

# MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

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2016

**The Development  
of Sustainable  
Independent Media  
in Moldova**



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## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2016

The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Georgia

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**Legal Media Center** (Kazakhstan)

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**Media LTD** (Montenegro) <http://www.media.cg.yu/index.htm>

**Center for Independent Journalism** (Romania) <http://www.cji.ro/>



**MOLDOVA**

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## **Moldova**

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MOLDOVA

In 2015, the Republic of Moldova went through a profound sociopolitical crisis. The contest between pro-European and pro-Russian parties in the March elections for governor of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, the local general elections in June, scandals related to the airport concession in 2013, and the plundering of three banks—including the largest, BEM—known as “the theft of the billion” all shook Moldovan society. The elections in Gagauzia were won by the former Communist and pro-Russian Irina Vlah. In Chişinău, the incumbent Liberal Party mayor won a heated contest against the pro-Russian Socialist Party candidate. In Bălţi, the largest city in the northern part of the country, Renato Usatai, a controversial politician and businessman with dealings in Russia and the leader of Our Party (OP), won decisively the election for mayor. Ilan Shor, another controversial businessman who, according to the media, was involved in the “theft of the billion” and was tied to several criminal cases, became the mayor of Orhei, located 40 kilometers from Chişinău.

Five prime ministers were replaced in 2015. When the government of Iurie Leancă was not approved by Parliament at the beginning of the year, Leancă left the Liberal-Democratic Party of Moldova (LDPM). In February, after voting with the Communist Party (CPRM), the LDPM and the Democratic Party (DP) invested a minority government headed by Chiril Gaburici, who resigned in mid-June. At the end of July, a new LDPM government run by Valeriu Streleţ was invested. He was discharged on October 29 as a result of a no-confidence motion. By the end of the year, no new government had been invested by the Parliament.

The political instability in the country generated social instability. In the spring, the so-called civic platform Dignity and Truth was established and organized protests against the government in Chişinău and elsewhere that saw the participation of tens of thousands from all over the country. On September 6, the platform announced non-stop protests and set up tents in front of the Large National Assembly, the main square in the country. At the end of the year, the members of Dignity and Truth announced that they would create a political party.

Compared with last year when the EU Association Agreement was signed, the pro-European messages of the authorities and of the media saw a dramatic decrease in intensity and visibility. Instead, the political battles polarized the media, some of which openly went to the barricades. For example, some of the most influential media outlets, affiliated with the DP, covered the local elections with heavy bias in favor of DP candidates. Persistent propaganda from Kremlin-controlled Russian stations rebroadcast in Moldova and an online portal of the Russian multimedia news agency Sputnik was launched in Chişinău, further destabilizing the media sector.

# MOLDOVA at a glance

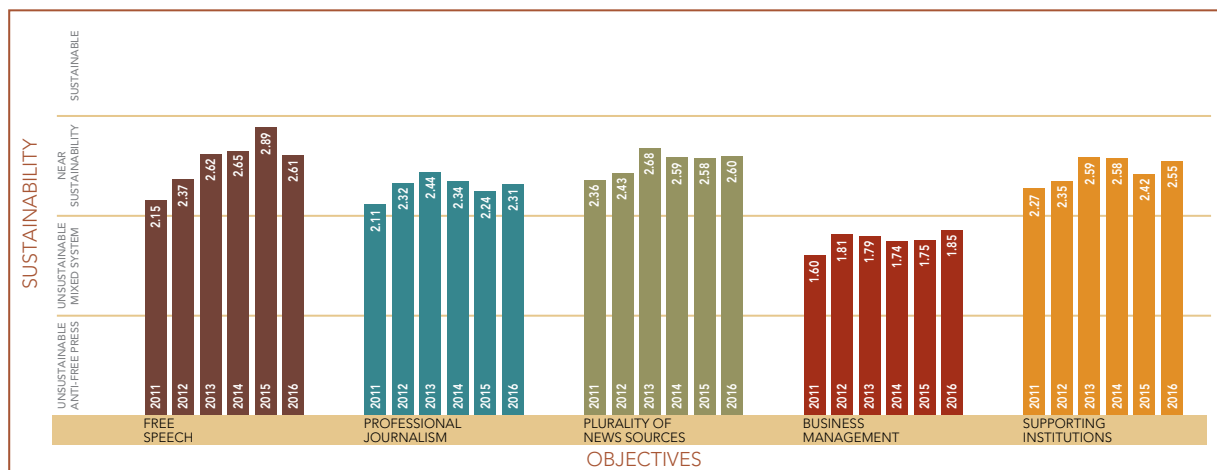
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 3,546,847 (July 2015 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Chişinău
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Moldovan 75.8%, Ukrainian 8.4%, Russian 5.9%, Gagauz 4.4%, Romanian 2.2%, Bulgarian 1.9%, other 1%, unspecified 0.4% (2004 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Orthodox 93.3%, Baptist 1%, other Christian 1.2%, other 0.9%, atheist 0.4%, none 1%, unspecified 2.2% (2004 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** Moldovan 58.8%, Romanian 16.4%, Russian 16%, Ukrainian 3.8%, Gagauz 3.1%, Bulgarian 1.1%, other 0.3%, unspecified 0.4% (2004 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2014-Atlas):** \$9.090 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2016)
- > **GNI per capita (2014-PPP):** \$5,500 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2016)
- > **Literacy rate:** 99.4%; male 99.7%, female 99.1% (2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Nicolae Timofti (since March 23, 2012)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active media outlets:** Print: 171 newspapers, 258 magazines (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015); Radio Stations: 58 (Broadcasting Council, 2015); Television Stations: 72 (Broadcasting Council, 2015); Internet News Portals: top three: point.md, protv.md, unimedia.md (Gemius, 2015)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (37,802), *Argumenti I Facti* (14,000), *Makler* (11,331), *Antenna* (11,268), *Unghiul* (10,000), *Timpul de dimineata* (6,488), *Ekonomiceskoe Obozrenie* (5,651), *Panorama* (3,300) (BATI, 2015)
- > **Magazine circulation statistics:** *Rabotai & Otdahai* (8,000), *Aquarelle* (3,500), *Business Klass* (2,500) (BATI, 2015)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Competing surveys produce dissimilar results. According to IPP (2014): Top three television: Prime TV (private), Moldova 1 (public), Jurnal TV (private). Top three radio: Radio Noroc (private), Radio Moldova (public), Russkoe Radio (private). According to AGB Moldova (2013): Top three television: Prime TV, Moldova 1 and TV7; Top three radio: Hit FM, Russkoe Radio, and Radio Noroc
- > **News agencies:** IPN, Moldpres (state-owned), Infotag, Info-Market, Sputnik Media, Basa-press, Deca-press, Novosti-Moldova
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** Television: €14.48 million; Radio: €0.6 million; Internet: €2.7 million; Print: €2 million (AAPM, 2015 est.)
- > **Internet usage:** 1.6 million (2014 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MOLDOVA



**Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):** Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

**Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):** Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

**Near Sustainability (2-3):** Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

**Sustainable (3-4):** Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

Scores for all years may be found online at [http://irex.org/system/files/u105/MENA\\_MSI\\_Score\\_Compilation.xls](http://irex.org/system/files/u105/MENA_MSI_Score_Compilation.xls)



## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Moldova Objective Score: 2.61

National legislation guarantees the freedom of speech and is largely compliant with EU norms, but its enforcement by the government is flagging. This is why Objective 1 scored about three-quarters of a point lower than the 2.89 it achieved last year. Petru Macovei, the executive director of the Association of Independent Press (AIP), said, “During the reporting period, claiming the need to eliminate foreign propaganda—mainly from Russia—Parliament tried to enact two draft laws that could have jeopardized the freedom of expression and the editorial independence of media institutions.” The draft laws raised concerns among media NGOs; their call to reject them that was signed by more than 20 NGOs in Moldova. Dunja Mijatović, the OSCE representative for the freedom of the press, also harshly criticized the draft laws. Not all developments were negative: media law expert Olivia Pîrțac pointed out, “The legislative framework was not amended radically in 2015 but was complemented with provisions to ensure the transparency of ownership of media institutions.”

Legislation in the Transnistria region also guarantees freedom of speech on paper, but this right is violated routinely by the authorities. Luiza Dorosenco, director of the Media Center in Tiraspol, said, “The law stipulates that the

### LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

#### FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing or registration of media protects a public interest and is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against media professionals, citizen reporters, and media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > The law protects the editorial independence of state of public media.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily available; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media, journalists, and citizens.
- > Media outlets’ access to and use of local and international news and news sources is not restricted by law.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

officers of state media are, according to principles of parity, the president and the Supreme Council [the local Parliament]; the Supreme Council has currently been removed from the list of officers. Its representatives have complained several times that they cannot access state media.”

Legislation in Moldova stipulates that radio and television stations must be licensed. The licenses are granted by the Audiovisual Coordinating Council (ACC), the national regulatory authority in this field. The ACC has been constantly criticized for how bids for granting broadcasting licenses are conducted. The panelists expressed a common view that the ACC is politically influenced in its decision-making. Galina Zablovskaya, executive director of the Association of Advertising Agencies (AAA), said, “All attempts to appoint ACC members based on criteria of professionalism have failed.”

In 2015, the ACC received three new members, one of whom was the former minister of culture in the CPRM government. He was expelled from the CPRM after he voted in May to suspend rebroadcasts by television station Rosiia 24 in Moldova, a decision contested by the CPRM. The ACC decision was unanimous and came in the wake of their monitoring of several television stations to check how they covered events in Ukraine. According to the panel, it might have seemed that the ACC was making efforts to fight propaganda; however, in reality, it reacted to a complaint from LP member of parliament (MP) Gheorghe Brega, who said that Rosiia 24 broadcast a film in which it justified the annexation of Crimea, and to a complaint by Nicolae Dudoglo, candidate for governor in Gagauzia, who felt that this station was biased in covering the election campaign. “In fact,” said Rodica Mahu, editor-in-chief of *Jurnal de Chișinău*, “the ACC only pretended to fight propaganda because the Russian media group Sputnik broadcasts in Chișinău on the frequency of the radio station Univer FM without a license. We notified the ACC of this, and their answer was that no station in the country has a contract for rebroadcasting radio station Sputnik from the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, Sputnik radio station broadcasts with no impediments, and the ACC keeps silent.”

Legislation does not restrict the entry of media outlets into the market or make any provisions that might force media to operate under unequal conditions compared with companies in other sectors. Ruslan Mihalevschi, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *SP* in Bălți, said, “National media outlets should have some tax breaks compared with foreign entities, otherwise many independent newspapers, especially local ones, might disappear.” Andrei Barga, owner and manager of Media TV in Cimișlia, regretted that only the “print media are exempt from VAT but not the broadcast media.” “According to the law, entry into the market is free, but it

**“In fact,” said Rodica Mahu, editor-in-chief of Jurnal de Chişinău, “the ACC only pretended to fight propaganda because the Russian media group Sputnik broadcasts in Chişinău on the frequency of the radio station Univers FM without a license.”**

is extremely difficult given the monopolies in the broadcast market and in commercial advertising,” noted Macovei. Macovei was referring to the fact that DP leader Vladimir Plahotniuc is the owner of four of the five national television stations and believed to also control the advertising agency Casa Media Plus SRL, which controls about half of the television advertising market. A similar situation can be seen in the Transnistrian region. “The state media receive subsidies from the budget, but the independent media do not receive any support from the state and are left on their own,” Dorosenco reported.

Moldova demonstrated that it is a relatively safe country for journalists, as serious offenses against them are rare. However, 2015 was tumultuous, with many street protests that saw plenty of incidents involving journalists, photographers, and camera operators. “Some incidents were widely publicized, but the media did not monitor whether those who were guilty of assaulting journalists were sanctioned or not,” noted Pîrţac. “The only exception was the case of journalist Vadim Ungureanu from the news portal deschide.md who, after being abusively detained last year, claimed illegal actions were committed by the employees of the Penitentiary Institutions Department. The General Prosecutor’s Office opened a criminal case that the media widely reported,” recalled Valentina Enachi, department head of the University of European Studies of Moldova (UESM). It should be noted that at the beginning of October, a press release from the General Prosecutor’s Office stated, “The Anti-corruption Prosecutor’s Office finalized the criminal investigation and filed criminal accusations against three employees of Penitentiary No.13 of Chişinău with the Central Court for abuse of power in the case of journalist Vadim Ungureanu.”<sup>1</sup>

The panelists cited more than 10 cases of intimidating journalists that occurred in 2015. In March, for example, Jurnal TV announced that one of its reporters was assaulted by the companion of a DP MP, while in July it announced

that its news crew was assaulted in the Orhei mayor’s office. In August, a deputy general director of the National Agency for Food Safety tried to intimidate RISE Moldova reporter Vladimir Thoric, accusing him of making an on-the-spot investigation into attempts to circumvent the Russian embargo on fruit. The incident inflamed public opinion and the government discharged the deputy general director. During the protests by Dignity and Truth in November, the demonstrators physically assaulted a cameraman of the portal Today.md, who suffered a concussion. In December, Ana Harlamenco, the former president of public company Teleradio Gagauzia (GRT), announced at a press conference that some politicians put pressure on the regional press and its managers on the eve of the elections for the Popular Assembly of Gagauzia.

Program host at Publika TV Vitalie Dogaru considered, “The polarization of society has made the criticism of journalists’ actions more acute. On September 6, during the meeting held by the Dignity and Truth platform, a group of people asked for the removal of the news crew of Publika TV. There are journalists who refuse to attend such events fearing they will be assaulted or subjected to ill-treatment.”

“In the Transnistrian region, journalists, bloggers, photo-reporters—nobody feels protected,” said Dorosenco, recalling the famous case of the activist and journalist Serghei Ilcenko, arrested by the Tiraspol security forces for “extremism” based on posts he made on social networks and opinions he expressed in the forums in the Transnistrian region. The journalist was detained for four months.

Regarding the legal independence of public media, media law expert Pîrţac said, “National legislation protects their editorial independence, and the funding is transparent; however, the enforcement of the legislation is flawed, which was demonstrated in 2015 especially on the occasion of the ‘mock’ election of the president of Teleradio-Moldova [TRM] and of the members of the Observers’ Council [OC].” “The funding is transparent but not sufficient as the law says and, when there is no money, it is very difficult to have editorial independence,” added journalist Valentina Ursu of Radio Free Europe. Macovei said that in 2015 the OC members were also appointed based on political criteria contrary to the legislation: “Of the new OC members, one was a former ACC member, one was the former manager of the Press Service of the Ministry of Information, Technology, and Communications, and one was the former head of the press service in the Filat government.”

The panelists were skeptical about the capacity of the OC to monitor the editorial independence of TRM given that after it did not operate in 2014 because of the lack of a quorum (only three out of nine members were in office). It resumed

<sup>1</sup> <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/trei-angaja-percentC5-percentA3i-ai-penitenciarului-nr-13-sunt-acuza-percentC5-percentA3i-percentC3-percentAEn-dosarul-jurnalistului-vadim-ungureanu>.

its activity amid scandals. On March 14 at the first meeting, the chairman of the OC was elected with four votes (the law requires at least five). A short time afterwards, as a result of public hearings the OC surprisingly appointed Olga Bordeianu as president of TRM. The press wrote about her: "Former employee of the Russian stations STS and Russkoie Radio is the new president of TRM." On the next day in a public meeting, OC member Petru Grozavu requested the annulment of his vote for the president claiming that he suspected her of plagiarism and of including false data in her CV.

The media NGOs that analyzed the election process issued a press release requesting the resignation of the OC members who had voted for the candidate without having sufficiently analyzed her background. Because there was no feedback from the OC, the media NGOs presented an independent evaluation of the candidates' files at a press conference. According to that evaluation, the OC had selected the weakest candidate for the position of TRM president. The NGOs requested the cancellation of the results, but the OC, supported by TRM legal experts, declared that Petru Grozavu's request was invalid and left the decision in force. At a new meeting of the OC on July 10, Petru Grozavu announced that he would go to court to ask for the cancellation of the election; OC chair Ludmila Vasilache then resigned, claiming that she could not represent a "divided team."

"The ACC does not have clear criteria for appointing candidates for OC membership, neither does the specialized parliamentary committee. In this situation, it is very easy to influence the independence of TRM through one's partisans," Ursu said. Currently, the OC has two vacant seats. In line with the legislation in force, the ACC proposed four candidates to the parliamentary committee that oversees it: two former ACC members, one employee of the CPRM newspaper *Comunistul*, and a writer who is thought to be affiliated with the LDPM. At the end of the year, the committee decided in a working meeting to propose two candidates at the parliamentary plenary session to be voted on in 2016: the writer and the employee of *Comunistul*.

The GRT was also shaken by scandals throughout 2015. "The GRT operated for almost one year without a president after the OC discharged Ana Harlamenco in April and did not appoint a new one. I have the feeling that the politicians in Comrat [capital of Gagauzia] openly intend to dictate to journalists how they should work," said Macovei. The GRT crisis drew the attention of civil society and of the local parliament. Ivan Burgudji, chairman of the committee of the Comrat legislative body that oversees GRT, opted for the reorganization of the GRT into a state company that, according to the panelists, is a dangerous sign for the destiny of Gagauzia's public radio and television stations.

In the Republic of Moldova, libel has been decriminalized; only the Civil Code contains sanctions against it. Pîrțac noted, "Not only the legislation, but also its enforcement complies with European standards and best practices because no obvious abuse occurred. The Law on the Freedom of Expression provides a positive framework for press activity, and those who do not have any control over the content published (Internet providers, etc.) cannot be held liable for offensive content. The task of bringing evidence in a civil lawsuit is balanced and equally distributed between the plaintiff and the defendant." Alexandru Burdeinii, editor-in-chief at the news agency InfoMarket, believes, "The media publish derogatory material written on command, but those who are referred to seldom decide to go to court."

No sensational cases occurred during the year, but there were some attempts. For example, in February CPRM leader Vladimir Voronin told Jurnal TV and Constantin Cheianu, the moderator of Jurnal TV's satirical and critical talk show, that he would sue them for libel and would ask for MDL 1 million (about \$50,000) as compensation for moral damage, but the case did not go to court even though both the station and the moderator continued to act in the same vein. Another case mentioned by the panelists was the one in which the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldova* was forced by the court to publicly apologize and pay MDL 9100 (\$450) for moral damage to Domnica Cemortan, witness to the wreck of the Italian cruise ship *Costa Concordia*. In January 2012, the newspaper had published an article that, according to the court, contained untruthful information.

The development of the Internet and of new technologies contributed in 2015 to consistent progress in e-governance, open government data, etc. Moldova was 22nd out of 122 states in the Global Open Data Index 2015, which ranks open data worldwide. This was 21 positions higher than its ranking in the previous year. The government portal for open data—[date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md)—launched in 2011 contains 879 sets of data provided by 48 central public authorities. Recently, [date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md) had a record of over 1million downloads. In 2015, the Association of Environment and Eco Tourism Journalists launched the mobile phone application Official Alert, which allows users to receive notifications when the web pages of the 38 government institutions, including 16 ministries, are updated.

There were, however, cases of limited access to information in 2015. "At the local level, law enforcement bodies often send us to the press officer for information, but for example, the Cimișlia court does not have a press officer while the police have one for several districts. There are employees who must ask for their manager's permission to talk to the press. This impedes us from receiving prompt reactions

to events that take place,” stated Bargan. Mahu stated that she could not get information she needed in three instances: from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, from the president of Edinet District and from the General Prosecutor’s Office which, she said, “...is usually open but does not provide information about extraordinary cases. We asked who funded Renato Usatai’s protest this autumn in front of parliament and what happened to the files opened in relation to him. We were asked to lodge an official request and received the answer three weeks later, but the information was incomplete and irrelevant.” Pîrțac agreed, “Indeed, there are authorities, including the Center for the Protection of Personal Data, that in the context of overall progress seem to regress regarding transparency, which cannot be justified from the perspective of public interest.” “Transnistrian legislation sets out clearly the procedure for providing information upon request by the media but says nothing about sanctions for those who do not provide it. So, ignoring a request and the failure to provide formal information are not punished,” noted Dorosenco.

Access by the media to local and international news and sources of information is not restricted in any way. “Although there have been constant discussions throughout 2015 about protecting our information space, and although TV station Rossiya 24 has been suspended, the enforcement of this principle has not changed,” Pîrțac declared. While the experts appreciated the unrestricted access of the media to local and international news, they also mentioned a downside. “One problem is that not all journalists faithfully report the sources of their information,” said Dumitru Ciorici, editorial manager and co-founder of the portal Agora.md. Burdeinii shared his opinion: “In 2015, the number of cases when journalists ‘forgot’ to mention that the news article was not theirs had not decreased.”

The experts expressed a common view that choosing to enter and practicing the profession of journalism is absolutely free in Moldova. “The faculties have state-funded places, but the access of students to paid education is free,” noted Enachi of UESM. “I know a case when a student who was a LDPM member was recruited by the press service of parliament directly after graduation, but this is an unusual case rather than a common phenomenon.”

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Moldova Objective Score: 2.31

The panelists noted an improvement in the quality of journalism compared with the previous year, when parliamentary elections and the pressure of politics on the media was stronger. In addition, the influence of the information war launched by the conflict in eastern Ukraine decreased in 2015. The change was, however, small. “Professional journalism is expensive and requires investment, while the media is poor,” said Ciorici. Bargan considered that journalists “in pursuit of promptness often provide erroneous information. Very often, instead of presenting a second source in controversial reports, journalists opt for the usual excuse that the accused could not be found or did not answer the telephone.”

The media has had limited capacity thus far to resist the massive influence exerted on it during elections. Macovei said, “The most influential TV stations sometimes even openly campaigned for some of the DP candidates in the local general elections.” It should be mentioned that as a result of weekly monitoring, the ACC applied sanctions to a number of stations including Prime TV, Publika TV, and Accent TV, which improved the quality of the coverage of local elections somewhat. Dogaru, program host and producer at Publika TV, explained the problems of accuracy in reporting by the fact that, “Most media continue to

### JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

#### PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well-sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption and retain qualified personnel within the media profession.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exist (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

depend financially and editorially on people with economic

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and political interests. Subjectivity is therefore possible due to pressure from some media owners who impose their points of view and because journalists do not have the power to influence editorial policy.”

Reports on the relations between Chişinău and Tiraspol that are published in the Transnistrian media have usually only one source, the official one. “This unbalanced information can also be seen when other subjects are addressed. There are many reasons for it: difficult access to information, insufficient professional training, and small number of independent experts, among others,” Dorosenco declared.

Moldova has a Journalist’s Ethical Code, whose provisions comply with international standards. There is also the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters. TRM has a similar internal document. The Press Council has been operating for several years and has demonstrated its effectiveness. “It’s good that we have an ethical code, but not everyone has signed it and many violate it,” stated Mihalevschi. “Although the Press Council encourages the enforcement of ethics, there are multiple violations because commercial considerations are at stake and what is ethical does not ‘sell’ to the same extent,” Pîrţac added.

The panelists agreed that while there were fewer serious ethical violations in the past year, they still occurred. Panelists cited, for example, a Pro TV newscast that gave airtime to a story from Romania where a man secretly recorded his former lover—a schoolteacher—engaged in a sexual act with another man. The report raised an outcry in society. The Press Council and the ACC reacted and 28 civil society organizations declared a boycott of ProTV Chişinău for defying the ethical code. Pro TV made an apology on its website, but not in the evening news bulletin in which the report was aired.

Self-censorship continues to be practiced. “The fear of being accused of libel makes some journalists select general phrases and avoid specific figures or names,” said Zablovskaya. “Journalists comply with the editorial policies of the institution that employs them. If the institution belongs to somebody, the journalist uses self-censorship to avoid upsetting the owner,” added Enachi. Bargan said, “Not only the owner. For example, an agricultural company in Basarabeasca district (SADAC AGRO) refused to continue paying for subscriptions to the newspaper *Gazeta de SUD* for its employees because it was criticized in one of the newspaper’s articles.”

The panel participants thought that journalists exercised self-censorship not because their lives might be threatened but rather for a minimum level of comfort in their jobs

and for the possibility for promotion. Panelists felt most could nonetheless find jobs where they would have more freedom to work honestly. Things are more worrisome in the Transnistrian media, where self-censorship has become a very frequent phenomenon. “If a journalist’s articles do not coincide with the editorial policy, they are not published. The journalists who express opinions other than those of their editors, or to be more exact of their owners [often a Transnistrian official or agency], will soon be dismissed, and it is very difficult to find a job in the local media as the territory is small and the economic situation is precarious,” Dorosenco noted.

In Moldova, there is no perception that the media ignore important events; however, when such events are publicized, the slant depends on the media owners’ interests.

“Journalists attend all announced events, but not all of them are important for the public, and journalists seldom look for events themselves. Some make an event when a politician makes a statement and another politician replies,” noted Bargan. “There is the ‘herd effect’: Somebody writes a news piece and everybody copies it while a number of subjects are either ignored or little publicized, such as culture or the issues of small communities,” Burdeinii stated. “In the Transnistrian region there is a specific exception,” said Dorosenco, “as the events held by NGOs are very rarely publicized and the organizer is not named unless they are aimed at ‘patriotic education.’”

As for reporters’ and editors’ wages, Pîrţac thought, “For a poor country like Moldova, the level of wages in journalism is not discouraging; rather, it is a profession that can provide a decent living.” This view was not, however, shared by the other panelists. Burdeinii considered, “The wages in the independent media are low. The journalists working for the media institutions of rich owners and oligarchs get high wages but do not have any freedom.” Zablovskaya thought that reporters and editors are poorly paid and, “They are either forced to work additional jobs or they leave for abroad.” Bargan said, “One of our reporters who got MDL 3000 (\$150) per month from Media TV went to the South Regional Development Agency to work for MDL 5000 (\$250) per month.” Ursu added, “There is no obvious discrepancy between wages in public and private media.” “The discrepancy is not large between journalists’ wages and the wages of other professions either. University lecturers get MDL 3000 per month on average. Graduates complain that beginners in media receive much lower salaries than employees with more experience,” noted Enachi. In 2015, no cases came to the public’s attention in which journalists produced reports in exchange for payments or gifts, although the panelists believe that such practices might exist.

“There are sufficient news bulletins in Moldovan media so that everyone is informed about the most important events in the country and abroad,” said Pîrțac. All the panelists shared this opinion. “Overall, there is a balance between news and entertainment so that people can choose what they are interested in,” added Burdeinii. The situation in the broadcast media has also improved because the ACC requires that at least 30 percent of broadcasts are produced locally. Broadcasters have started to increase the amount of local products, first by introducing news programs and then other types. In any case, the presence of a number of local news bulletins on radio and television has not caused consumers to shift their attention to other types of media products.

The panelists believed that the materials and technology required for collecting, producing, and broadcasting information are not real problems for the Moldovan media. “There is room for improvement, especially in the case of public or local media, but the technologies allow them to adequately operate and meet people’s needs. The Internet is accessible anywhere and is cheap. What is still lacking is journalists ability to use the available technologies with high productivity,” declared Ciorici.

Mihalevschi said, “In Moldova, things related to specialized reports and programs are OK.” This opinion was shared by other panelists who referred to the growing number of journalistic investigations conducted by *Ziarul de Garda*, *Ziarul National*, *Panorama*, the Center for Journalistic Investigations, RISE-Moldova, Jurnal TV, TV7, and Publika TV among others. Online media like mold-street.md, deschide.md, omg.md, and realitatea.md also carry out investigations in a very professional way. “There are many investigations, but the high-quality ones are rare,” was the opinion of Zablovskaya. She saw two reasons for this: investigations are expensive and do not have the expected impact if the authorities react inadequately.

There are journalists who specialize in specific areas such as education, economics, ecology, culture, and sports, and there are specialized media institutions including some online. Nevertheless, “Reporters should be better trained,” said Ursu. “I think that politics and negativism dominate our media,” added Burdeinii, while Bargan said, “There are many fewer specialized journalists and many fewer investigations in the local media.” “In Transnistria, most journalists are generalists, but there are also journalists who are specialized, especially in addressing the Moldovan-Transnistrian conflict,” Dorosenco noted.

## OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Moldova Objective Score: 2.60

According to the panelists, there are many sources of information for people in Moldova—newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, wired and mobile Internet—and their number are gradually increasing. “People have the possibility to be informed and to check sources of information since the media presents different perspectives, including those of the political parties even though some of [the parties] have their own press services,” said Enachi.

In 2015, two new television stations were licensed: Vocea Basarabiei, a general station, and TV Agro Moldova, a specialized station, in addition to the news portal Sputnik.md in Romanian and Russian, which some panelists said is a propaganda tool of the Russian Federation. In 2015, the Russian media holding STS Media suspended broadcasts of the STS MEGA TV station in Moldova, and in June of that year broadcasts by station Rossia 24 were banned by an ACC decision.

“There are many sources of information, but some of them are manipulative,” Ursu noted. Ciorici shared this view given that, “Some of the sources are politically controlled.” “People must use a number of sources to understand what is really happening,” added Macovei. The Internet also provides significant possibilities to get information. According to statistics, 75 percent of households have connections to wired and mobile Internet, and 67 percent

## MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE, OBJECTIVE NEWS.

### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > Plurality of public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet, mobile) exist and offer multiple viewpoints.
- > Citizens’ access to domestic or international media is not restricted by law, economics, or other means.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for media outlets.
- > Private media produce their own news.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge the objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources
- > The media provide news coverage and information about local, national, and international issues.

of them use the Internet to access news websites. People are increasingly using social networks. Odnoklassniki, for example, is used by 860,000 people while Facebook is used by 570,000. Instagram and LinkedIn are also popular.

In Transnistria, all types of media exist. "Older people trust the print press more while the young trust the online press. The media reflects different political opinions, but there is pressure on the opposition press or on the press that criticizes the government," Dorosenco declared.

Media institutions have mobile applications for iOS, Android, and others. At the end of the year, the news portal point.md presented the mobile application Point News for Apple iOS users in which, in addition to reading and leaving comments on the news, there is a function for adding news. The login to the user's account can be performed via a SimpalsID account or via Facebook, Google, Yandex, or Mail.

Moldovan citizens face no restrictions on using national and international media; authorities do not block access to foreign websites. In addition, access to information is not expensive. "In rural areas, there is Internet and local media, but Chişinău is more privileged because it is the capital city," said Enachi, and her view was shared by all the panelists. "Access to the media is not the same in all communities, but the free and cheap Internet facilitates the adequate provision of information to all those who want it," added Pîrţac. In 2015, Moldova ranked second in the world for affordability of packaged Internet and digital television at €7.30 per month on average, according to a survey conducted by SecDev.

The situation in Transnistria is different. Access to the Internet is not limited, but, "Some websites that criticize the authorities cannot be accessed in the region. Starting in 2012, at least 16 websites and forums were blocked, and there were cases of hacking into groups on Facebook. For instance, in November [during the local election campaign], the group 'Transnistria without Şevciuk' [Transnistria's president] turned into 'Transnistria is for Şevciuk' overnight. In addition, media in Moldova do not have access to Transnistria," added Dorosenco.

Public media outlets fulfill their missions to a large extent, including by airing educational and cultural programs that do not receive sufficient attention in the private media. "As an election year, 2015 facilitated the monitoring, including by comparison, of public media performance compared with that of private media and saw a pretty good situation in this regard," Pîrţac observed. "TRM provided a balanced perspective on the political range in the country and room for alternative comments," Enachi said. Mahu thought that, "In some cases, TRM put more focus on the policies of the governing alliance or on specific components of the alliance

like DP and LDPM. For example, the LDPM is obviously privileged in terms of air time on Radio Moldova."

It seems that some TRM journalists have not yet managed to leave behind their propaganda pasts colored by the Soviet period. The public national and regional broadcasters are still vulnerable because they "are funded from the state budget and the OC members are appointed based on political criteria," Macovei remarked. In Transnistria, not only the state media is heavily politicized. "The state television, for example, propagates the ideas of the Transnistrian leader, while TSV, which is private, promotes the ideas of the party Obnovlenie. More than half of the members of the Supreme Council are members of the Obnovlenie party," stated Dorosenco.

The most important news agencies in the country are Moldpres, the state agency, and private agencies IPN Neo and Infotag. "They mainly provide media with balanced news, but the agency Sputnik.md that was created this year is the megaphone of the Russian pro-imperial forces," Enachi observed. "There are news agencies, but it's up to the media institutions to find money to pay for subscriptions. Unfortunately, not all the media institutions have that financial ability, not to mention subscriptions to international news agencies," added Mihalevschi, whose view was shared by all the panelists. The news agencies mostly provide text, but IPN, for example, also offers audio and video content. For the second year, IPN provided news to a number of regional radio and television stations on the basis of a subscription paid to the agency by the ACC from the so-called Fund for Supporting Broadcasters (the Fund is financed by a 1 percent fee on broadcasters' revenue).

The panelists agreed that the Moldovan media, including that from the Transnistrian region, produces its own content, including news. "The amount of content produced by the national and local media is increasing and the quality is getting better every year," Burdeinii declared. "It is true that everyone produces content, including news, irrespective of whether they are broadcasters [an ACC requirement], print press, online press, or bloggers, but not all of them manage to do it well," was the opinion of Pîrţac. Macovei agreed and added, "Media with sufficient resources also produce manipulative news, while bloggers instead express opinions rather than writing news, although we can also find good material everywhere."

In 2015, there was some legislative progress in terms of transparency of ownership for broadcast media outlets. In line with the amendments made to the Audiovisual Code, the ACC asked broadcasters to declare their owners. "Thus, we learned in November that DP sponsor Vladimir Plahotniuc is also the owner of four national TV stations—Publika TV, Prime TV, Canal 2, and Canal 3—and of three

radio stations—Publika FM, Muz FM, MaestroFM. LDPM MP Chiril Lucinschi is the only owner of TV7, and Jurnal TV belongs to businessman Victor Topa. The public found out about the owners but cannot influence the monopoly that exists in the broadcast media,” noted Enachi. “There is a real monopoly in broadcast media. One structure controls 53 percent of the audience, but the Competition Board says that this is a dominant position, not a monopoly,” Zablovskaya said.

“We know the owners of radio and TV stations, but not the owners of the other types of media, especially portals and blogs,” Mihalevschi remarked. “In any case, if we look at the messages, we can easily understand who controls which media institutions,” added Ursu.

In the Transnistrian region, it is also known to whom the media belong. “Most media institutions belong to the authorities, but the actual founder is either the Transnistrian leader or the Sheriff Company,” Dorosenco declared.

In Moldova, foreign investment in the media sector is virtually absent, and press institutions change their owners not based on economics but rather on political considerations.

There is no perception that the interests of minorities are infringed upon in any way. “Irrespective of ethnic background, minorities use the Russian language, and a huge amount of information is broadcast in Russian,” Pîrţac noted. In the minority communities there are media sources in their languages: Gagauzia and Taraclia District (largely inhabited by Bulgarians) serve as examples. The national public broadcaster produces programs weekly in Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Roma, and Belarusian.

“The central private media address a large range of issues, but those related to ethnic minorities or sexual orientation are less covered. These subjects are probably not attractive from a commercial point of view,” Zablovskaya remarked. “The media is mainly in Russian and Moldovan. Media products in the languages of minorities are not demanded, and if there is no demand, there is no supply,” added Burdeinii. Even though in the Transnistrian region there are three official languages—Russian, Moldovan and Ukrainian—Russian prevails. Dorosenco noted, “The newspapers Гомін and Адевэрул Нистрян are published every week in Ukrainian and Moldovan, but their circulation is very small and they are not popular, just like the programs in these languages on state television.”

“A number of national TV stations, first of all the public one, have news and programs with material from the regions, but they are few. This shortage is complemented by the local media that cover a broad range of problems, not only cultural events as was the case five to seven years

ago,” Bargan observed. Pîrţac added, “Media institutions do not exist in all the districts, and not all communities are covered in an equal and balanced way with qualitative local information while national media outlets seldom manage to address important local events.” Media in general do not focus on a specific type of news; rather, “International news is simply copied not knowing how objective it is because outlets can’t afford to have their own correspondents abroad,” said Mihalevschi.

The inhabitants of the Transnistrian region do not, however, receive sufficient information on a number of topics from the regional media. According to Dorosenco, “The topic of European integration is addressed in only a negative context, the activities of NGOs are not covered and the contribution of European/international funds to the development of civil society or of the economy is ignored.”

#### OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

#### Moldova Objective Score: 1.85

Of all the objectives, Objective 4 received the lowest score from the panelists although it did show slight improvement compared with last year, increasing by 0.10. There was very little deviation from the average among the indicators, with the exception of indicator 5, government subsidies and interference in the media market. Panelists did point to positive changes, such as a number of online media outlets have matured and that TRM managed its budget in a transparent way. For much of the rest of the media, the old problems persist.

Mihalevschi saw a direct relationship between “management problems and the financial instability of several media outlets.” “Many of the media outlets are not even conceived by their owners as businesses but rather as tools for applying pressure and/or for ideological manipulation. Consequently, their financial management is not based on tools and mechanisms that are required in a market economy,” Macovei declared.

The situation in Transnistria is similar. Dorosenco said, “The state central and municipal media institutions serve the interests of the president’s team, while the media institutions founded by the Sheriff Company serve the company’s interests. The independent press face major problems. In 2015, the independent newspapers *Chelovek i yego prava* and *Grazhdanskoye obshchestvo* closed down due to a lack of funds.”

“It is unlikely that somebody at the local level has marketing experts or business plans to follow,” Bargan pointed out. “At



the central level, radio, television and print press constantly lose funds. Online media is an exception, but not all of it. Even though there are business plans, it is very difficult to enforce them because of the economic instability in the country," Zablovskaya added. The economic problems generate double accounting, which "although it is not publicly referred to, exists in a number of media outlets," declared Ursu and Burdeinii.

Media outlets usually have revenue from several sources, but the most influential ones, "...have a basic funder in the person of an oligarch or a politician who determines their editorial policies," Pîrțac stated. "At present, media accept any source of funding, even with the risk of losing editorial independence. The main task now is to survive," Zablovskaya observed. "The local media get about 30 percent of revenue from advertising, about 30 percent from grants and projects, and about 40 percent from television services (reports, paid programs). The 40 percent is vulnerable because it depends on the mood of the local administration. If you criticize it, they might drop the paid programs," Bargan warned. Few media institutions have the managerial skills that would enable them to diversify their sources of revenue so as not to have their editorial independence threatened, but most of them, "...have somebody behind them who requires loyalty," Ciorici concluded.

The economic crisis has had an impact on the underdeveloped advertising market. There are no accurate estimates on the extent to which the market has shrunk, but it is thought to be by 30 percent. Zablovskaya said, "The supply of services far outruns the demand because the poor economic situation does not allow many businesses to advertise in the media." Most suppliers of advertising

have been mobile telecommunications companies, sellers of pharmaceutical products, and large retailers. "The big players focus strictly on targeted demographic groups and try to obtain maximum efficiency from the funds they invest in advertising while the small suppliers act as they deem necessary, including based on nepotism, but in all cases the rates are set by the demand in the market," she added.

According to its governing legislation, public media can broadcast advertising under the same conditions as private media, but panelists do not think the rates public media charge undercut those of private media. Television continues to have the largest share of the advertising market. Advertising on television stations is secured from advertising agencies (both local and international), from advertising consolidators, or directly from the sales departments at the stations. The sales departments of television stations access about 15 percent of the advertising volume. Small businesses usually operate directly with television stations in a sporadic manner and with no advertising strategy.

For some years, the most important operator in the media market has been Casa Media, with about 70 percent of sales, controlled by oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc. Alkasar, controlled by Gazprom-Media and LDPM MP Chiril Lucinschi, has about 9 percent and Nova TV has about 3 percent. "There is some form of monopoly in TV advertising that does not give too many chances to players other than those protected by these three media sellers," Pîrțac observed. Nonetheless, the advertising agencies work with all the media institutions but most actively with the television stations and online media because, "They are the most transparent and the most demanded by advertisers," Zablovskaya observed. The biggest operators in the online market are Pro Digital, Numbers, Alkasar, and Media Contact. The panelists pointed out that the quality of about half the advertising spots had increased compared with previous years.

At the local level, the media have a hard time finding advertising for two main reasons: "Advertising is mainly focused in the capital city and the audience measurements that the advertising suppliers request more and more frequently are conducted for the big radio and TV stations that can pay for the services of [AGB Nielsen Media Research]," Bargan noted. Mahu added, "Small ads, such as public summons, condolences, congratulatory messages, are often the only advertising in the newspaper."

In Transnistria, the print media with limited circulation cannot attract the attention of advertising suppliers; consequently their basic revenues, "...come from congratulations, obituaries...and very little advertising from small and medium-sized companies," Dorosenco stated.

#### MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED ENTERPRISES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

##### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets operate as efficient and self-sustaining enterprises.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards.
- > Government subsidies and advertising are distributed fairly, governed by law, and neither subvert editorial independence nor distort the market.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor the product to the needs and interests of the audience.
- > Broadcast ratings, circulation figures, and Internet statistics are reliably and independently produced.

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The share of revenue generated by advertising varies among the media. “Except for the ones protected by the big advertising companies and by some successful Internet portals, the revenues from advertising are more of a supplement to the amounts provided by the owner-funder,” Pîrțac stated. There are media institutions—especially national radio and television stations—that use all the time allowed in the legislation for advertising (12 minutes per hour or 15 percent in 24 hours); however, things are different at the local level. Bargan from Media TV in Cimișlia said, “In fact, the advertising space is used at five to seven percent of the 15 percent stipulated by the legislation, and even this percentage is often used for free social advertising.” The situation improves during election campaigns when revenues go up, but this is not due to increased supply and not better sales techniques by media outlets.

The public broadcasters and the state media in Transnistria are not very interested in attracting advertising since they are funded from the state budget, so they do not make full use of their advertising time.

There are no government subsidies for supporting private media. In addition, the government and the local authorities are not important suppliers of advertising. At the same time, “There is no monitoring to specify how public money is spent on advertising. At the moment, there is no perception of violations, and the advertising coming from the authorities is not very visible. It is necessary to monitor the situation and to develop a regulatory framework that will impose strict and equitable rules for selecting the media that will broadcast advertising coming from the state,” Pîrțac concluded. The legislation covering issuance of official and legal public notifications does not favor specific media institutions.

Although media outlets acknowledge the importance of market research for strategic planning, they can seldom afford them. “Market studies are costly and few media outlets can order them, maybe only the strong TV stations,” Burdeinii said. There are some market studies, but they are neither frequent nor well known. “The situation in Moldova has not convinced media managers that market studies are efficient and that they can bring returns on investments,” Pîrțac observed, while Macovei stated, “Normally, knowing the market helps you to adapt your products to demand and to the growth of the audience; however, in our country the growth of the audience does not necessarily mean growth in revenues from advertising, especially since there is a monopoly in this segment.” However, Zablovskaya from the AAA noted, “In all situations, the media outlets must know that advanced advertising agencies do not start an advertising campaign without using data on the audience.”

In Transnistria, there are no market studies or specialized agencies. “Probably experts from Russia have conducted some market studies for state media, but nothing has been communicated about them,” Dorosenco noted. The local/regional media cannot afford to order market studies. “We can use the results of a study only if somebody carried it out on the basis of a grant. For the rest, we can judge the profile of our audience through questionnaires that are filled out in the field or from phone calls on the air or in the office,” Bargan stated.

Things are different with the online media. The Office for Circulation and Internet Audit (OCIA) has measured the online audience in the Moldovan market since 2012 through the Study of Measuring Traffic and Audience on the Internet conducted in partnership with GemiusAudience. For instance, a study was carried out in the third quarter of 2015 to learn the profile of Internet users, the frequency of Internet use, and a ranking of the most popular websites. OCIA provided data about the general socio-demographic profile of Internet users as well as data about the profile of the audience of every website included in the study. The study showed that 88 percent of these visitors used the Internet every day; 53 percent were female; most Internet users (65 percent) were aged 20 to 49 and of those the largest share (28 percent) were aged 20 to 29; 56 percent were actively employed or entrepreneurs; most had medium to high incomes while 34 percent had net monthly incomes under MDL 10,000 (\$500).

Data on the radio and television audience in Moldova is provided by the company TV MR MLD, the official representative of AGB Nielsen Media Research. It measures monthly the audience of 15 television and 6 radio stations. Data on print circulation and Internet traffic is produced and provided by OCIA. “Although it is independent, there are many suspicions about—and little credibility attached to—the AGB data,” Pîrțac observed, mentioning several cases that were brought to the public’s attention when AGB was accused of rigging data in favor of some television stations. Zablovskaya from the AAA says that the OCIA data, “...is acknowledged in the market and is taken into consideration by advertising agencies, just like the data provided by Gemius.”

The panelists noted nevertheless that not all media outlets can pay for the services of companies that measure their audiences. “At the local level, there are no measurements of the audience,” Bargan stated. “Only the rich media outlets have access to data on the audience, while data with free access either does not exist or is very limited,” said Burdeinii.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Moldova Objective Score: 2.55

Compared with last year, this objective improved slightly, up 0.13 points from 2.42 to 2.55. Panelists felt this is due primarily to the increased activity of media NGOs and the development of infrastructure for information technology and communications. In other areas, some of the same challenges exist.

Despite the fact that there are no legal restrictions to impede the establishment and operation of trade associations, very few exist and even then only two are more or less active in the broadcast sector. Pîrțac observed that the Employers' Association of Broadcasters, which seems to be dependent on political forces and the Cable Operators' Association, "...are heard only when they must lobby for these forces' interests. They give the impression that their activity is ad-hoc, aimed at lobbying, is not permanent and does not serve the professional interest of the independent media." Zablovskaya explained, "There are many contradictions even inside the profession. There are managers who collaborate with international organizations but who would not sit at the same table with other managers of Moldovan media. In addition, the registration procedure [for organizations] is complicated and registration at the Ministry of Justice must be renewed every year." At the local level, "The managers are not involved and do not feel the support of the Employers' Association," she added. Dorosenco further stated that in Transnistria, "There are no

### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

#### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of media owners and managers and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights and promote quality journalism.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience.
- > Short-term training and in-service training institutions and programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of media equipment, newsprint, and printing facilities are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, cable, Internet, mobile) are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Information and communication technology infrastructure sufficiently meets the needs of media and citizens.

associations of this kind." The Cable Operators' Association is funded from membership fees while the source of funding of the Employers' Association of Broadcasters is not known.

There are a number of professional associations whose aim is to promote quality in journalism. These include the Sports Press Association of Moldova (SPAM) affiliated with the International Sports Press Association, the Guild of Agricultural Journalists, the Association of Environment and Eco Tourism Journalists (AEETJ), and the Young Journalist's Center. Some are quite active; for example, SPAM annually organizes the Olympic Games for Sports Journalists and at the end nominates the best athletes, coaches, and teams in Moldova. AEETJ participates in the annual Environmental NGOs Forum. The Young Journalist's Center organized for the second consecutive year the Gala of Young Journalists.

Mihalevschi considered, however, "These associations and clubs are still fragile because they usually operate using external funds that they receive." Dogaru thought, "There has never been cohesion in this field that would result in the creation of a trade union that might protect the interests of media professionals, and I don't think that one will be created soon."

In Transnistria there is a trade union where membership can be obtained by filling in an application form and a separate Journalists' Union that requires with three years of work experience for membership. "In reality, neither the trade union nor the Journalists' Union does anything to protect journalists' rights. In addition, training journalists or lobbying is not part of their activities either. The Journalists' Union does not cooperate with similar international organizations. The trade union and the Journalists' Union get revenue from membership fees, which is not sufficient for them to become active. Both structures have close relations with the Transnistrian authorities that they fully support," Dorosenco stated.

For several years there have been NGOs in the country that protect the freedom of speech and journalists' independence. Enachi considered, "The Independent Journalism Center [IJC, the local organizer of this study] is functional, active and viable. In 2015, there were media awareness activities for several categories of beneficiaries to which foreign representatives, including from Ukraine and Georgia, were also invited. The IJC collaborated with universities and high schools in Chișinău, Cahul, Bălți and Comrat." Pîrțac thought that several media NGOs, "... continue to operate efficiently and are prolific in the number of their projects and initiatives." This opinion was supported by Mihalevschi: "Unlike the professional associations, the media NGOs are active and influential. They provide significant support to journalists and protect the interests of the media in crises."

In 2015, the first media forum in the country was held under the aegis of the Press Council in partnership with the Association of Independent Press, IJC, and the Electronic Press Association (APEL). It was attended by about 150 representatives of the profession and by decision makers. Macovei considered that the success of the forum was due to the fact that the participants, "...developed a roadmap with many activities to be implemented in one year by the authorities and by the journalism community." One of the actions stipulated in the roadmap was the approval of the new Audiovisual Code developed by APEL back in 2011. This was reviewed by three European institutions but has parliament has not acted on it since the three public parliamentary committee hearings at the end of 2015. Burdeinii was convinced that the media NGOs, "...take an active part in improving the legislation and are ready to defend the freedom of the press," referring to the amendments made to the Audiovisual Code regarding the transparency of media ownership as a result of an IJC initiative.

Bargan regretted that, "There are few specialized NGOs at the local level, and they are not very active." In Transnistria, one of the active NGOs is the Media Center that protects journalists' interests and collaborates with international institutions. Dorosenco, its director, said, "There are no legal restrictions on the registration and operation of the NGOs, but there are threats. Currently, the draft law on non-commercial organizations is with the Supreme Council. According to this draft, the NGOs that receive financial support from outside will have the status of foreign agents with all the accompanying consequences."

The panelists believed that there are sufficient educational programs for training journalists in the country. Enachi of UESM said, "50 percent of the subjects in the UESM curriculum for journalists have a practical orientation. The newspaper *UESM Reporter* is written and published by students. It is edited by a linguist professor, and the articles are not censored." A student newspaper is also produced at the State University of Moldova (SUM) where there is also an online student radio station, Tera bit. Both faculties teach information technology, where students are informed about new techniques for creating media products. Pîrțac thought, "Those who want to become good journalists have all the possibilities to achieve that goal because in addition to the faculties, there is also the School of Advanced Journalism, an IJC project with a focus on practical skills." Zablouvskaia noted that the faculties train too many journalists for whom, "It is a challenge to find highly paid jobs."

In 2015, the international project "TEMPUS-TACIS: Cross-Media and Quality Journalism" was finalized. It resulted in the creation of a master's degree with a double diploma from Moldova and Germany. Specialized

cross-media laboratories were created at SUM and UESM under the project. Students can also study abroad within the ERASMUS+ program that offers student exchanges for one or several quarters. The program started recently and panelists were unsure whether or not they will return to Moldova.

The educational program in Transnistria focuses on theoretical knowledge. The graduates are not prepared to work in the media, except those who managed to work in a media institution while they studied. "They manage to find jobs after graduation, but there are not enough jobs," said Dorosenco. "There are no student publications. The students are encouraged to write for the newspaper *Pridnestrovskiy universitet*, but their articles are closely reviewed by the editor and the chair of the department. According to official statistics, all journalism graduates find jobs. This is reached due to the fact that before the presentation of the final diploma, future graduates are required to produce written confirmation that a media institution is ready to employ them after graduation. Fearing that the absence of this confirmation might have a negative impact on their exam results, the graduates obtain it by any means. In many cases, these confirmations are fictitious," she added.

The panelists said that there are many possibilities for different categories of employees in the media to attend trainings and short-term in-service courses. They are affordable because in most cases they are free and are delivered by national media NGOs often with the participation of international experts. The courses usually meet the journalists' needs and cover a wide range of problems from addressing subjects related to human rights, public health, ecology, gender equality, journalism ethics, data journalism, and investigative journalism. Others cover the use of modern techniques and technologies in the creation of media content, such as hackathons, drone filming, multimedia content, etc. Ciorici appreciated the usefulness of the existing short-term courses but added, "It can be felt, however, that long-term training courses are necessary." This opinion was also shared by Ursu: "A national in-service training center is required because the media is different and the priorities are different." Pîrțac indicated the need to, "...institutionalize short-term courses and give them a stable and predictable character." Most media managers encourage their employees to participate in training sessions, "...but organize such courses in their own institutions quite rarely," said Mihalevschi. Dorosenco painted a starkly opposite picture of the situation where she works, declaring, "In Transnistria participation in training provided by NGOs is not welcomed by editorial managers."

The suppliers of media equipment, sources of paper for newspapers, and printing companies are apolitical, are not monopolies, and there are no restrictions on working

with them. "All you need is money," Burdeinii noted. However, "There are problems with the quality of services," Mihalevschi said and Zablovskaya stated, "The printing quality is poor and many are forced to print their products abroad, wasting time and money."

In Transnistria, the situation is different. Dorosenco mentioned, "Among the few printing companies in Transnistria, Tipar is state owned and operates in Bender City. The rates are lower, but the company provides services selectively. If the media institution is not loyal to the regime, the printing company can reject the order, claiming limited production capacity."

The panelists felt that many of the means for distributing media products, such as kiosks, cable, Internet, and mobile telephony are apolitical and unrestricted. At the local level, "There are no attempts by the authorities or political parties to control the means of transmitting media content, but the means themselves are expensive for us," said Bargan. "Currently at the national level, I.S. Radiocomunicatii holds a monopoly on transmission for radio and television stations, whereas Posta Moldovei holds a monopoly on distributing the print media," Ursu remarked. In some circumstances, these companies, "...can put pressure on the media," Mihalevschi stated. "This threat will not vanish even after the shift to digital terrestrial television because according to the program approved by the government, the first two of the three national digital multiplexes will be run by I.S. Radiocomunicatii," added Macovei.

Over the last year, there were no cases when access by the media to mobile telephony or to the Internet was restricted or blocked. The online press and bloggers have the full freedom to choose software, platforms, domains, and IP addresses as they wish; however, "One obstacle is licensed software which is too expensive and not everybody, especially at the local level, can afford it," Zablovskaya observed.

In Transnistria, the Internet, television towers and transmitters and mobile telephony networks are controlled by the authorities and/or the monopoly company Sheriff. "In 2012 and 2013, this enabled the blocking, with no explanation, of over 10 websites and Internet forums that were not loyal to the government. Such practices still exist," Dorosenco declared.

The experts shared the opinion that the infrastructure for information technology and communications in the country is well developed and able to meet both the needs of the media and of individuals. Enachi said, "Access to the Internet is sufficient both in urban and rural areas, and people can

use [SMS and/or audiovisual MMS] as they wish. In the domestic market, there are enough mobile phones to meet people's needs for news and information." The situation is similar in Transnistria, but according to Dorosenco, "The mobile phones that enable access to online news websites are not widely used because they are still expensive." Bargan expressed his concern that some local and regional broadcasters, "...might vanish after the shift to digital terrestrial television due to a lack of money if they cannot replace the analog transmitters they have at present or if they cannot work together and build regional multiplexes."

## List of Panel Participants

**Petru Macovei**, executive director, Association of Independent Press, Chişinău

**Olivia Pîrţac**, freelance media law expert, Chişinău

**Vitalie Dogaru**, program host and producer, Publika TV, Chişinău

**Andrei Bargan**, owner and manager, Media TV and Radio Media, Cimişlia

**Luiza Dorosenco**, director, Media Center, Tiraspol

**Rodica Mahu**, editor-in-chief, *Jurnal de Chişinău*, Chişinău

**Dumitru Ciorici**, editorial manager and co-founder, Agora.md, Chişinău

**Ruslan Mihalevschi**, editor-in-chief, SP, Bălţi

**Valentina Ursu**, journalist, Radio Free Europe, Chişinău

**Valentina Enachi**, department head, University of European Studies of Moldova, Chişinău

**Alexandr Burdeinii**, editor-in-chief, InfoMarket, Chişinău

*The following participant submitted a questionnaire but did not attend the panel discussion.*

**Galina Zablovskaya**, executive director, Association of Advertising Agencies, Chişinău

## Moderator & Author

**Ion Bunduchi**, media expert, Chişinău

*The Moldova study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, the Independent Journalism Center, Chişinău. The panel discussion was convened on December 10, 2015.*

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*Even without an ideologically-enforced set of cultural norms, the media tend to reflect popular opinions on gender, sexuality, and minorities like Roma, rather than challenge them.*



MOLDOVA

The media in Moldova, with the exception of a few high-quality, small-audience outlets, fail to meet the needs of a country struggling to develop an identity and vision for its future. Moldova's political paralysis and ongoing economic crisis is reflected and intensified by a news media that exacerbates tensions across groups. News coverage is focused on, and produced in, Chişinău, with the political intrigues of the various oligarchs the main subject of discussion. Because each outlet, particularly broadcast television, skews all coverage towards its political patron, the citizenry lose the balanced information it would need to inform opinions that might support compromise. This is a new reality for Moldova, which endured decades of Soviet rule and censorship that uniformly advanced a vision of a generous government working exclusively to provide public welfare through socialism.

Now, Moldova is a divided society, with geopolitical, ethno-linguistic, gender, and local patronage divides pulling citizens toward competing camps. Ideology barely registers in the media, which reinforces personality-driven political parties and a perception that government can, and should, solve all the country's problems. Even without an ideologically-enforced set of cultural norms, the media tend to reflect popular opinions on gender, sexuality, and minorities like Roma, rather than challenge them.

Even if major broadcasters had the independence necessary to advance a healthy, thriving marketplace of ideas, the structural impediments to doing so—poorly trained professionals across generations and levels of seniority, and a lack of resources due to market dynamics—might spoil honest efforts to do so. Scandal and sensationalism appear to be better methods to attract what little advertising money is available to compete for. The few good outlets that exist are mostly donor funded, enjoy only a small audience, and only in Chişinău. Their investigations rarely lead the authorities to hold perpetrators to account. Even the best outlets, most of which are online or in print, rarely cover events outside the capital, and those outside the capital are rarely exposed to them. Citizens in rural areas have little idea what is going on anywhere besides the capital.

The panelists provided a few recommendations to media for improving their public service:

- Help people to understand the difference between real and fake news;
- Reallocate coverage from local politics to social, economic, and international issues;
- Abandon old program formats and bring in new, more professional reporters with vision and personality;
- Unite and act together to protect the public interest, show solidarity, and disseminate each other's investigations ethically;
- Improve professionalism of reporting, particularly ethical and equal treatment of all people, without stereotypes and discrimination;
- Better explain complex issues to ordinary citizens and follow-up on evolving stories;
- Local media need assistance for local issues to receive better coverage.

*Objective 6 is a separate study from objectives 1 through 5 of the Media Sustainability Index. This objective is measured using a separate group of panelists (listed at the end of this section) and unique indicators (described at the end of this section).*

## OBJECTIVE 6: SERVING PUBLIC NEEDS

Moldova Objective Score: 1.66

The panelists generally agreed on the strengths and weaknesses of Moldovan media's ability to cover broadly important issues. The panelists were critical of what they viewed to be shallow and biased coverage of the overall political struggle in the country. This is particularly true on television, where broadcasters with a broad reach in the countryside stick consistently to the editorial line of their patron owners. Political analysis is repetitive and predictable, and described by one panelist as "impenetrable" to the average viewer. Social issues receive comparatively short shrift, though scandals are covered, but this is rarely with analysis and context to help the audience understand a bigger picture. Economic coverage also contains little analysis, leaving the public unable to assess the causes and solutions to Moldova's perpetual economic crisis.

Much of the discussion amongst the panelists focused on the weaknesses of the political coverage and the affects this has on society. Discussions of geopolitics, for example, "distract attention from urgent issues for Moldova, for example those related to poverty, the development model, and good governance. Such discussions lead to conflict and mask real problems, which play into the hands of a corrupt government," said Petru Negură, a lecturer at the State

Pedagogical University of Chişinău. "In my opinion, a visible slippage in this regard, compared to what we had anterior to this date, took place especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Even respected TVs and radio stations like Radio Free Europe began to circulate information and produce biased material in the context of regional policy, engaging in a media war with Russian channels. We would need more insightful information about the region, such as thematic reports about Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, and Russia, not just biased information with geopolitical character."

Vasile Spinei, a superior lecturer at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences of the State University of Moldova, criticized the depth of the political coverage. "The press tries to tackle some issues, but they get tired quickly and quit. We have more a press of declarations: who said what, who and how has replied." Spinei and other panelists criticized the predictable rotation of analysts, "who have already aired the same views hundreds of times. An informed TV-viewer knows who will say what. A fresh perspective is necessary, with new analysts and professional reporters."

Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, State University of Moldova, Daniela Vidaicu pointed out that politics may be in demand. "Political broadcasts have the highest ratings," she said. However, "there are no alternatives to be consumed by the population in social, cultural, or international affairs."

When there is political analysis, it too is problematic. Marius Tarita, a scientific researcher at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, criticized the conflicts of interest of political analysts on television. "Formally, for the public, these are presented as independent analysts, but in reality, a significant number of them have contracts with TVs and are paid." Tarita quickly named four or five analysts at two major stations. "The speech of all of these is predictable, first because they appear consistently, and secondly because their opinion is favorable to the political line supported by the respective TV station."

Doru-Florin Petruti, general director of the research company IMAS, described Moldova's media as a microcosm of the country itself. "Independence may exist when you may survive from advertising and you pay official salaries, while media from Moldova has the same issues as the whole society: politics and corruption, which is why it is so concentrated on politics and corruption." He described a deterioration in the quality of once reliable political analysis programs: "Talk-shows that used to be serious, for instance, *In Profunzime* on Pro TV, became a sort of rumor mill." While the program used to be high quality, now it the guests preface their statements with "I heard..." and "Apparently..." He noted that the content "doesn't matter

### THE MEDIA SERVE CITIZENS BY PROVIDING USEFUL AND RELEVANT NEWS AND INFORMATION AND FACILITATING PUBLIC DEBATE

- > The media promote and facilitate inclusive discussions about local, national, and international issues (social, political, economic, etc.) that are important to citizens.
- > Reporting and discussion in the media support democratic policymaking, government transparency, equitable regulatory enforcement, and consumer protection.
- > News and information provided by the media is relevant to, and informs, the choices and decisions (social, political, economic, etc.) made by citizens.
- > Citizens trust that news and information reported by the media accurately reflects reality.
- > It is possible for citizens to recognize partisan, editorial, or advertorial content as such.
- > Editorial and partisan media content is a constructive part of national dialogue; media refrain from including "hate speech" content.
- > The media expose citizens to multiple viewpoints and experiences of citizens from various social, political, regional, gender, ethnic, religious, confessional, etc., groups.



anymore, [as] one can mute the sound and get the message non-verbally.”

One major problem with the lack of inclusive coverage of broadly important issues is the political agendas of the major outlets, particularly on television. “At first glance they discuss important topics for citizens—pensions, utility rates, health care—but if you know the subject from your own, multiple sources, you understand that the content is distorted both by the moderator and guests,” said Roxana Teodoric, a civil society activist.

Angela Frolov, an LGBT rights activist, berated the limited social coverage on television. “These TV shows look for scandal. The theme of the program is not important for them.” Spinei agreed on this point. Frolov noted that the print outlets are much better on social issues, though their coverage is limited.

On the positive side, there is diverse reporting available to those who go looking for it, though the geographic coverage of this variety of reports tends to be limited to the few quality outlets that exist. The panelists commended a few outlets, including the investigative newspaper *Ziarul de Garda* and the investigative team at *rise.md* for their critical coverage of important topics. Their reports often point out irregularities such as corruption, labor rights violations, and unexplained incomes. In some cases, their reports are picked up by the larger broadcasters, but few of them follow-up on those stories to determine whether there were prosecutions and if they led to convictions, noted Angela Frolov.

The panelists described a few television shows that enter deep into social issues, such as *Tara lui Dogaru* on Publika TV, as well as thematic Russian-language newspapers *Moldavskie Vedomosti* and *Panorama*.

The following of these investigative outlets, as well as the occasional coverage of social issues, is limited by the resources of the outlets in Chişinău. Petriuti noted the lack of connection to audiences outside the capital. “One may find out only about an accident or rape case that happened in the regions, but does not know how actually life is like there, for instance, in Gagauzia.”

Petru Negură largely agreed. “One exception is the Saturday radio program hosted by Valentina Ursu, because it goes to villages and gathers opinions from the grassroots, although unfortunately even here the themes are excessively politicized [by the reporter] or focused on administrative and political issues. I would be interested to know through daily reports from the mouth of those who suffer, and also from some real experts and analytical sources, about how people live, breathe, in the deep recesses of Moldova.”

Participants from the regions underlined that if national press is considered bad, then local press is worse. Victoria Ivancioglo, a civic activist from Cahul, affirmed that local press in this district is down to a single, private, largely commercial newspaper, the *Cahul Express*, and a web publication. Since the website, *ziuadezi.md*, has come under the subsidy of the Cahul District Council, it has begun a print run which is distributed in the villages and presents only the activity of Democratic Party leaders in the region. She said that the local press reflects only the position of authorities—district president and vice-presidents, mayor—and basically there is no dialogue with citizens.

Serghei Ţapordei, a lawyer from Bălţi, affirmed that the local newspaper *SP* is strong, but the local television channel is the opposite. Ion Oboroceanu, former human rights activist who works as a prosecutor, noted, “In Căuşeni, we have both local TV and radio owned by the same person, which have contracts with local authorities to cover their activities. This dramatically influences the local content.” Whether an outlet covers issues of importance to the public rests entirely on the source of funding, political preferences of the owner, and who will gain from that coverage.

Olesea Tabarcea, director of an NGO for protection of vulnerable people in Bălţi, noted some hope for progress. Some citizens, she said, particularly youth and middle aged, use Facebook or other networks to express their opinions. They create unique pages to discuss issues not covered by media and create and distribute on-line petitions.

Petriuti concluded, “The media must resocialize with its consumers. The media today do not allow you to analyze and create your own opinion: they tell you the opinion you should have.”

Panelists saw indicator 2, looking at how media support policymaking, transparency, etc., as one of the weakest points of media’s public service performance. The weaknesses of Moldova’s democracy are reinforced in this case by the fourth estate. To the extent that the media play a role in ensuring transparency and consumer protection, the effect is small, and still partisan.

Tarita noted that the media do not act in concert when one outlet reveals something of critical importance. “If, for instance, a newspaper does a serious investigation and reveals serious abuses, except in a few cases, other outlets ignore the story,” which limits its reach and the value of good investigative work. “If all media would react in solidarity, then pressure on the authorities would be applied and things would change,” he continued. Tarita blamed this phenomenon on a competitive mindset among the media outlets.

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Tarita also described the tendency for the media outlets to interpret each debate through a political lens, where “the essence of the debate is avoided.” He described the case of the new law on prosecution, which was introduced in the news according to its political implications, with very little description or analysis of what the law entails. “One exception was an article by Virginia Nica in the popular newspaper *Adevarul*, which asked ‘Will the reform destroy prosecution?’—clearly a political assessment.”

“Citizens’ opinions on a subject or on a document are asked sporadically, not as part of an ongoing process,” opined Ivancioglo, who expressed his belief that this explained passivity of the citizenry. Spinei further explained: “Despite the fact that we have a law just for citizen involvement in decisions, in fact the transparency of the decision-making process has been compromised, because authorities understand putting draft laws online and organizing so-called hearings, whereas real participation is broader and more serious.” He described how the process should work, then lamented that the media participates in the degradation of the public debate. There are “few, very few debates [in the media] on the development of major legislation. And if it does transpire, this is for the well-educated consumers and not for the general public. Here again we see the need for well-trained, specialized journalists.”

Again, the panelists recognized the few outlets that contribute. “Despite the long list of biased media sources, there are still a few which inform the audience, and have a critical attitude, like *Ziarul de Garda*,” said Veronica Vition, a women’s rights activist, who lamented that despite that outlet’s investigations they lead to little action from law enforcement.

To responsibly promote transparency, rule of law, and consumer protection, the media should constructively criticize the government institutions that do not perform, according to Vidaicu. “This won’t happen if the media belongs to or is biased to certain political forces, which applies to a vast majority of media sources.”

Teodorcic noted that when the media does illustrate a situation through the case of an individual, “this is usually done for charity campaigns.”

Panelists mentioned a few cases when the media pushed the authorities to take action. One is the recent case of a woman with five children who killed her husband in self-defense, but received a harsh sentence: “Civil society mobilized to issue statements and petitions, and the media supported this appeal. As a result, the Minister of Justice

announced that the case would be re-investigated,” said Roxana Teodorcic. Budeanu added additional cases where the media successfully applied pressure on the authorities until a resolution was achieved, including a recent sexual assault scandal in Orhei, a controversial nomination of judge Mariana Pitic to the Superior Council of Magistrates, and a controversy surrounding Chişinău prosecutor Elena Neaga. In each case, the authorities wanted to cover up some irregularities, but the media did not allow it, and acted as a powerful fourth estate.

There was some cynicism of these cases, however, with some panelists replying that such cases were simply fodder for political agendas, as they fit into overall political narratives of one or another political-oligarchical faction and the media empire they control.

All the panelists agreed that media has a big influence on public opinion. “All those who watch a certain channel believe in what it says,” asserted Serghei Țapordei. But this influence is not rooted in quality, balanced reporting that leads the public to form its own judgements. “This is particularly true because Moldova is a poor country and the population does not benefit from quality education that could develop critical thinking,” said Vidaicu.

For example, “Jurnal TV succeeded in bringing people out to protest,” argued Roxana Teodorcic, referring to the ongoing protest movement against oligarch Vlad Plahotniuc, which is covered widely by that channel but largely ignored by the other major broadcasters, most of which Plahotniuc owns. Jurnal was unabashedly biased in its coverage, however, calling for people to join the movement and the protests in the capital.

Daniela Vidaicu asserted that the media carries a lot of propaganda, which negatively affects the harmonious life of the population. “Events covered unfairly often lead to social and family conflicts.”

At times, the media spurred on public interest in social directions, for instance, by “the media helped to attract donations, and solicit aid to needy families,” according to Tabarcea. But, there are also cases where the media violated privacy rights. Many panelists raised the case of a teacher from Ungheni, whose life was harshly affected by the unethical reportage of Pro TV Chişinău. In April 2015, the channel broadcast a video, which was made without her consent, of the teacher engaged in a sexual act. Under pressure from civil society, the National Center for Personal Data Collection and the Press Council acted to ensure an apology was issued, and the video was destroyed.

Tatiana Chiriac expressed disgust with how the media depicts society and the impact it has on the public's mindset. "I would like to know how a person lives in this country on MDL 2000 [\$100] per month, but every day the media shows me glamorous private events and persons. They make us feel worthless! Such programs assert values that the vast majority of the population, who are neither rich, nor beautiful, could never reasonably emulate, leaving them frustrated." Chiriac continued: "As a simple citizen following multiple sources, I do not find the issues that concern my everyday life: how to succeed in the labor market after 45 years, where to study a foreign language or buy children's clothing affordably, where or whether it's even possible to access a professional psychologist with state funding, and so on. Instead, the media is saturated with advertising for shops and services that are inaccessible to the vast majority of the population."

Ivancioglo had a slightly different perspective, asserting, "National TV stations do broadcast news related to everyday life, but usually not at the beginning of the broadcast, and programs on health and social affairs are broadcast during working hours, when few can watch them."

Others noted that important storylines are dropped. "Many news items should be followed up, but the discussions are only presented as sensational or shocking and then are forgotten. Following the October 2015 Club Colectiv tragedy in Bucharest, [in which 63 people were killed in a fire] media coverage led to public pressure that forced the Chişinău municipal authorities to evaluate the fire safety and security procedures at clubs," said Tarita. Shortly thereafter, the media moved on. "The authorities relaxed and there were two more tragedies in the Central Market, and later a fire at a shopping center in Chişinău."

Petruti, a sociologist, shared his belief that the media reproduce the political atmosphere, and is determinative to how people behave. "If it wants, the media is used to incite panic, such as by implying exchange rate fluctuations that push the public to change their lei to euros, or, if it wants, it limits the panic," he said.

While the media tend to include facts in its reporting, the coverage is selective. As such, the extent to which coverage reflects reality is limited to the selective bias of the major outlets. Gheorghe Budeanu noted the frequency of single-source reporting. "Yesterday I watched the news-bulletin on Jurnal TV. From 10 stories, four covered important issues. In all four, when it came to cover the alternative point of view, they would say simply 'it was not to be found' or the party 'refused to comment.' How will citizen trust media in such conditions?"

Angela Frolov noted a phenomenon: "The same story, covered by the same media outlet, will have tones and opinions that are completely depending on whether the story is in Romanian or Russian."

Angela Frolov noted a phenomenon: "The same story, covered by the same media outlet, will have tones and opinions that are completely depending on whether the story is in Romanian or Russian." The media adapt the editorial content knowing that Romanian language speakers have a more pro-Western orientation, while those that speak Russian are usually pro-Russian.

Vidaicu presented some anecdotal evidence that trust in the media is faltering due to the biased coverage. "A part of the public does not consume the media at all anymore, and prefers to be informed by private discussions, with relatives, neighbors, friends, and so on."

The extent to which citizens are informed is reflected by the diversity of media they can access. "City-dwellers are better informed, because they have more access... Residents of rural areas have limited access, which is why their opinions are influenced by biased media that serve the interests of a group or party," according to Tabarcea. Cable television is less available in villages, and national terrestrial broadcasters are broadly biased. Most people from villages cannot afford to subscribe to newspapers, even for MDL 13 per month (\$0.50). Internet is accessible everywhere in Moldova, but it is mainly used by young people.

"To build an informed opinion on a topic, I try to consult many sources until I find a grain of truth. One needs a lot of time to find an unaffiliated political analyst, therefore I prefer to read press from Romania [that cover Moldova]," declared Tatiana Chiriac.

The NGOs Independent Journalism Center and the Association of Independent Press have begun a number of campaigns to reveal manipulation in the media. For instance, there is a "Stop fake" public discussion group on Facebook, based on the Ukrainian model of the same name. The website [mediacritica.md](http://mediacritica.md) launched this year to critique press coverage. Some awareness campaigns were launched with for this purpose, including in schools.

There was wide suspicion that selective coverage is used as red herrings to distract from more critical issues. As Frolov put it, "When a new scandal appears in the press, I wonder

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what important thing they wanted to hide by attracting the public to this scandal?" Petruti added, "In the last year media lost about 20 percent of the public trust [according to the Public Opinion Barometer.<sup>1</sup>] People know they are manipulated, but still recite the version of events they hear from the few TV channels they watch. Now, when you give to people real information, they don't understand this anymore—they can't tell the difference."

Finally, the prevalence of reports based on new media posts has been met with some skepticism. "More and more news are based on Facebook posts. What kind of journalism is this?" wondered Roxana Teodorcic. The panel also recalled an incident where a Publika TV report was based entirely on a misinterpreted social media post by the U.S. Embassy in Chişinău.

The panelists were unanimous in their view that the press is overly partisan, but also subtly manipulative. A recent study<sup>2</sup> of media literacy by IJC supported their view. "30 percent of the public say they do not know what 'manipulation' means, and 50 percent say they do not have the ability to distinguish it. I think that in reality this percentage is much higher," Petruti said.

This is particularly true on television, and with regard to political debates. Roxana Teodorcic described "a high degree of manipulation" on television, evidenced by single-source stories, or stories with multiple sources from the same political orientation. Other sourcing methods are even worse. "In order to create the impression of credibility, sometimes the media cites non-existent or invented 'sources.' The average person is not prepared to be wary of these manipulations," said Daniela Vidaicu.

Teodorcic described subtle, commonplace manipulation using loaded imagery, such as the case of a report on Publika TV on undeclared ownership of television stations. The report noted indicted former Prime Minister Vlad Filat was one of the co-founders of Voice of Bessarabia TV with an image of him in handcuffs, surrounded by masked anticorruption police officers. "In the same report, Publika TV presented Liberal Democratic Party Member of Parliament Kiril Luchinschi as the owner of TV7 and TNT, using a screen capture from a talk show and depicting the party logo," Teodorcic recalled. "One can't understand where the news is and where is the opinion."

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<sup>1</sup> See data from November 2015 at page 26 here: [http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura\\_BOP\\_11.2015\\_first\\_part\\_ENGLISH\\_V1.pdf](http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura_BOP_11.2015_first_part_ENGLISH_V1.pdf). Data from November 2014 may be seen at page 35 here: [http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura\\_BOP\\_11.2014\\_prima\\_parte-r.pdf](http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura_BOP_11.2014_prima_parte-r.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.media-azi.md/sites/default/files/Studiu-calitativ\\_percent202015-eng.pdf](http://www.media-azi.md/sites/default/files/Studiu-calitativ_percent202015-eng.pdf)

The panelists widely cited the journalist corps as contributing to the situation, noting they are broadly weak, poorly trained in both ethics and critical thinking, or seamlessly blending reporting and editorializing. As Spinei described, "Frequently the general public does not understand what is being said as TV guests engage in vague and pseudo-philosophical digressions."

Even blatantly partisan positions are difficult for the public to parse. Tarita noted that partisan television uses biased leads. For example, Publika TV's Fabrika program demonstrated their bias towards their patron Vlad Plahotniuc and his Democratic Party with episodes such as "The Liberal Democratic Party changes time and again," and "'Yes' to the party and 'no' to the platform," referring to two rival political parties. On the other hand, Journal TV led off a program about the arrest of the former prime-minister and Liberal Democratic Party leader Vlad Filat with the title "Plahotniuc seized Moldova," and the following day's broadcast was entitled "Plahotniuc strengthens its empire."

The panel expressed concerns about the divisions in society that are exacerbated by the media. These include ethno-linguistic, politics, gender and sexuality, religion, and others, where the media fails to bring people together.

The divide between Russian and Romanian speakers has been stark since the independence movement, and is reinforced by a media that speak differently to both audiences. "Our society is divided along ethnic lines. Regretfully, this is reflected in the media as well. Our press has not tried even to find constitutive elements of the national dialogue," remarked Budeanu.

Political affiliation, beyond the simple pro-West or pro-EU orientations, further heightens tensions. "Basically, we are witnessing an information war between political clans, fought with manipulation that includes insults, vulgarities, and abusive language," concluded Spinei.

Traditional beliefs about gender roles, sexuality, and otherness are perpetuated, rather than mitigated, by the mainstream media. "The media are extremely sexist. The TV studios invite people that they know in advance will perpetuate hate speech, and this is not stopped. If a Roma participated in some incident, it would be mentioned that person is Roma. If there is a discussion about LGBT people, than they might be incited to violence or even annihilation. Online it's even worse: comments are not moderated. I think that this is intentionally done to raise hatred," opined Frolov.

In some cases, the lack of professionalism by the journalists themselves exacerbates poor editorial decisions. Tatiana Chiriac is the president of the Falun Dafa Association, a

spiritual group widely known in the U.S. as the Falun Gong. Her group was forced to shut down after a court order ruled that its symbols had an “extremist character” based on swastikas, which are associated with Nazis. Chiriac said that, despite this fact, she was never invited on any television program. “Our association was brought to the Constitutional Court. But, the only coverage was by a TV reporter who was so incompetent that my own mother could understand nothing from her report. The young girl did not even know how to pronounce the word ‘swastika’—how could the media send such a report to cover an important decision?” wondered Chiriac.

All panelists agreed that there are a few highly professional media outlets that respect ethical principles and rules. Unfortunately, such media outlets are sufficiently influential in the national dialogue.

Despite the large number of media sources, there is little diversity within any source. “It has reduced to a minimum,” Petruti said. “Lots of sources [in these reports], but with a single point of view,” said Spinei. These sentiments were repeated by many panelists.

“I wish more programs that reflect life of communities, which the ‘majority’ of the population does not know enough beyond the folkloric, anecdotes or stereotypes. I think the best in this regard is Radio Free Europe. Moldova 1 still remains constrained in old models of Soviet origin. Missing or insufficient are the reports on the life of marginal or (formerly) oppressed communities, such as Roma, LGBT, or different religious minority groups. On the other hand, excessively militant, sectarian speeches showing a particular group exclusively as victims would probably be boring,” affirmed Negură, who offered a suggestion. “Daily life, livelihood and survival strategies, relationships with other groups of people and those within their own group, would be more interesting and I think they would be instructive for the public.”

Tatiana Chiriac, in addition to having noted that her own issues in the courts were not covered widely, noted migrants as another area where coverage was lacking. “Although I hear rumors that many Chinese, Syrians, Ukrainians and others have come to our country and that they ‘take our jobs,’ I have not found any news in this regard.”

Spinei also credited part of the shortcomings in this area to the denationalization of local press following a 2010 law, which led to the privatization or closure of newspapers formerly owned by the state. As a result, the “Local press doesn’t exist. We lost that diversity.”

Olesea Tabarcea put this problem in context. “If you ask a person living in Chişinău what is happening in Bălţi or Cahul, for sure he would not know. But if you ask those from Bălţi and Cahul what is happening in Chişinău, certainly you will get a detailed answer. Unfortunately, citizens receive most information on political issues, and less on social issues, but even in this case it refers to urban areas. Rural areas are covered only in exceptional cases: rape, accidents or other tragedies,” she said.

## List of Panel Participants

**Marius Tarita**, scientific researcher, Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, Chişinău

**Angela Frolov**, LGBT rights activist, Chişinău

**Vasile Spinei**, superior lecturer, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, State University of Moldova, Chişinău

**Doru-Florin Petruti**, sociologist; general director, IMAS, Chişinău

**Alina Andronache**, vice-president, Platform for Gender Equality, Chişinău

**Victoria Ivancioglo**, director, Perspectiva, Cahul

**Ion Oboroceanu**, human rights activist; civil servant, Căuşeni

**Roxana Teodorcic**, civil society activist, Chişinău

**Gheorghe Budeanu**, chief, public relations and editorial department, National Institute of Justice, Chişinău

**Tatiana Chiriac**, civic activist; president, Falun Dafa Association, Chişinău

**Serghei Țapordei**, legal consultant, Legal Clinic, Bălţi

**Daniela Vidaicu**, lecturer, Faculty of Law, State University of Moldova, Chişinău

**Petru Negură**, sociologist, researcher; co-editor, platzforma.md; lecturer, State Pedagogical University of Chişinău, Moldova

**Veronica Vition**, women’s rights activist, Chişinău

**Olesea Tabarcea**, director, Universitara Legal Clinic, Bălţi

## Moderator & Author

**Olivia Pîrţac**, media lawyer, Chişinău

*The panel discussion was convened on February 27, 2016.*

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*Our society is divided along ethnic lines. Regretfully, this is reflected in the media as well. Our press has not tried even to find constitutive elements of the national dialogue,” remarked Budeanu.*



# MOLDOVA

To complete both studies, IREX used closely related, albeit slightly different methodologies. The Methodology for Objective 1 through 5 are explained in detail, followed by a summary of modifications made for the Objective 6 study.

### Methodology for Objectives 1 through 5

IREX prepared the MSI in cooperation with USAID as a tool to assess the development of media systems over time and across countries. IREX staff, USAID, and other media-development professionals contributed to the development of this assessment tool.

The MSI assesses five “objectives” in shaping a successful media system:

1. Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.
2. Journalism meets professional standards of quality.
3. Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable, objective news.
4. Media are well-managed enterprises, allowing editorial independence.
5. Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.

These objectives were judged to be the most important aspects of a sustainable and professional independent media system, and serve as the criteria against which countries are rated. A score is attained for each objective by rating between seven and nine indicators, which determine how well a country meets that objective. The objectives, indicators, and scoring system are presented below.

### Scoring: A Local Perspective

The primary source of information is a panel of local experts that IREX assembles in each country to serve as panelists. These experts are drawn from the country’s media outlets, NGOs, professional associations, and academic institutions. Panelists may be editors, reporters, media managers or owners, advertising and marketing specialists, lawyers, professors or teachers, or human rights observers. Additionally, panels comprise the various types of media represented in a country. The panels also include representatives from the capital city and other geographic regions, and they reflect gender, ethnic, and religious diversity as appropriate. For consistency from year to year, at least half of the previous year’s participants are included on the following year’s panel. IREX identifies and works with a local or regional organization or individual to oversee the process.

The scoring is completed in two parts. First, panel participants are provided with a questionnaire and explanations of the indicators and scoring system. Descriptions of each indicator clarify their meanings and help organize the panelist’s thoughts. For example, the questionnaire asks the panelist to consider not only the letter of the legal framework, but its practical implementation, too. A country without a formal freedom-of-information law that enjoys customary government openness may well outperform a country that has a strong law on the books that is frequently ignored. Furthermore, the questionnaire does not single out any one type of media as more important than another; rather it directs the panelist to consider the salient types of media and to determine if an underrepresentation, if applicable, of one media type impacts the sustainability of the media sector as a whole. In this way, we capture the

influence of public, private, national, local, community, and new media. Each panelist reviews the questionnaire individually and scores each indicator.

The panelists then assemble to analyze and discuss the objectives and indicators. While panelists may choose to change their scores based upon discussions, IREX does not promote consensus on scores among panelists. The panel moderator (in most cases a representative of the host-country institutional partner or a local individual) prepares a written analysis of the discussion, which IREX staff members edit subsequently. Names of the individual panelists and the partner organization or individual appear at the end of each country chapter.

IREX editorial staff members review the panelists' scores, and then provide a set of scores for the country, independently of the panel. This score carries the same weight as an individual panelist. The average of all individual indicator scores within the objective determines the objective score. The overall country score is an average of all five objectives.

In some cases where conditions on the ground are such that panelists might suffer legal retribution or physical threats as a result of their participation, IREX will opt to allow some or all of the panelists and the moderator/author to remain anonymous. In severe situations, IREX does not engage panelists as such; rather the study is conducted through research and interviews with those knowledgeable of the media situation in that country. Such cases are appropriately noted in relevant chapters.

## I. Objectives and Indicators

### Objective 1

#### LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

##### FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing or registration of media protects a public interest and is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against media professionals, citizen reporters, and media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > The law protects the editorial independence of state of public media.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily available; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media, journalists, and citizens.
- > Media outlets' access to and use of local and international news and news sources is not restricted by law.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

### Objective 2

#### JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

##### PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well-sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption and retain qualified personnel within the media profession.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exist (investigative, economics/business, local, political).



### Objective 3

#### MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE, OBJECTIVE NEWS.

##### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > Plurality of public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet, mobile) exist and offer multiple viewpoints.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted by law, economics, or other means.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for media outlets.
- > Private media produce their own news.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge the objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources
- > The media provide news coverage and information about local, national, and international issues.

### Objective 4

#### MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED ENTERPRISES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

##### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets operate as efficient and self-sustaining enterprises.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards.
- > Government subsidies and advertising are distributed fairly, governed by law, and neither subvert editorial independence nor distort the market.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor the product to the needs and interests of the audience.
- > Broadcast ratings, circulation figures, and Internet statistics are reliably and independently produced.

### Objective 5

#### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

##### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of media owners and managers and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights and promote quality journalism.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience.
- > Short-term training and in-service training institutions and programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of media equipment, newsprint, and printing facilities are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, cable, Internet, mobile) are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Information and communication technology infrastructure sufficiently meets the needs of media and citizens.

## II. Scoring System

### A. Indicator Scoring

Each indicator is scored using the following system:

- 0** = Country does not meet the indicator; government or social forces may actively oppose its implementation.
- 1** = Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator; forces may not actively oppose its implementation, but business environment may not support it and government or profession do not fully and actively support change.
- 2** = Country has begun to meet many aspects of the indicator, but progress may be too recent to judge or still dependent on current government or political forces.
- 3** = Country meets most aspects of the indicator; implementation of the indicator has occurred over several years and/or through changes in government, indicating likely sustainability.
- 4** = Country meets the aspects of the indicator; implementation has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion, and/or changing social conventions.

## B. Objective and Overall Scoring

The average scores of all the indicators are averaged to obtain a single, overall score for each objective. Objective scores are averaged to provide an overall score for the country. IREX interprets the overall scores as follows:

**Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):** Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

**Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):** Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

**Near Sustainability (2-3):** Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

**Sustainable (3-4):** Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

## Methodology for Objective 6

The purpose of this separate but related study is to rate the extent to which the traditional media (such as newspapers and broadcasters) and new media (blogs and other online or mobile formats) capture citizen concerns in a non-partisan manner. The study also assesses the media's ability to serve as a facilitator of public debate and as an outlet for citizen voices. It measures the capacity of media to hold politicians, business, and other actors accountable.

To accomplish this, IREX developed a methodology similar to its original MSI, described above, so that the results can seamlessly accompany the MSI's five objectives, which measure the performance of a country's media sector. This study uses the same process of scoring, enlisting local participants to answer an IREX questionnaire, and holding a panel discussion moderated by a local partner. Hence, we refer to this study as the Media Sustainability Index's "Objective 6."

Like the original five objectives of the MSI, this study relies on a stated objective and several supporting indicators. Objective 6 and its indicators are stated in such a way that panelists can use them as a model against which to evaluate their current news and information environment. This allows for meaningful comparisons, as well as setting forth expectations for future development. The objective and indicators are listed in the table below.

### Objective 6

#### THE MEDIA SERVE CITIZENS BY PROVIDING USEFUL AND RELEVANT NEWS AND INFORMATION AND FACILITATING PUBLIC DEBATE

- > The media promote and facilitate inclusive discussions about local, national, and international issues (social, political, economic, etc.) that are important to citizens.
- > Reporting and discussion in the media support democratic policymaking, government transparency, equitable regulatory enforcement, and consumer protection.
- > News and information provided by the media is relevant to, and informs, the choices and decisions (social, political, economic, etc.) made by citizens.
- > Citizens trust that news and information reported by the media accurately reflects reality.
- > It is possible for citizens to recognize partisan, editorial, or advertorial content as such.
- > Editorial and partisan media content is a constructive part of national dialogue; media refrain from including "hate speech" content.
- > The media expose citizens to multiple viewpoints and experiences of citizens from various social, political, regional, gender, ethnic, religious, confessional, etc., groups.

The process of undertaking the study is the same as above, with the following modifications:

- **A distinct set of panelists.** For Objective 6, panelists might be academics, student leaders, bloggers, media analysts, human rights and other NGO leaders, business association leaders/members, or trade union leaders/members. Consistent with the original MSI methodology, panelists represent the diversity within a society, and are selected in terms of gender balance, residence in the capital city and more rural areas, and membership in various political or other factions.
- **Modified score definitions and interpretation of final score.** Guidance on how to score each indicator and definitions of the meaning of scores are unique to this objective. These are detailed below.

As above, panelists are directed to score each indicator from 0 to 4, using whole or half points. They are provided with the following guidance:

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- 0** = No, the media in my country do not meet the provisions of this indicator; it is impossible or exceedingly rare to find content in any media outlet that meets the provisions of this indicator.
- 1** = The media in my country minimally meet the aspects of this indicator. Occasionally, a media outlet produces content that meets the aspects of this indicator. Or, citizens in my country may sometimes obtain news and information that meet the aspects of this indicator, but only by referring to several sources and comparing reports on their own.
- 2** = The media in my country have begun to meet many aspects of this indicator. There are at least a few media outlets that frequently produce content that meets the aspects of this indicator. However, progress may still be dependent on current political forces or media ownership/editors.
- 3** = The media in my country meet most aspects of this indicator. Many media outlets strive to, and regularly produce, content that meet the aspects of this indicator. Adherence to this indicator has occurred over several years and/or changes in government, indicating likely sustainability.
- 4** = Yes, the media in my country meets the aspects of this indicator. Media outlets and the public expect content to meet the aspects of this indicator. Exceptions to this are recognized as either substandard journalism or non-journalistic content (e.g., labeled and recognized as opinion or advertorial). Adherence to this indicator has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion, and/or differing social conventions.

The overall score for the objective is interpreted to mean the following:

**Unsustainable (0-1):** Country's media sector does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Media content is contrary to citizens' information needs, media seek primarily to serve political or other forces, and professionalism is low.

**Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):** Country's media sector minimally meets objectives, with significant segments of the media sector beholden to political or other forces. Evident progress developing media that serve citizens information needs and increased professionalism may be too recent to judge sustainability.

**Near Sustainability (2-3):** Country's media sector has progressed in meeting multiple indicators, and many media outlets consistently strive to and succeed in serving citizens' information needs with objective, timely, and useful content. Achievements have survived changes in government; however, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism is sustainable.

**Sustainable (3-4):** Country's media sector is considered generally professional; serving citizen information needs with objective, timely, and useful content; and facilitating public debate. A primary goal of most media outlets and media professionals is to serve such ends, and similarly, the public expects this from the media sector. Achievements have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.