatol Ciubotaru, former director of the “Timofei Mosneaga” Republican Clinical Hospital, was the source of one story, with 53 seconds of airtime. Igor Pokanevych, WHO Country Director, also appeared in one story, with a direct intervention of 20 seconds.

The representatives of opposition parties (Maia Sandu and Alexandru Slusari) were cited as sources in two materials.

Qualitative analysis

In this newscast, Moldova 1 paid more attention to official institutions, particularly to the Presidential Administration and the Government. As for people, officials/authorities were the most often mentioned in the news presented by the public television.

In the newscast on March 9, 2020, Moldova 1 broadcast one conflicting news story about the statement of the PSRM’s MP Corneliu Furculita addressing Maia Sandu (PAS) and Ala Nemerenco (former Health Minister) and urging them to “stop doing PR on account of COVID-19.” In this case, Moldova 1 **changed accents**: authors began the story with the MP’s statement/accusation, which was in fact a reaction to the statements of Maia Sandu and Ala Nemerenco (who had accused the government of acting late in the epidemiological crisis). Thus, the MP appeared in a positive light. However, in this news story Moldova 1 ensured the right to reply to all the parties concerned.

In another news story on the topic of the PSRM and PDM [Democratic Party] negotiating the creation of a coalition, which Igor Dodon presented as being “at the first stage, that of internal policy,” Moldova 1 journalists referred to only one source, President Igor Dodon, and presented him in a positive light. To balance the story, Moldova 1 should have included at least 1-2 more sources (representatives of the two parties or political analysts) or background information, which did not happen.

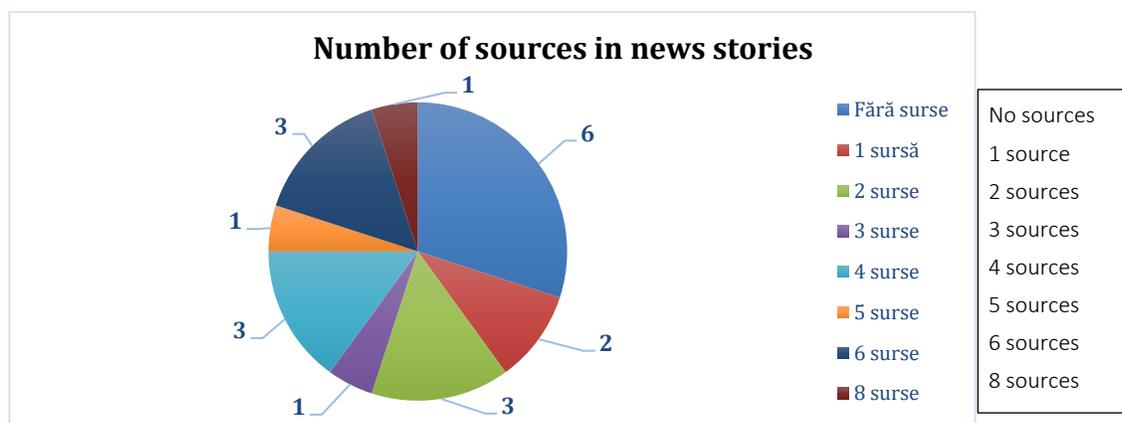
It should also be mentioned that topics were arranged in the newscast in a tendentious and unbalanced manner. For example, the news stories about official institutions and authorities (Presidential Administration, Government) and/or those referring to the PSRM appeared in the beginning (e.g., “the request” of Corneliu Furculita) or in the first part of *Mesager*, while news about opposition parties and politicians appeared in the second part (the story about the initiative of PPDA/Alexandru Slusari) or even at the end of the newscast.

Mesager: March 10, 2020

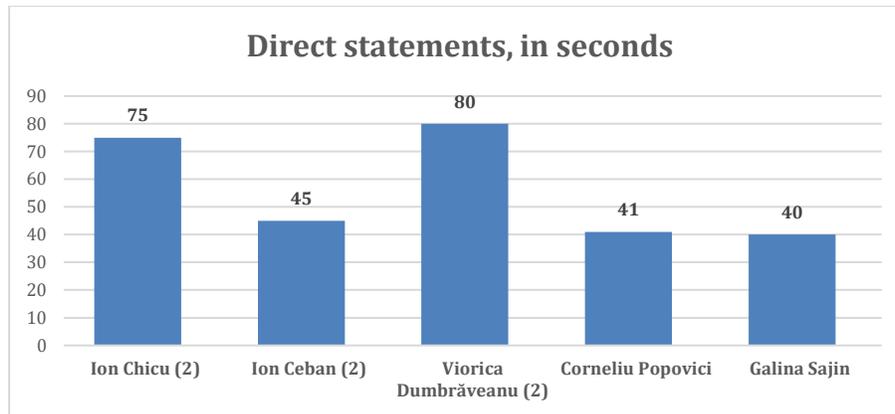
Quantitative analysis

The newscast *Mesager* of March 10, 2020 contained 20 news stories, of which 12 appeared in the Main News section, five in the News in Brief section, two in the section dedicated to the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti, and one in the Culture section. The topic of most news stories was COVID-19 (six stories in the beginning of the newscast). President Igor Dodon was featured in three stories (mentioned, without his direct statements); Prime Minister Ion Chicu, Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban, and President of Parliament Zinaida Greceanii were featured in two stories each; Health Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu and Education, Culture, and Research Minister Corneliu Popovici – in one story each.

As for politicians (implicitly MPs), Maia Sandu (PAS), Galina Sajin (PAS), Dumitru Alaiba (PAS), Liviu Vovc (PPDA), Dinu Plingau (PPDA), Andrian Candu (Pro-Moldova), Vlad Batrincea (PSRM), Octavian Ticu (independent), Ion Groza (independent), Lilian Carp (PAS), Marina Tauber (Shor Party), and Dumitru Diacov (PDM) were cited and/or mentioned in one news story each. Eight of them were targeted in one story (about exclusion of the MPs that had left the Democratic Party from the Moldovan delegation to the PACE). Ordinary people were sources in four news stories.



The most airtime for direct statements/opinions was provided to Prime Minister Ion Chicu, followed by Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban, Health Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu, Education Minister Corneliu Popovici, and PAS’s MP Galina Sajin.



Qualitative analysis

Based on the frequency of citations or references, Moldova 1 favored and presented in a favorable light the country's authorities (Prime Minister Ion Chicu, ministers Viorica Dumbraveanu and Corneliu Popovici) and some representatives of local public administrations, such as Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban. Its favorable attitude appears in the selection of information for news stories. For example, in the story about "stricter hygiene measures in the capital city," the reporter eventually said, "Ion Ceban had a meeting with President Igor Dodon. They discussed about the measures required for protection and for minimizing the danger."

The newscast also had two conflicting news stories. In both of them, Moldova 1 provided the right to reply/opinion to the people concerned (President Igor Dodon and MPs from the Pro-Moldova group). In the section dedicated to the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti, Moldova 1 aired two stories, which were fair and had no violations of professional ethics.

Mesager: March 11, 2020

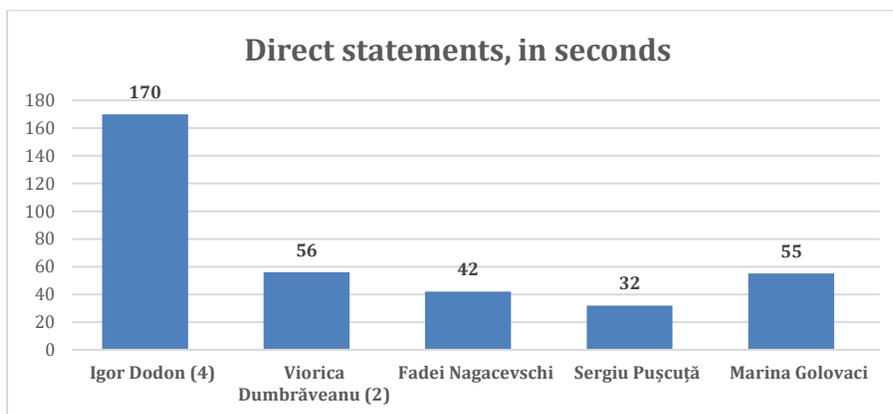
Quantitative analysis

On March 11, 2020, *Mesager* had 18 news stories, five of which appeared in the News in Brief section, two in the New Parliamentary Elections section, and one in the Culture section. Half of the stories (nine) covered the topic of the coronavirus pandemic, and most of them appeared in the Main News section. Other topics were increase of pensions from April 1; a new round of negotiations between PDM and PSRM for creation of a governing coalition; an opinion poll; PPDA's initiative to support farmers and its accusations of the PSRM for doing too little in this regard.

Authorities/officials were the most often cited as sources (11). Of them, President Igor Dodon appeared – with statements and/or being mentioned – the most, in six news stories. Health Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu appeared in two stories. Prime Minister Ion Chicu, Finance Minister Sergiu Puscuta, Justice Minister Fadei Nagacevschi, and State Secretary Marina Golovaci appeared in one story each. As for politicians, Maia Sandu (PAS), Andrei Nastase (PPDA), Radu Mudreac (PSRM), Zinaida Greceanii (PSRM), and Dorin Chirtoaca (PL) were mentioned in one story each.

Eight news stories had no reference to sources, four stories had two sources each, three stories had six sources each, and other three stories had one source each.

In terms of airtime for statements, President Igor Dodon enjoyed the most attention (170 seconds), followed by ministers Viorica Dumbraveanu, Fadei Nagacevschi, Sergiu Puscuta, and State Secretary Marina Golovaci.



Qualitative analysis

The study showed that Moldovan authorities were favored by means of the number of direct statements in the news. For example, President Igor Dodon was cited in 30% of news stories, i.e. almost in every third story of the newscast. Moldova 1 also presented Igor Dodon in a positive light by means of phrases such as “Igor Dodon pledged that he would not allow growth of prices...” The president was also favored by the airtime provided in one of the electoral news stories, about Dorin Chirtoaca (PL) accusing the government – implicitly, the Presidential Administration – of doing nothing to stop people being infected with COVID-19. While Dorin Chirtoaca’s statement was of 30 seconds, Igor Dodon’s reply was of almost 1 minute.

On the other hand, like before, news stories with and about opposition parties and politicians appeared closer to the end of the newscast. The story that “the PPDA proposes a draft law to support farmers and accuses the PSRM of inaction” was of conflicting nature, and Moldova 1 provided the right to reply to both parties concerned: Andrei Nastase (PPDA) and Radu Mudreac (PSRM).

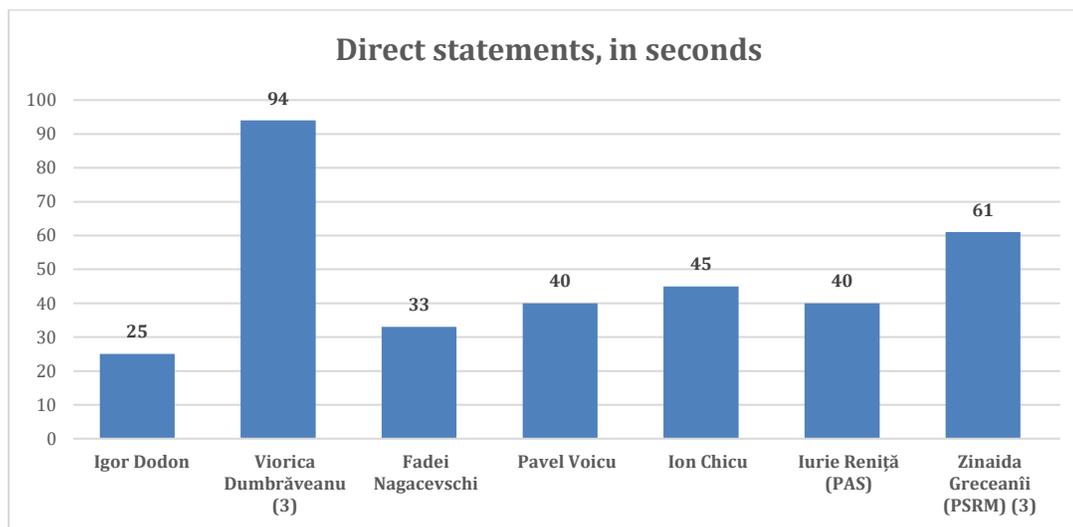
In the section of New Parliamentary Elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti, Moldova 1 aired two news stories. One of them covered the electoral priorities of the PSRM candidate Stefan Gatcan, which he had presented at a press conference. The other one was about Dorin Chirtoaca, the candidate of UNIREA Electoral Bloc, who accused officials of acting late to combat the coronavirus epidemic. The person concerned (Igor Dodon) was provided with the right to reply.

Mesager: March 12, 2020

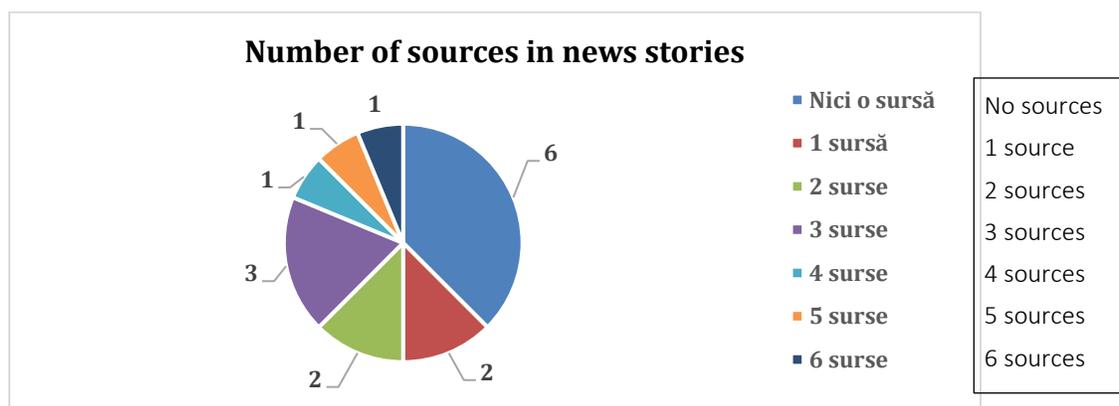
Quantitative analysis

On March 12, 2020, *Mesager* had 21 news stories. Seven of them (30%) were about the COVID-19 pandemic; three materials appeared in the News in Brief section; and five stories covered the electoral campaign for the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti.

The public television most often referred to authorities as sources of news. In 12 of the 21 materials at least one official was mentioned or cited directly or indirectly: Health, Labor, and Social Protection Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu and President of Parliament Zinaida Greceanii – in three stories each; President Igor Dodon and PSRM’s MP Vladimir Golovatiuc – in two stories each; Prime Minister Ion Chicu, Economy and Infrastructure Minister Anatol Usatii, and Justice Minister Fadei Nagacevschi – in one story each.



Six of 16 news stories – except the ones from the electoral section – were without direct sources; three of them had three direct sources; and the rest had one, two, or more sources.



PSRM representatives appeared in the most news stories (four); those of PPDA – in two stories; and the representatives of PAS, PDM, Pro-Moldova, and Shor Party – in one story each.

Qualitative analysis

In the *Mesager* of March 12, 2020, official authorities/institutions were favored both by means of the airtime provided for direct interventions, and by the large number of news stories in which they were mentioned or cited. Some officials were presented in a positive context by means of journalists’ phrasing or background details. For example, in the story “Heating bills for February to be 25-50% smaller” authors noted, “A couple weeks ago, Igor Dodon warned the managers of Termoelectrica that they would be dismissed if heating bills for February are not reduced.”

At the same time, Moldova 1 favored the PSRM by means of the number of news stories mentioning the party or its representatives. The party was presented in a positive light in one news story, which said, “PSRM’s MPs decided to donate their one month salaries to medical institutions,” and included two direct statements of Corneliu Furculita (PSRM) and Zinaida Greceanii (PSRM). On the other hand, news with and about the representatives of other parties appeared in the second part of the newscast (“Iurie Renita of PPDA came up with a draft law regarding modification of articles concerning the status of diplomats”).

In one news story (“Moldova might receive 20 million dollars from the IMF”), Moldova 1 admitted one case of **generalization of information**¹: “Experts in economy welcome the successful closure of the program with IMF.”

In the section of New Parliamentary Elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti, there were five news stories, three of which were about the electoral priorities of candidates from PDM, PSRM, and PAS (all of them were provided with airtime for direct statements). Other two stories covered the Central Electoral Commission’s request to exclude from the electoral campaign the Shor Party candidate Vitalie Balinschi (who was also provided with the right to opinion), and the report of the organization Promo-LEX about the violations committed by some candidates.

Mesager: March 13, 2020

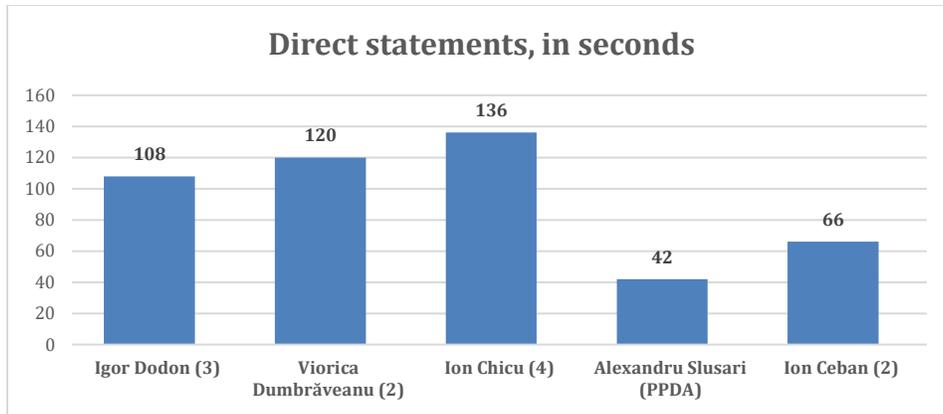
Quantitative analysis

The *Mesager* of March 13, 2020 had 22 news stories: 13 main stories, four stories in the News in Brief section, and five in the section of New Parliamentary Elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti. The first eight stories covered the topic of COVID-19, which was presented directly or tangentially. Other topics were: rehabilitation works on the road linking the Ialoveni road and Balcani road, inspected by President Igor Dodon; cooperation agreement signed by Chisinau Mayor’s Office with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Budapest; the new edition of the “President responds” program; PPDA’s request to verify the management of Moldovan holiday resorts in Ukraine; the intention of veterans’ organizations to join in a single entity.

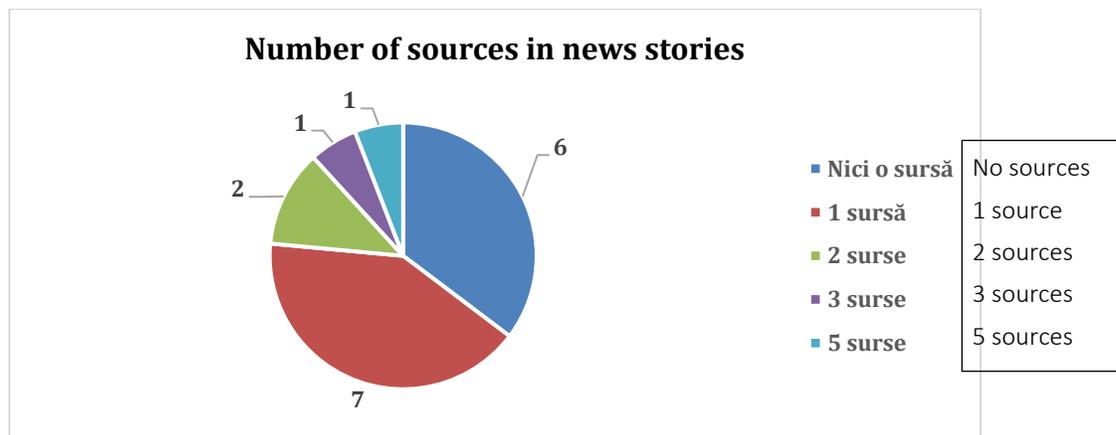
Like in previous newscasts, the representatives of authorities were most often mentioned as sources. Ten of the 22 materials concerned authorities, which were cited directly or indirectly. Prime Minister Ion Chicu was mentioned as a source in three news stories; President Igor Dodon – in two stories; Health Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu – in two stories; Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban – in two stories. Other sources were hospital directors, ordinary people, business owners, doctors, veterans.

Prime Minister Ion Chicu had the most interventions/direct statements (four), with a total of 136 seconds of airtime, followed by President Igor Dodon with three direct interventions and 108 seconds of airtime, Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu with two interventions and 120 seconds, Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban with two interventions and 66 seconds. Among politicians, PPDA’s MP Alexandru Slusari was cited with a direct statement of 42 seconds.

¹ *Generalization* is a disinformation technique, by which the opinion of one person or entity is generalized and presented as an opinion supported or rejected by the majority. At the same time, generalization is used to promote stereotypes and discredit nations, ethnicities, or groups of people. To ensure fairness and equity, it is necessary to mention/present some experts, MPs, and so on.



The majority of main news stories and stories from the News in Brief section (except the ones from the electoral section) had either one direct source (seven stories) or none (six stories).



Qualitative analysis

Moldova 1 favored authorities both by means of the number of news stories in which they were mentioned/cited, and of the airtime provided. The most often, news featured Prime Minister Ion Chicu, President Igor Dodon, Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu, and Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban. At the same time, Moldova 1 aired a story synthesizing the YouTube program of President Igor Dodon, called “President responds,” focusing on the president’s statement that PSRM and PDM “will not sign an agreement in the coming days.”

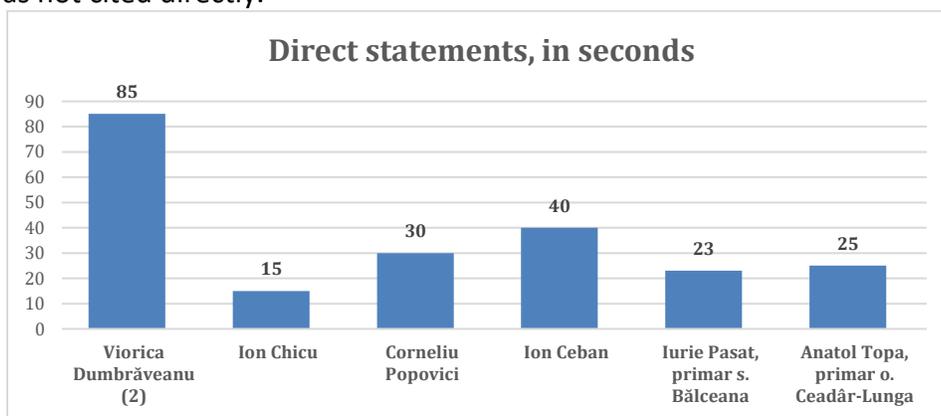
The news story targeting opposition parties or politicians, regarding the PPDA’s request to verify the management of Moldovan holiday resorts in Ukraine, was aired, like in other editions of *Mesager*, in the second part of the newscast.

The section of New Parliamentary Elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti contained five news stories, three of which were about candidates presenting some priorities of their electoral programs – Dorin Chirtoaca (UNIREA Electoral Bloc), Gheorghe Cobzac (independent candidate), and Vitalie Balinschi (Shor Party), who was excluded from the electoral race. In the latter story, given its conflicting nature, Moldova 1 **had to request and/or provide this candidate with the right to reply**, which did not happen. Three of the five stories had one direct source each, and two of them had no reference to sources.

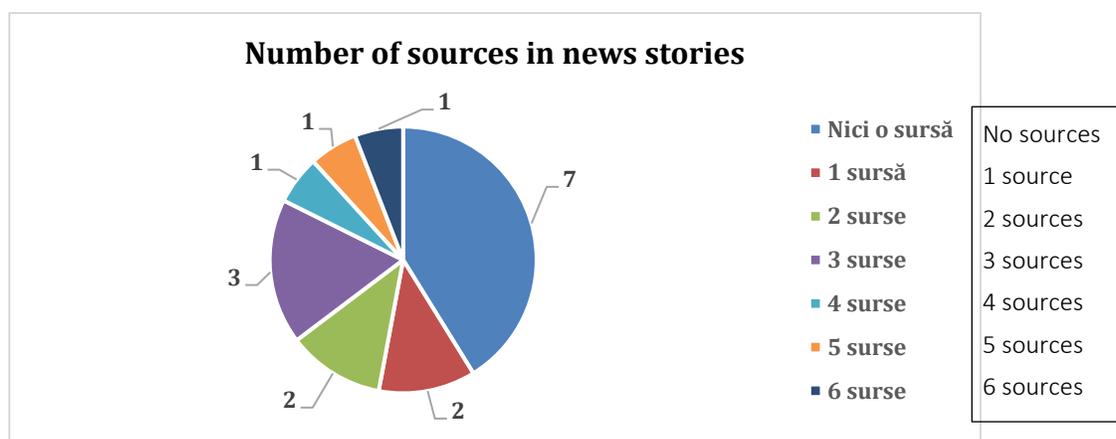
Quantitative analysis

The *Mesager* of March 14, 2020 had 18 news stories. The first seven of them focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, three covered the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38, and one was on a cultural event. Other seven materials covered topics related to education, medicine, ecology, and international relations.

The most often cited sources were central authorities (e.g. Prime Minister Ion Chicu – once, Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu – twice, Minister Corneliu Popovici – once), as well as local authorities (mayors of Chisinau, Balceana, Hincesti, and Ceadir-Lunga). President Igor Dodon was also mentioned in one news story, but he was not cited directly.



Seven news stories had no direct sources, three stories had three direct sources each, and two stories had two direct sources each.



Qualitative analysis

The topic of COVID-19 was prevailing in this edition of *Mesager*, as well. It was covered in 40% of news stories, and all of them appeared in the beginning of the newscast. There was no news with or about politicians or concerning any political party, and central authorities were the most often featured or cited as sources.

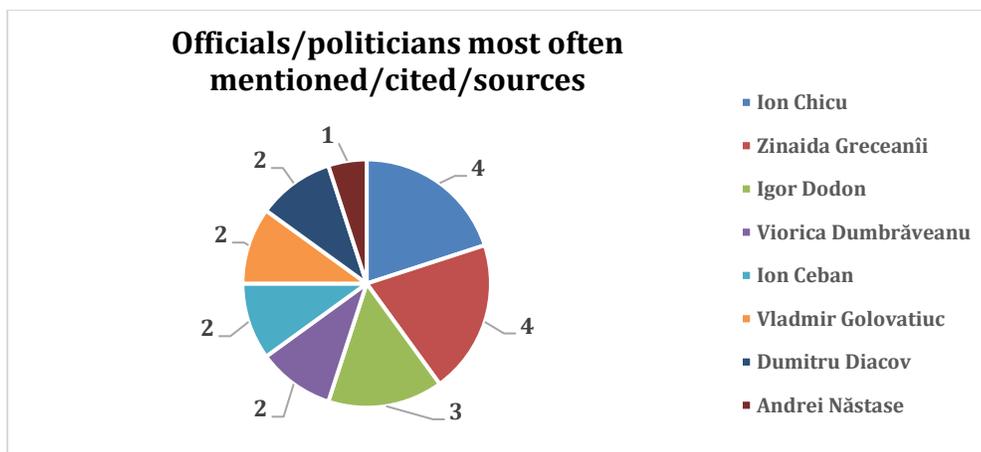
There was one attempt to favor President Igor Dodon by means of the structure of a news story. The material about the operation of the Leuseni border checkpoint during the epidemiological crisis was presented strictly from the perspective of its inspection by President Dodon, with a focus on the official visit rather than on the situation there that day.

Moldova 1 also aired three news stories about elections. Their authors did not mention, however, any certain candidate in any of them, as they were mainly intended for purposes of electoral information and education. These materials were about the silence day for the candidates running in the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38; protective and hygienic measures in polling stations; the electoral process in Balceana village, which was one of the centers of COVID-19 infection in Moldova.

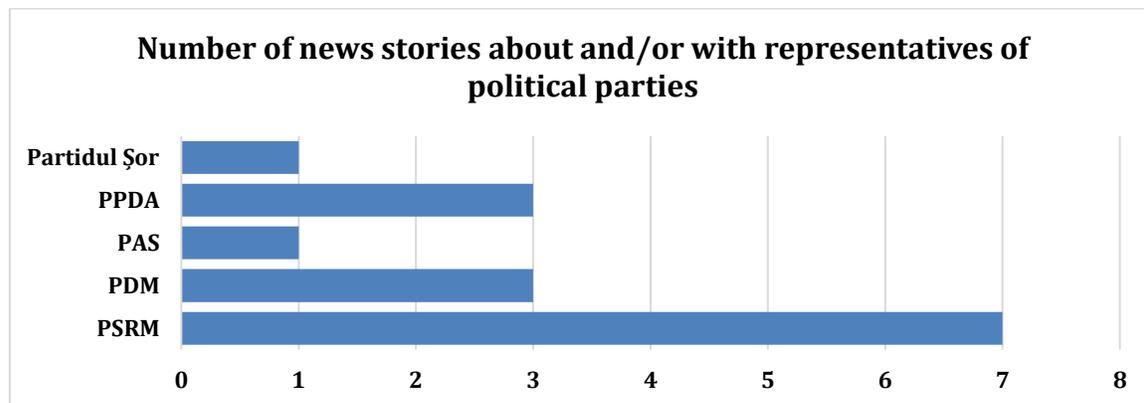
Mesager: March 15, 2020

Quantitative analysis

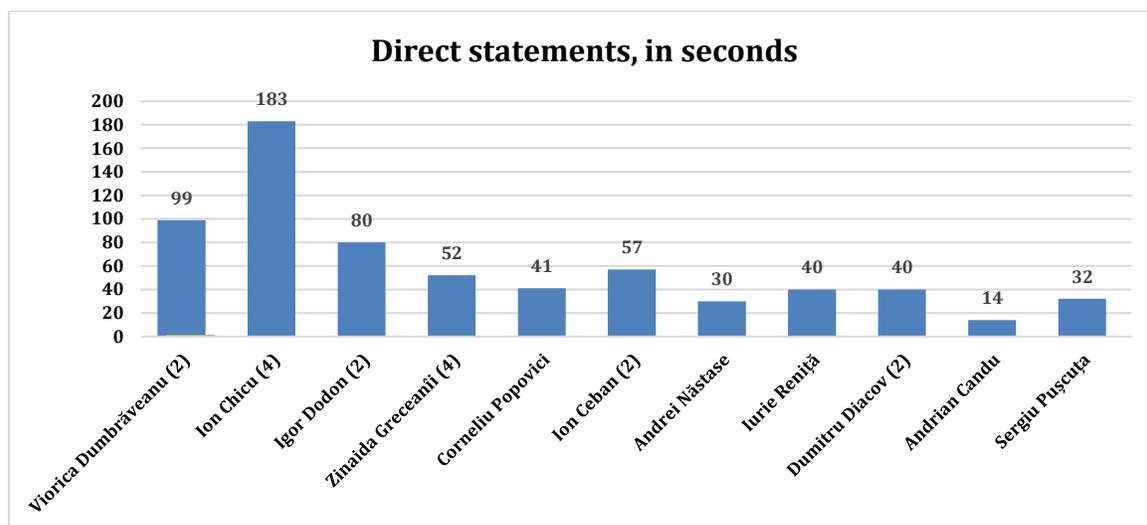
The Sunday edition of *Mesager*, called “Flash Back,” had 26 news stories and was based mostly on the news from the newscasts aired during the week (22). Only four of them were new stories: two covered the current situation of COVID-19, and two referred to the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti. Journalists again mostly referred to authorities as sources: Prime Minister Ion Chicu (4), President of Parliament Zinaida Greceanii (4), and President Igor Dodon (3).



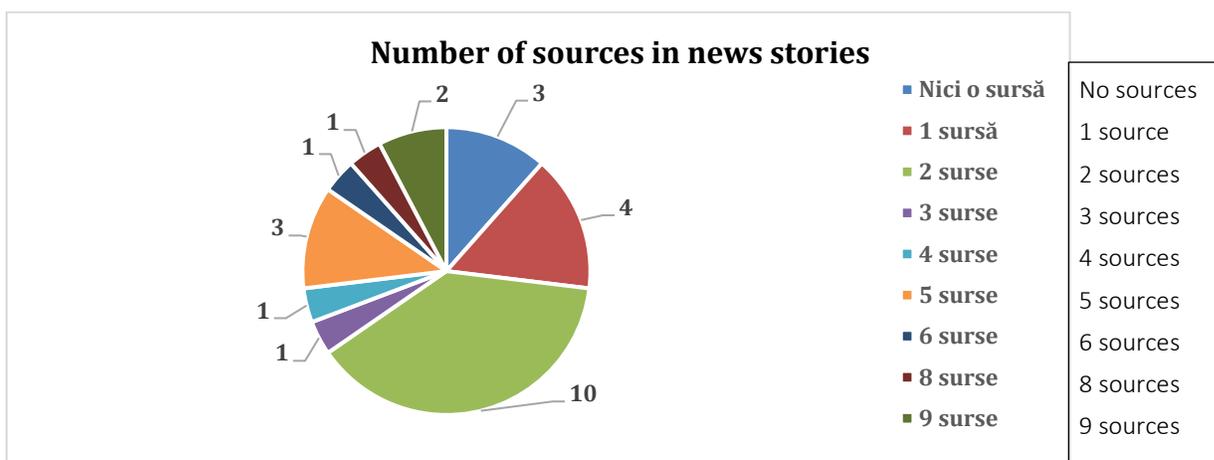
At the same time, PSRM (the party or its representatives) was mentioned in most news stories of this edition of *Mesager* (seven stories), followed by PDM and PPDA (in three stories each), and PAS and the Shor Party (in one story each).



In terms of the airtime for direct statements, Prime Minister Ion Chicu enjoyed the most attention, with a total of 183 seconds in four direct interventions. Ion Chicu was followed by Health Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu with 99 seconds in two direct interventions, and President Igor Dodon with 80 seconds in two direct interventions.



In terms of the number of direct sources, the majority of news stories had two sources each (10 stories), four stories referred to one source each, five stories had three sources each, and three stories had no direct sources.



Qualitative analysis

The topic of COVID-19 was less present in the *Messenger* of March 15, 2020. Only four news stories out of 26 total covered this topic and appeared in the beginning of the newscast.

Like before, authorities/officials were the main sources in news. More than half of the 26 news stories (16) featured authorities/officials, who were either mentioned or cited. The most often mentioned or directly cited sources were Prime Minister Ion Chicu, President Igor Dodon, President of Parliament Zinaida Greceanii, Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban, and Socialist MP Vladimir Golovatiuc.

Monitoring data show that PSRM was favored by means of the relatively large number of news stories (7) and their placement mostly in the first part of the newscast. On the other hand, news stories about and with representatives of other parties (particularly from the opposition) appeared mostly in the second part of the newscast or towards its end.

At the same time, President Igor Dodon was presented in a positive light in two news stories, by means of authors' phrasing, among other things: "A couple weeks ago, Igor Dodon warned the managers of Termoelectrica that they would be dismissed if heating bills for February are not reduced" (the story "Heating bills for February to be 25-50% smaller," where the "**National Savior**" technique² was used) or "Rehabilitation of the road linking Ialoveni road and Balcani road started one month earlier. On Friday, Moldovan President Igor Dodon inspected the works. According to him, these 6.5 km are one of the three segments of the ring road that are to be repaired this year" (the story "Rehabilitation of the road linking Ialoveni road and Balcani road").

Moldova 1 programs

[Vector European](#) (March 9, 2020)

Author: Ludmila Barba

Duration: 30 minutes 58 seconds

The topic of the program *Vector European* on March 9, 2020 was gender equality and the challenges faced by women in Moldova (particularly violence against women and the fight against it). The program was made of three reports and one interview.

The first report addressed the results of the project implemented by the organizations Promo-LEX, Casa Marioarei, and the Memoria Aid Center, which is funded by the European Union (EU) to combat the phenomenon of domestic violence in Moldova. Four sources were interviewed for it: Eugenia, a victim of domestic violence, had four direct interventions; Veronica Braghis, director of Casa Marioarei, had two direct interventions; Ludmila Popovici, director of Memoria Aid Center, had three direct interventions; and Lilia Poting, lawyer of Promo-LEX, had one direct intervention. The journalist presented information and formulated questions in line with professional ethics, and the victim's identity was properly protected.

The report was followed by an interview with Neghina Azizov, UN Women project coordinator. The topics discussed included the current situation with gender equality in Moldova; the role of women in society; the legal framework governing gender issues; and the results of the UN Women project "I am the Generation of Change." The questions asked were specific, to the point, correct, and in line with professional ethics.

The program continued with a report about Rodica Carpenco, a victim of domestic violence and one of the 50 "Positive Champions" declared by UN Women. In this report, the host discussed with the interviewee about her case of domestic violence and how she managed to overcome this problem.

² The "National Savior/Messiah" technique is a manipulation technique that involves presentation of a certain person in the media as the only one who can solve the problems of a community and/or society. This technique refers to a state of mind in which an individual is presented as responsible for saving or helping others. Usually – but not necessarily, – this technique is accompanied by the "Internal or External Enemy" technique, where the "savior" is presented in a positive light and always ready to fight with "enemies."

The program ended with a video report about the Keukenhof Park in Holland, “the world’s largest flower garden.”

March 10, 2020: [Moldova în Direct](#)

Moderator: Tatiana Herta

Duration: 60 minutes 54 seconds

In the period of March 9-15, 2020, Moldova 1 aired only one edition of the program *Moldova in Direct* [Moldova on air]. Its topic was COVID-19, and its guest was Marina Golovaci, State Secretary at the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection. Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu and WHO representative in Moldova Igor Pokanevych were also going to participate, but they “didn’t manage to come to the studio.”

The program began with the presentation of the latest information about the situation with COVID-19 in Moldova. The moderator was asking the guest about the capacities of the country’s medical system and the scenarios outlined to overcome the crisis. They also discussed the clinical aspects of the disease (e.g. symptoms), who is the most exposed to infections, and the protection measures. During the discussion, the background showed footage from several hospitals (Republican Clinical Hospital, Toma Ciorba Infectious Diseases Hospital, etc.), from hospital rooms intended for infected patients, and footage of doctors and equipped ambulances. The footage was in line with the Code of Conduct.

The moderator’s performance was mostly neutral and fair, without favoring or presenting in positive light a certain entity. Every time it was necessary, she asked specific questions, including sensitive ones. However, in one case the guest tried to accuse the media of causing panic in society, and the moderator had the mission to interfere and ask for more information and arguments, which did not happen.

[Electoral debates for the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti](#) (March 11, 2020)

Moderator: Oxana Mititelu

Co-moderator: Pavel Postica, program director of Promo-Lex

Duration: 56 minutes 40 seconds

Moldova 1 organized two editions of electoral debates for the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti. The first debates program aired on March 11, 2020. At the debate, Moldova 1 ensured the presence of a sign language interpreter for people with hearing impairments. In the first debates program, the first three candidates in the ballot took part: Ion Mereuta (PDM), Stefan Gatcan (PSRM), and Lilian Carp (PAS), who represented Olesea Stamate. Each candidate got 13 minutes of airtime, counted by the moderator per second.

The debates began with an introduction made by the moderator, who mentioned all six candidates and presented to participants the rules of debates. First, each candidate got one minute of introduction to present themselves and address a message to voters.

In the second round, where 11 minutes were given to each candidate, the moderator asked them two questions: why they decided to run in elections, and what are three biggest problems/challenges of voters in Electoral District 38 and how they will try to solve them. In this round, a slight favoring of the PSRM candidate Stefan Gatcan was perceived. The moderator asked specific questions about how he would

reform and modernize the medical system... and where he would get the money. In relation to Olesea Stamate, however, the moderator mentioned the disagreements between PAS and PPDA regarding a common candidate, as well as the PPDA's request to exclude Olesea Stamate from the electoral race. In relation to the PDM candidate, the moderator also asked specific questions, such as which party he would join in the Parliament if he won the elections – PDM or Pro-Moldova.

Next was the round of questions and answers among candidates, after which Pavel Postica asked each of the three candidates a question referring to some electoral violations committed by those present in the studio. The final round of debates consisted in one minute for each candidate, so they could present conclusions and appeal to their voters.

The debates program was moderated in a generally neutral and fair manner, without serious violations of professional ethics, except the ones mentioned above. Each candidate got equal airtime and enjoyed the right to reply whenever they were concerned.

Electoral debates for the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti (March 12, 2020)

Moderator: Oxana Mititelu

Co-moderator: Pavel Postica, program director of Promo-Lex

Duration: 55 minutes 14 seconds

The second debates program organized by Moldova 1 had the other three candidates as guests: Grigore Cobzac (independent candidate), Dorin Chirtoaca (UNIREA Electoral Bloc), and Dinu Turcanu, who represented Vitalie Balinschi (Shor Party). A sign language interpreter was ensured, again.

The debates followed mostly the same scenario as on March 11, 2020. However, there were some differences. The moderator asked the independent candidate Grigore Cobzac which parliamentary group he would join if he got into the Parliament, and asked Dinu Turcanu about the likelihood of Vitalie Balinschi to be excluded from the electoral race and what he thinks of the possible exclusion. Dorin Chirtoaca in his interventions insisted solely on the epidemiological situation in the country and the danger of COVID-19 (although the moderator asked him specifically about his electoral priorities, the challenges faced by the people of Hincesti district, etc.), including on annulling elections in Electoral District 38.

Since two candidates – Grigore Cobzac and Dorin Chirtoaca – had some unused airtime, the moderator asked them one more question. Dorin Chirtoaca (UNIREA) was asked why he did not respond to the appeal of other right-wing candidates of nominating a joint candidate. Independent candidate Grigore Cobzac was asked under what conditions he would withdraw from the electoral race.

The Moldova 1 journalist moderated the program in a neutral and fair manner, in line with professional ethics.

Bună seara (March 13, 2020)

Moderator: Mircea Surdu

Duration: 59 minutes 42 seconds

The program *Buna seara* [Good evening] on March 13, 2020 addressed the political situation in Moldova, and its moderator mentioned the “code red for coronavirus in the country and in Moldovan politics.” Three guests were present in the studio: Anatol Taranu, political analyst and director of Politicon Center; Aurelia Peru-Balan, doctor in political science; and Ion Tabirta, political analyst.

First, each guest had one minute to present his opinion about the COVID-19 epidemic, the possibility to reset the government, and possible alliance between PSRM and PDM. Then, discussion focused on the main topics of the week of March 9-13, 2020 (and not only), including: the visit of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban to Moldova; split within the PDM; researchers’ protest in front of the Government; flexibility and ethics in Moldovan politics; the Government reform of 2017-2018 and its impact; possible alliance between PSRM and PDM; importance and role of development partners and embassies/ambassadors in a country; events delayed or suspended due to COVID-19; suspension of air flights due to the epidemic.

When the work of the Chicu Government was discussed, direct accusations against him were launched. The moderator showed fairness and impartiality in this situation and made a direct appeal to the Government and Prime Minister Ion Chicu, saying that the latter could come to the live broadcast or to a future program in order to use his right to reply.

The discussion also referred to some aspects of the new parliamentary elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti (the need to hold them, voter safety, added value of the new MP elected during the pandemic, etc.), and, like in the situation above, the moderator asked the discussion about the electoral campaign and the candidates to be “general, without mentioning candidates’ names.” Also, Mircea Surdu stopped the discussion when guests tried to analyze the “mistake PAS made by nominating its candidate for the elections in Electoral District 38.” In the end, each guest was given one minute for conclusions and eventual political predictions.

Each guest enjoyed equal amount of airtime. The moderator was neutral and fair, asked correct direct questions, and intervened whenever guests in their responses were about to violate ethical standards (provided the right to reply to those concerned, intervened whenever guests expressed contradictory opinions about the campaigns of some candidates in Electoral District 38, etc.).

O seară în familie (March 14, 2020)

Host: Rusalina Rusu

Duration: 51 minutes 40 seconds

The guests of the program *O seara in familie* [An evening in the family] on March 14, 2020 were members of the Samoil family (Antonina, Valentin, and their five children) and the singer Geta Burlacu. The topic of the program was families with many children and how they are perceived in Moldova. The introduction made by the host showed that such families are perceived by society in a stereotyped manner, like socially vulnerable families, and by means of the program, she tried to dismantle this stereotype/myth. Discussion focused on aspects from the daily life of the Samoil family: distribution of roles and responsibilities, children’s activities, family-work relation, development and education, role of grandparents, etc. In the middle of the program, the singer Geta Burlacu was invited into the studio and joined the discussion. The program was moderated in a neutral and fair manner, and the host did not admit violations of professional ethics, hidden advertising, or other wrong actions.

CONCLUSIONS

In the period of March 9-15, 2020, the public television station Moldova 1 presented information in newscasts and programs (talk shows, debates, etc.) mostly in a neutral manner. The monitoring, however, revealed some violations that affect equity and/or present certain institutions/persons in an exclusively positive light, by providing a lot of airtime for direct statements and by means of the frequency of appearances in newscasts.

In terms of quantity, the prevailing topic of news was the COVID-19 pandemic. Every edition of the *Mesager* newscast started with stories on this topic (four to nine stories per edition), making 30-40% of the total airtime of each newscast. At the same time, almost every edition of *Mesager* had at least one story featuring the Chisinau Mayor's Office.

At the institutional level, authorities/official institutions were featured in news the most often. In about half of the stories in the main daily newscast, central authorities and/or state institutions (Presidential Administration, Government, and Parliament) were cited as sources. At the same time, Prime Minister Ion Chicu, President Igor Dodon, Health Minister Viorica Dumbraveanu, President of Parliament Zinaida Greceanii, and Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban enjoyed the broadest presence in news, with the biggest frequency of citations/references to the source and the largest amount of airtime provided for direct statements. Thus, one of the main conclusions of this monitoring is that Moldova 1 in its newscasts tends to adjust its media content to the messages and/or agenda of the government, covering events mostly from the perspective of the government.

Speaking about the political element in Moldova 1 news, on the one hand, the station favored the PSRM and representatives of this party. It was done by means of direct citations, as sources, mostly in a large number in news stories; by the manner in which these news stories were prioritized in newscasts (most often placed in the first part of *Mesager*); by presenting in a positive light the PSRM, its initiatives and representatives. On the other hand, Moldova 1 tended to disfavor opposition parties and politicians (PAS, PPDA, Shor Party) by means of smaller number of their citations in news and by the place of stories with and about them in the newscasts (usually in the second part or closer to the end).

In terms of quality, Moldova 1 committed some violations of professional ethics in news. They include:

- *Change of accents.* In the story on March 9, 2020 about the statement of the PSRM's MP Corneliu Furculita addressing Maia Sandu (PAS) and former Health Minister Ala Nemerenco with the appeal to "stop doing political PR on account of COVID-19," Moldova 1 reversed the order of statements. In fact, Maia Sandu and Ala Nemerenco accused the PSRM, and then the party came up with a reply. By changing the order of statements, the station favored the Party of Socialists and disfavored the other two parties concerned.
- *Generalization.* In the news story on March 12, 2020 about the fact that Moldova might obtain 20 million dollars from the IMF, journalists mentioned that "experts in economy welcome the successful closure of the program with IMF."
- *Lack of the right to reply.* In the news story on March 13, 2020 in the section of New Parliamentary Elections in Electoral District 38 - Hincesti, about exclusion of Vitalie Balinschi (Shor Party) from the electoral race, given the presence of a conflicting element, Moldova 1 had the mission to request and/or provide this candidate with the right to reply, which did not happen.

- *National Savior/Messiah technique.* In almost all newscasts, the station presented President Igor Dodon in a positive context, most often creating the perception, especially through journalists' formulations, that he is the one who can solve any problem and has everything under control: "Heating bills for February to be 25-50% smaller... A couple weeks ago, Igor Dodon warned the managers of Termoelectrica that they would be dismissed if heating bills for February are not reduced" (March 12, 2020); "Rehabilitation of the road linking Ialoveni road and Balcani road started one month earlier. On Friday, Moldovan President Igor Dodon inspected the works. According to him, these 6.5 km are one of the three segments of the ring road that are to be repaired this year" (March 13, 2020); or the detailed summary of an edition of the program "President responds."

In the six programs monitored in the period of March 9-15, 2020, Moldova 1 presented information in a neutral and fair manner. The public television covered various topics in its programs: COVID-19, gender equality/women's rights, electoral debates, politics, family. The hosts moderated programs in a correct manner, committing no serious violations, and without favoring or disfavoring anyone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Broadcasting Council (BC), based on Article 13 (Ensuring correct information), Article 75 (Functions of the Broadcasting Council), and Article 86 (Cooperation with civil society) of the [Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova](#), should take note of the situation and monitor the station Moldova 1 in order to identify violations of professional ethics and/or of the legislation, and apply proper sanctions in justified cases.
- Members of the Supervisory Board of the public institution Teleradio-Moldova Company (TRM), based on Article 45 (Functions of the Supervisory Board) of the [Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova](#), and Article 17 of the [Regulation for Organization and Operation of the Supervisory Board of the National Public Broadcasting Institution Teleradio-Moldova Company](#), should monitor the activity of Moldova 1 in order to realize their mission and analyze the content produced in order to prepare proper recommendations.
- The director and editors of Moldova 1 should monitor the editorial content so that it be in line with the mission of the public media outlet, cover the reality correctly, without favoring or disfavoring a particular person, entity, institution, or party/politician.
- Moldova 1 reporters should make the public interest a priority when they select topics for newscasts and report on relevant facts from the sites of events, in a fair manner and after verifying information. Given that Moldova 1 is a public media outlet, not "state-owned" or "official," its journalists and employees should understand that they are in the service of the public/citizens of Moldova, who finance the station by means of the taxes they pay.