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MOLDOVA

# P

Parliamentary elections will take place at the beginning of 2009, which made 2008 a pre-election year. Although the Republic of Moldova has not managed to fulfill all of the EU-Moldova Action Plan commitments (which expired in February 2008), especially those concerning the independence of both the mass media and judiciary, the Communist government has been trying to begin negotiations over a new agreement with the EU. This final agreement should lead to the establishment of more advanced relations compared to the current status of being simply an EU neighbor.

On the other hand, steps have been taken to establish closer relations with Russia, which sought to improve its global image in the wake of its war with Georgia by addressing the Transnistria issue. Moldovan authorities hoped that new Russian president Dmitri Medvedev would exert pressure upon Transnistria's separatist leaders to accept the settlement project proposed by Chişinău. If this would have occurred, the future parliamentary elections would have taken place throughout the entire territory of Moldova, including Transnistria. But this did not happen: Russia suggested that Moldova reconsider the settlement plan proposed in 2003 by Moscow, which stipulated, among other things, continuing deployment of Russian troops in Moldova in spite of commitments to withdraw them made at the 1999 OSCE summit.

Switching to domestic issues, the unofficial government coalition, composed of the Communist Party (PCRM) and the Christian Democratic People's Party (PPCD), continued the process of monopolizing the Moldovan broadcast media by supporting each other in the Parliament and taking the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC) under their control. At the same time, the tandem refused to award frequencies to independent media outlets and it harassed and intimidated those media who dared to offer access to the opposition parties or criticize the coalition's rule. As the elections get closer, one has noticed an increase in the amount of cases where police treat journalists brutally and restrict their access to events of interest to the public.

All of this occurs despite legislation that, in general, strives to reach European standards. Unfortunately, the observance of the law in Moldova is selective and arbitrary. Authorities apply the law in accordance with the interests of the ruling party. The public broadcaster Teleradio Moldova (TRM) continues to be a propaganda instrument of the party in government.

For economic or political reasons, journalism in Moldova is strongly marked by self-censorship and partisanship. A significant part of the population, especially those living in the villages, does not have access to a variety of information sources due to poverty. Profitable media still represent an exception rather than the rule. Increased revenue from advertising is below generally accepted standards in other countries. Moldovan media barely receive investment from foreign countries, with the exception of Russia.

# MOLDOVA AT A GLANCE

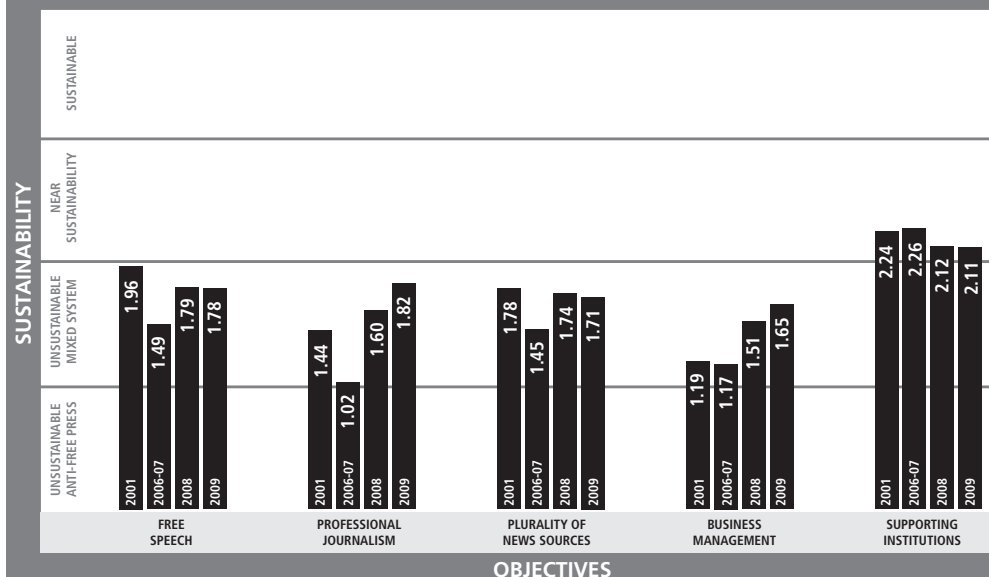
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 4,324,450 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Chişinău
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Moldovan/Romanian 78.2%, Ukrainian 8.4%, Russian 5.8%, Gagauz 4.4%, Bulgarian 1.9%, other 1.3% (2004 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Eastern Orthodox 98%, Jewish 1.5%, Baptist and other 0.5% (2000 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Moldovan (official, virtually the same as the Romanian language), Russian, Gagauz (a Turkish dialect) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** \$4.323 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** \$2,930 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **Literacy rate:** 99.1% (male 99.7%, female 98.6%) (2005 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Vladimir Voronin (since April 4, 2001)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: approximately 170 total newspapers in magazines, primarily in Romanian and Russian; Radio: 49; Television stations: 38 ([www.moldpresa.md](http://www.moldpresa.md))
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** top ranked television station: TV Moldova 1; top ranked radio station: Radio Moldova
- > **News agencies:** Infotag, Basa-press, Reporter.MD, Moldpres (state agency), Info-prim Neo, InfoMarket, Deca-press, Flux, Novosti/Moldova
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** Approximately \$34 million
- > **Internet usage:** 700,000 (2007 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MOLDOVA



Annual scores for 2002 through 2005 are available online at [http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI\\_EUR/archive.asp](http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_EUR/archive.asp)

### 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.

The political views of the journalists divide them and undermine their solidarity. Despite being active, the NGOs that fight for press rights and freedom of expression are ignored by the government.

Note: the violence occurring after the April 2009 elections took place after the preparation of this report. The impact on the media and its coverage of these events will be included in the 2010 study.

## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### Moldova Objective Score: 1.78

The majority of panelists believed, that in spite of the “good” media laws, the overall situation of the freedom of expression has not seen a change in 2008, on the contrary, it has “deteriorated” a lot.

According to Article 32 (section 1) of the Constitution, “All citizens are guaranteed the freedom of thought, opinion, as well as freedom of expression in public by words, images, or any other possible means.” The Press Law (Article 1), passed in 1994, “Guarantees to all individuals the right to freely express their views and ideas and to access truthful information on domestic and international events.” It also prohibits “... censorship of any type against periodicals and news agencies, interference with their information gathering and dissemination work.”

The Broadcasting Code, passed in 2006, “...aims at, among other things, guaranteeing to broadcasters the right to editorial freedom and freedom of expression, and establishing democratic principles for the operation of broadcasting in Moldova....”

However, some articles in the Constitution and other laws can be used as a pretext to limit the freedom of expression. Article 32 (3) in the Constitution punishes “defamation of the state and the nation.” On December 8, 2007 the government approved a legislative initiative to eliminate from the Constitution the phrase “undermining and defaming the state and the nation.” Nevertheless, on December 24, 2008, the Constitutional Court revoked the amendment, ruling that it could lead to “...infringing the constitutional provisions that guarantee the sovereignty, independence, and unity of the state and suppressing the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens and their sense of security.”

There is more legislation that does not parallel international agreements regarding human rights and freedom of expression. Criminal Code 347 sets punishments for “defiling the flag, coat of arms, or anthem of the Republic

of Moldova or of any other state.” Additionally, the Administrative Code provides up to 30 days imprisonment for libel and verbal abuse.

A result of the Soviet past, the freedom of expression is not truly valued in Moldova. Violations of freedom of expression are seen as a habitual thing, not as an uncommon thing. “Cases of freedom of speech violations do not trigger the attention of the state representatives. It only receives the concern of the journalists, media organizations and foreign embassies in Chişinău,” said Eugen Uruşciuc, director of press monitoring agency Monitor Media.

The main obstacle in implementing the laws is the formal and declarative attitude of the authorities towards freedom of expression and of the press, as well as the lack of independence of the judicial system.

No government authorization is required for Internet access. The Government does not block or limit access to particular websites.

Radio and television licenses are issued by the BCC, which, according to the Broadcasting Code, is an “autonomous public authority.” However, BCC members are selected and appointed by the PCRM-dominated parliament, and appointees are selected based upon their party loyalty. Most panelists believed that the BCC does not issue licenses in a balanced and objective way, by treating preferentially media outlets that support the PCRM.

For instance, BCC has not rejected a single license application from NIT TV that, according to monitoring results, favors the PCRM. Moreover, it has ensured national coverage to NIT. At the same time, BCC has rejected the request for a new license to the radio station Vocea Basarabiei and ProTV, who disseminate information critical of PCRM, consequently preventing the development of these stations.

The tendency of the authorities to suppress the opposition media and other critical voices could be discerned in the May 7 to 8 BCC meetings, when 16 radio frequencies and 60 television frequencies were distributed. Vocea Basarabiei radio station was not awarded any of the eight FM frequencies it applied for. It is significant to note that this was the 26<sup>th</sup> time that BCC rejected this station’s request for a frequency in Chişinău.

In exchange, Radio Antena C, who belongs to PCRM, was awarded five frequencies, including one in Chişinău. Pro TV Chişinău has not been issued any of the seven licenses that it applied for (in some cases those frequencies remained unused), while Euro TV, managed by PPCD received nine; NIT received 12 licenses.

After these decisions, several NGOs issued a joint statement. In summary, it said "BCC behavior indicates that its decisions are prescribed from higher above and BCC members only express partisan interests, which undermines the watchdog role of the media."<sup>1</sup> "Despite the legislation stipulating a transparent and equal attitude towards every candidate who applies for licenses, one cannot trust that these principles will be followed. BCC does not offer convincing and proven reasons for its refusal to issue licenses to particular aspirants," noted Dmitri Kalak, deputy editor-in-chief of *Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie*.

A telling example in this context is the case of Pro TV, whose license expired December 23, 2008. Initially, in the response to Pro TV's application to extend the license, BCC said that the television channel's application does not meet the conditions stipulated in Article 24 of the Broadcasting Code, because during the period of validity of the license, Pro TV did not respect all the stipulations of the broadcasting legislation and the terms of the broadcast license. According to Vitalie Nagacevschi from the NGO Juristii pentru Drepturile Omului (Lawyers for Human Rights), BCC cited "criminal chronicles" in Pro TV's 5 p.m. newscast several years previous and non-compliance with regulations that stipulate simultaneous interpretation for the hearing impaired; no other television station upholds these regulations.

Afterwards, at a news conference on December 12, BCC president Gheorghe Gorincioi said that the broadcasting authority would not extend the license of Pro TV for other reasons: under Article 26 of the BCC Statute, only those broadcast licenses "obtained in accordance with the Broadcasting Code" (as adopted in 2006) can be renewed. Since Pro TV's license was obtained before the 2006 Broadcasting Code was adopted, BCC could not grant a renewal, Gorincioi said. Pro TV's case is now being heard by the Constitutional Court, which will examine the contradictions between the Broadcasting Code and the BCC Statute.

Refusals to award a license can be challenged in the court, but panelists doubt it would have any effect because judges obey the ruling party and, on a regular basis, rule in favor of BCC. A good illustration is the TVR1 case, whose license was illegitimately auctioned off. Even though the Appeals Court has ruled that TVR1 is allowed to broadcast during the lawsuit, the Supreme Court of Justice overturned the decision in record time. The complaint was accepted by the European Court for Human Rights and is still pending. In another example, the Chişinău Court of Appeals rejected Pro TV's appeal to sue the BCC for refusing to automatically prolong its license.

<sup>1</sup> [www.ijc.md/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=342](http://www.ijc.md/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=342)

Media companies that are awarded a license access the market without any restrictions. The tax system for media is comparable to other business areas; media companies are not exempt from taxes. There are no restrictions to market access for online and print media. "Legislation does not directly limit market access of media. Instead, there are other methods to create obstacles to restrict it," said Anatol Golea, manager of TV 7.

The past year saw an increasing number of cases in which journalists were abused. On February 16, 2008 a journalist representing *Timpul de Dimineaţa* newspaper was harassed by a bodyguard of Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev during an inspection of a public facility. Despite the fact that the reporter had presented her identification card, one of the prime minister's bodyguards forced her to leave the premises of facility. Before this incident, this specific correspondent had published a number of articles in connection with some illegalities committed by the government while purchasing 17 Škoda vehicles.

On July 10, cameraman Ghenadie Brega was verbally and physically assaulted by a person at the General Prosecutor's Office while he was trying to capture video footage of one of the young web commentators accused of "repeatedly calling for a violent upheaval of the constitutional regime, dissolution of the statehood and territorial integrity of Moldova" through a web forum. Although the cameraman informed the aggressive individual that he was a journalist and was filming lawfully in a public institution, the man

#### 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 of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > 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 accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.



dressed in civilian attire brutally forced him to leave and struck the camera several times.

On April 30, journalist Oleg Brega was detained and arrested for three days for peacefully protesting in front of the National Palace where a celebration was held to mark the 50th anniversary of the foundation of Moldova's public television station. The police prevented Brega from approaching the National Palace. The Buiucani District Court ruled that his placard, which bore the inscription "50 Years of Lies," constituted "injury" and sentenced him to three days' detention. This violated a number of legal provisions and international norms on the right to opinion and free expression. Cameraman Ghenadie Brega, who accompanied his brother Oleg and filmed the incident with the police, was fined. On May 10, Ghenadie Brega, who was then protesting in front of government offices against the detention of his brother, was ill-treated by police officers dressed in civilian clothes, arrested, and taken to the police department of Buiucani district where he was held for 48 hours in inhumane and degrading conditions. He was accused of "deliberative insubordination, resistance, and insulting the police."

*Ziarul de Garda* announced that it was subjected to pressure and was threatened by phone and email after it published, on September 4, 2008, an article titled "Torrid Summer at SIS [Security and Information Service]." Following the article's publication, unidentified persons called the members of the staff on their cell phones from unidentified numbers, threatening them with "troubles with SIS." They were pretending that they knew the names of the article's authors, their personal addresses, and the contacts of their family members. The unidentified persons also said that they were tapping the authors' phones and hacking their emails.

On November 29 the vice president of the Parliament and the leader of PPCD publicly insulted and verbally brutalized PRO TV Chişinău reporter Tatiana Turcanu after she had asked him to comment on a previous statement regarding the owner of Pro TV. "Miss, go find yourself a job, soon there'll be no place for you to prostitute yourself," said Iurie Rosca. On December 26 a policeman physically abused Domnica Negru, a reporter with Pro TV. Upset that the journalist insisted that her questions be answered, he twisted her arm and grabbed her microphone, throwing it on the ground.

As usual, only the opposition press reports on cases of abuse against journalists. Little is done to punish the culprits. "Unfortunately, officials of different ranks are encouraged to continue to hamper journalists as such behavior it is not condemned by society," said Vasile Botnar, Radio Free Europe bureau chief.

"Practice shows that the judicial institutions and courtrooms work as the government's tool for sanctioning media critical to them. In 2008, the bank accounts of a few newspapers were frozen following courts decisions that came while there were attempts to file lawsuits against the newsrooms. For example, *Jurnal de Chişinău* and *Edinaya Gagauzia* had their bank accounts blocked without a justified reason," said Eugen Urusciuc, director of Monitor Media agency.

Even though, according to the law, public media should have editorial independence, this does not happen in reality. It has become a tradition for the political powers to repress the public media. Also, Moldovan legislation stipulates that public and private media should be treated equally and balanced. In spite of this, the authorities discriminate against private media when it comes to access to information and the use of public money for advertising purposes. According to monitoring by the Independent Journalism Center spanning December 2007 to May 2008,<sup>2</sup> the amount of advertising the state places in a particular paper does not depend on its circulation. *Daily Timpul*, with five issues per week and a weekly circulation of 46,750, received four times less advertising from state-owned companies and local public administrations than *Moldova Suverana*, which comes out four times a week and has a weekly circulation of 19,452. Outside the capital, the discriminatory practices are more evident.

Local public media are, by rule, controlled and financed by local administrations, which also designate their management. A Council of Regents made up of members loyal to the PCRM appoints the leadership of the public broadcaster TRM. Big businesses have the power to influence the editorial policies of state media by making their wishes known to the ruling party.

Any individual who feels defamed may file civil charges according to article 16 of the Civil Code. The offending information must be retracted and damages paid unless the defendant can prove that the information is true to the smallest detail. Despite the fact that the information may be correct, it is still possible for journalists to lose the lawsuit because of minor details. The law does not impose a ceiling on how much in damages an individual can ask for. There is an absence of cases where public officials are punished and usually these lawsuits are swept under the rug. Internet service providers, however, are not held liable for the content published by their clients online. Criminal penalties for libel have largely been taken off the books.

Although the Supreme Court of Justice has recommended to judges that they offer less protection to public figures in defamation cases, this has yet to be implemented. For

<sup>2</sup> [http://ijc.md/Publicatii/presa\\_stat\\_raport\\_final.pdf](http://ijc.md/Publicatii/presa_stat_raport_final.pdf)

instance, a judge from Chişinău decided to freeze \$300,000 in *Jurnal de Chişinău's* bank account, which could block the issuance of the newspaper. This was in order to ensure action against the newspaper brought by an ex-prosecutor who claimed that *Jurnal de Chişinău* injured his honor and dignity in two articles published four years previously.

A statute of limitations on defending honor, dignity, and professional reputation is not provided by law, but totally different is the situation for claiming moral damages. According to Article 1424 of the Civil Code, the term for claiming damages expires after three years from the moment when a victim was aware of the damages. Since the moral damage could not have been paid to the claimant anyway, the only reasonable presumption is that behind the judge's decision to freeze the bank account was intent to intimidate and block the paper's activity.

However, in March 2008 parliament recommended that the judiciary, prosecutors, and the police should adopt practices in line with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in cases of libel and that the judiciary should stop ignoring ECHR decisions.

According to the Access to Information Law passed seven years ago, any individual legally residing in Moldova can request any information or documents from the government or public institutions without having to justify their inquiry. Even so, journalists continue to face serious problems with this matter, in particular those from media considered disobedient to the ruling party. "Both PCRM and PPCD members hang up the phone when journalists from *Timpul de dimineata* daily contact them for an interview," said Gheorghe Budeanu, deputy editor-in-chief of that newspaper.

From time to time, journalists disclose the cases in which they were denied access to public information and even take the issue to court. A number of media NGOs publicize the legislation concerning access to events among journalists and media workers, both in Chişinău and outside the capital.

According to monitoring carried out by Acces-Info, "Out of 4,839 requests for information addressed to public authorities and institutions from Moldova, the applicants received answers in only 19.3 percent of cases. Out of 934 responses submitted, only 78.1 percent contained full answers, 13.8 percent were incomplete, and in 8.1 percent of cases entities gave only a formal answer. NGOs received 18.5 percent of the answers, mass media 21.2 percent, and citizens 17.2 percent. The number of answers to the requests of citizens was much smaller than expected, compared to the number that press organizations received."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [www.acces-info.org.md](http://www.acces-info.org.md)

On November 25, the Parliament passed a final reading of the draft law on state secrets in spite of calls from the international community to improve the bill. Miklos Haraszti, the media freedom representative of the OSCE, said in Vienna that the draft "... would not reduce unnecessary secrecy and other obstacles to access by the media to governmental information." He noted that in many areas the draft expands secrecy, including in the definition of state secrets and the types of information that can be classified, and includes a new undefined category of "restricted" secrets that does not require proof that it is potentially harmful to national security. The draft also reduces parliamentary oversight over secrecy.<sup>4</sup>

"The legislation guarantees access to information, but still, public institutions receive orders that contradict the law. For example, in Rezina local aldermen could not access common data about aid distribution in agriculture that they officially requested. Employees are afraid to talk to journalists without their superiors' permission," said Angela Zaharova, editor and anchor with Elita TV. "Civil servants are required by law to ensure access to information. However, they are not sanctioned when they do not honor this obligation," affirmed Anatol Golea, manager of TV7. "Access to information is restricted by some incompetent public officials who are 'hostages' of the excessively bureaucratic and centralized administrative system. This system is a relic of the Soviet times, when information of public interest was always undisclosed. Mass media cannot fully perform its role of an honest informer since journalists' access to official information is scarce, at times discriminatory, entailing certain professional risks," noted Petru Macovei, executive director of Association of Independent Press.

Dmitri Kalak, deputy editor-in-chief of *Ekonomiceskoe obozrenie* had a different opinion, remarking that, "2008 brought good and important changes regarding the access of journalists to information of public interest. Many institutions renewed their websites (Customs, the National Bank), providing additional information and the opportunity to interact online and address questions. Other state departments (National Bureau of Statistics, the State Chamber of Registration) extended the range of services, including offering necessary information, in some cases free of charge."

The government does not restrict in any way the access of the media to foreign news and information sources, including those from the Internet. Journalists have the opportunity to use the Internet to gain access to international news and other information. Relaying news from foreign agencies is not restricted in any way. Television stations are permitted to broadcast international programs only in their original version. There are no regulations

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.azi.md/en/statement/321>

concerning publications in foreign languages. The only reason that Moldovan media outlets cannot get foreign news is because of financial difficulties.

The Press Law, passed in 1994, provides the requirement to seek accreditation with public authorities. Article 21 (2) of the Press Law stipulates that "Periodic publications and news agencies may accredit journalists with public authorities, as well as for artistic and sports events, according to the relevant procedure." By taking advantage of this ambiguous provision, state agencies and the presidency deny accreditation to journalists from critical media.

Foreign journalists in Moldova are accredited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration in accordance with regulations approved by the government in 1995. As in previous years, in 2008 foreign journalists, especially those originally from Romania, were denied access to events in Moldova. On December 1 the Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO) released a statement that condemned the Moldovan authorities' refusal to issue an accreditation card to Cristina Dumitrescu, a journalist for Radio Romania News. She applied for it on October 13.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Moldova Objective Score: 1.82

Oftentimes politically involved journalists do not strictly follow professional standards such as fact checking and the use of multiple sources. Objective and unbiased journalism represents an exception. It is seldom that reporters present all sides of a problem and the opinion of all participants in an issue. Journalists do not necessarily consult experts in specific fields or examine the background of a story. Most panelists believed that professional standards are oftentimes deliberately ignored and that a change in this aspect would depend on the social-political circumstances generally, and on press becoming a business. "Journalists are not properly trained, according to current international standards. Events are reflected tendentiously, subjectively, and are politicized," said Dmitri Kalak.

"Being short on funds, media owners try to hire the smallest possible number of journalists in their newsrooms. Having too many responsibilities and an extraordinary amount of duties, these few reporters lose the chance to develop their abilities and to follow all ethical and professional standards," said Gheorghe Budeanu.

The Code of Professional Ethics Principles for Journalists adopted in May 2000 comprises principles similar to the rules widely accepted by international journalism associations. The

Code states, among other things, that "The journalist must clearly differentiate between information and opinion, use only information that he/she considers reliable and comes from known sources; such information must be reported in an impartial manner; the journalist must not receive any direct or indirect compensation from third parties for the publication of any opinion or information; the journalist must respect the privacy of individuals." Even though the journalists are familiar with and accept these principles, they do not follow them as a law.

Unfortunately, the Ethics Committee of the Union of Journalists of Moldova has no practical power, despite the numerous cases of serious ethical violations. Offering material rewards for a special type of report is part of the Soviet "tradition" of the Moldovan journalism. This practice can be encountered in all branches of the media and all generations and categories of journalists. "Our journalists have a problem with responsibility, accuracy, quality, and ethics," said Nicolae Pojoga, photojournalist and senior lecturer at the Journalism Department of the State University. The most regrettable thing is the fact that the majority of journalists do not make any efforts to improve their professional quality," noted Dmitri Kalak.

Veaceslav Tibuleac, manager of Vocea Basarabiei radio station disagreed, saying that "in most cases, Moldovan journalism meets professional standards." "Roles have switched when it comes to slander and deliberate defaming language; they are performed more and more often by the so-called advocates of the state," noted Vasile Botnaru.

All panelists agreed that nothing has changed in the matter of self censorship: it is practiced both in public and private media.

## 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.
- > 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 exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).



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The reasons are that the journalists are afraid of losing their jobs and of upsetting the authorities, sponsors, or advertising agents. Self-censorship is evident among the editors and publishers, as a result, the reporters and photojournalists are censored as well. "In most cases, reporters and editors that work for public media practice self censorship for the fear of losing their jobs," said Petru Macovei, executive director of Association of Independent Press.

The majority of the panelists believe that important events are not always covered by Moldovan media either due to economic or political reasons. Public media considers as significant only the issues that directly involve the authorities. The private broadcast media carefully select events they should cover, since they risk being deprived of their license. "News became like a propagandistic entertainment, this is the latest ethical perversion. For example, the ex-prime minister Tarlev announces the launching of a campaign for supporting the local producers. This initiative is being boycotted for political reasons, and soon after that it is being forgotten completely. Later on, nobody calls Tarlev to account for the abandoned project," said Vasile Botnaru, bureau chief of Radio Free Europe.

No important changes have occurred regarding the salaries of media professionals. Both in print and in broadcast media, the wages are not high enough to discourage corruption. There is not a big difference between the salaries paid in public media and those paid by private outlets. Broadcast journalists have slightly higher wages (averaging \$250 to \$300 monthly) than those in print media (averaging \$200 to \$250 monthly). Correspondents from the capital earn more than their colleagues from smaller towns and the countryside. In general, journalists are not paid any better than other professionals. "Selling" articles to politicians or to economic agents is a widely spread practice.

"Low wages do not contribute in any way to improving the condition of Moldovan media. Journalists migrate intensively from one newsroom to another in the hope of finding bigger incomes. It is the case of many TV7 correspondents who switched to NIT," considered Dmitri Kalak.

"It is not the uncomfortable, troublesome journalist, advocating for the public that is recognized as an example of professional standards, rather the cooperating, tolerating reporter, under the false impression that he is willing to work with the state and to serve its interests. For example, the funds meant to benefit all of the media institutions were allocated on a selective basis, on political criteria. The conclusion was established by a group of experts who recently examined the fulfillment of the commitments mandated by the European Union's Moldova Action Plan," stated Vasile Botnaru.

Most panelists believed that entertainment programs produced abroad and broadcast by Moldovan television channels continue to overshadow news programs. "Local TV and radio stations do not produce their own entertainment programs at all. Also, local broadcasters have trouble finding enough stories to fill up a typical newscast. The reason is the lack of media professionals outside the capital," said Angela Zaharova, editor and anchor, Elita TV in Rezina.

According to Anatol Golea, manager of TV7, in Moldova there is a shortage of local news and entertainment programs. This situation could be repaired if there were investments in this area, but these are lacking for the time being. Most television stations, including the public ones, broadcast fresh newscasts only in the evening. Introducing day-time newscasts would attract more viewers to those stations. In order to get informed during the day, citizens listen to the hourly five-minute radio newscasts, which are based on news agency feeds. Dmitri Kalak considered that, "Entertainment does not overshadow the newscasts. However the quality of news is poor. Broadcast news fails to optimally cover topics such as social and specific business problems—life in general in the regions of Moldova. Basically, news is made from official events, press conferences and presentations, etc."

The broadcast media is getting better equipment, although still not according to international standards. Only two television stations could afford to buy remote trucks and to broadcast live on-location. Print media lack modern printing technologies. Newspapers do not have professional cameras and licensed editing software. The media in the provinces is equipped even more poorly than the media in Chişinău.

Regarding niche reporting, the participants' general opinion was that quality stories are quite rare. However, in 2008, with American financial aid, a number of private newspapers did a series of investigations about corruption. "As compared to previous years, in 2008 the politically independent press published a larger number of investigations into fields such as corruption in the public administration and their institutions, human rights, organized crime, etc. But society and the authorities do not respond to these reports," said Tudor Iascenco, director of *Cuvantul* newspaper. Broadcast media pay less attention to niche reporting than print media does. Print media also covers economic problems more often and is more competent in this aspect. "Publications covering specialized areas are few in Moldova. Many of the magazines or newspapers specializing in construction, medicine, business, are created with the support of firms or associations that have interests [in those areas], therefore they report on subjects in a biased manner," noted Dmitri Kalak.

## OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

### Moldova Objective Score: 1.71

The majority of the panelists believed that access to multiple objective and trustworthy sources of information is more difficult in rural areas than in the cities. This refers especially to news offering critical yet objective reporting, since the current government monopolizes national broadcasters. "The segment of independent press is declining more and more every year," considered Gheorghe Budeanu.

None of the broadcasters presenting the opposition's perspective has national coverage. Both private and public television stations that air over the entire territory report only on the actions of the authorities, while ignoring those of the opposition. A small number of private, local, and national newspapers do have an editorial policy that promotes pluralism. Yet these papers have a modest circulation that does not grow because of the high price in relation to the population's income. Only about seven percent of the population can afford to purchase national private newspapers. The papers published in Chisinau reach villages in the country with an average delay of two or three days.

Countryside residents receive their information from Moldova 1 and other television stations with national coverage controlled by the authorities: NIT TV, Prime (relaying the Russian public television station ORT), and 2 Plus (now transmitting on the frequency that used to be operated by the Romanian public station TVR1). Euro TV, which has quasi-national coverage, is under the wing of the PPCD. Radio stations with national coverage, Radio Moldova and Antena C that were privatized by the current government, cover stories from the ruling coalition's perspective.

According to the October 2008 Public Opinion Barometer, 76 percent of the respondents rely on media controlled by the authorities (Prime TV, Moldova 1, and NIT) as their primary means of information.<sup>5</sup>

Community stations are only just beginning to flourish, while some districts already have local television stations producing local news. According to BCC data, 20 percent of Moldovan cities and villages can access cable television.

Internet has reached a penetration of 3.7 percent, according to Vladimir Voizian, head of the Research and Prognosis Unit with the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology. The above-mentioned study showed that 3.4 percent of respondents consider the Internet as their primary

source of information. There has been no official data collected concerning the use of blogs. For a small fee, cell phone carriers send news feeds by SMS, but this means of information has not become very popular. Setup fees for Internet are, on average, €50, and the monthly subscription is €10 to €15, while the average monthly salary in Moldova is €160. The initial subscription fee for satellite television is on average €100.

Pro TV, Vocea Basarabiei, and TV7 are private and independent broadcasters whose Romanian and Russian newscasts come closer to an impartial and pluralist coverage of the news. These stations broadcast in Chisinau, as well as in several district centers: Cahul, Cimislia, Edinet, Rezina, Soroca, Floresti, Basarabasca, etc. "The TV stations that produce quality news do not have national coverage, therefore are not able to reach a broad audience. People in most villages have access only to NIT and Moldova 1, which provide stories that talk about the authorities concern for the population," said Angela Zaharova.

"People have a multitude of information sources to choose from. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the media is controlled by the government and is used to promote a positive image of themselves as well as to discredit the opposition parties," said Anatol Golea. "Usually, small town residents have access to the press controlled by the authorities. I refer both to print and electronic media. The number of community papers and radio stations has fallen compared to the previous year when the amount of such media was on the rise," said Eugen Urusciuc.

The authorities control the international and national media that people have access to by keeping a tight grip on BCC, by issuing broadcasting licenses based on political criteria, and by approving the list of channels transmitted through cable. Other than these means of limiting access to media, legislation does not restrict in any way listening to foreign broadcasters or reading international publications. However, with the exception of Russian ones, no foreign publications are present in Moldova due to cover price. The authorities do not block access to online international media. Subscribing to Internet services, as well as to satellite or cable television is a function of one's financial capabilities.

The accessibility of the Internet in rural regions is very low. The difference between access to cable TV and satellite TV in rural regions is determined only by the economic conditions. "The BCC, following instructions from the authorities, refused to award extending frequencies to Vocea Basarabiei radio station. In such a way the state limits the access of all citizens to their product," stated Gheorghe Budeanu.

<sup>5</sup> [www.ipp.md/barometru1.php?l=ro&id=34](http://www.ipp.md/barometru1.php?l=ro&id=34)

The majority of the panel participants believed that Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova cannot be considered true public institutions, because they are not open to opposition perspectives and do not air alternative opinions. These broadcasters serve rather as tools for propaganda and stretching the truth. In most instances, Moldova 1 newscasts tend to focus on the activity of the country's president and of the government. The opposition is ignored and shown in a negative light. Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova do not offer airspace for public debates.

Almost half (48 percent) of the respondents of Monitor Media Agency's Public Opinion Barometer survey conducted in October 2008 think that Moldovan media is not free to publish news and articles without being censored by the government. Further, 41 percent of the respondents believed that Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova, which together form TRM, cover events from the angle of the ruling coalition. This figure represents a 10 percent increase from 2006. On December 4, 2008, the party Alliance Our Moldova (AMN) demanded that the president of TRM explain in front of the Parliament why, in its report about the Exhibition of the Political Parties, TRM showed only PCRM's exhibit even though there were 17 different political parties participating in the event. AMN argued that TRM violated the norms of the Broadcasting Code by advertising the governing party and making favorable comments about its exhibit, while at the same time showing the other parties in a negative light.

The ideological factor is also present in cultural and educational programs. It is noticeable as well in the way that participants to debates are selected. "With the goal to

manipulate public opinion, state-owned and public media does not reproduce multiple points of view and does not interview various people for more opinions on a particular problem," considered Anatol Golea.

On November 6, Dumitru Diacov, the leader of the Democratic Party, stated in front of the Parliament that the opposition does not have access to public radio and television stations. Diacov made everyone burst into laughter by stating that he is willing to have the government charge him with criminal offenses, as, according to him, this would be the only way he can appear on television in Moldova. A statement issued on December 8 by the Democratic Party noted that, "Although officially denationalized, the public institutions continue to misinform citizens and to offer media support to the leading party. The access of the opposition to public TV and radio is restricted."

"The lack of political will to transform TRM into a genuine public service that would offer balanced and impartial information is detrimental to the general welfare of the population and creates conditions for misinforming citizens in the interest of a particular political party," said Petru Macovei.

"There are four independent news agencies in Moldova: DECA-press, Info-Prim Neo, INFOTAG, and Reporter.md. On the other hand, there are Moldpres, Novosti-Moldova, Basa-press, and Omega, who serve the interests of the ruling party. Public media prefer to subscribe to the news from the agencies loyal to the authorities," said Eugen Urusciuc. The independent agencies sell their product on a non-discriminatory base to any client for a set fee. These news agencies offer information only in written form, not in video.

Most media outlets use the news feed provided by news agencies, without always paying for this service or indicating the source. With a few exceptions, media companies from Moldova cannot afford to subscribe to international news feeds. News from international agencies is accessible on the Internet.

Private radio and television stations usually produce their news programs in-house. The content of the news produced by the private channels with national coverage, NIT, Prime, and Antena C does not differ significantly from that produced by public outlets Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova.

According to the Press Law and the Broadcasting Code, media outlets are under the obligation to identify their owners. However, only the formal executives are identifiable, whereupon the true owners are not visible. The stockholders who own the majority of the shares in stations like NIT and Pro TV are offshore concerns, whose owners remain unknown. BCC does not compel them to reveal their identities.

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

##### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge 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.

"It is unfortunate that in Moldova a law that would require the founders to disclose the identity of the owners of the media outlets is absent. In this context, it is strange that a request made in the Parliament to reveal the names of the owner of Pro TV provoked such a stormy reaction from certain politicians and journalists. I consider that it should become a norm of a civilized society, as well as a legislative norm," remarked Dmitri Kalak. Angela Sirbu considered that, "The journalists reacted in a stormy way not because of the inquiry itself, rather because of the intention to intimidate and harass the above mentioned TV station. A MP in front of the Parliament accused Pro TV of being biased for the opposition, of discrediting the state institutions, and betraying the national interest." "Instead of proposing ways to improve the legislative framework, the member of the Communist-allied PPCD demanded that Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova bring to light who backs Pro TV, without showing any interest for who backs other broadcasters, including the ones the do partisan work for the Communists or PPCD," she added.

Most panelists believed that the PCRM and the PPCD acquired a number of media outlets through intermediaries. According to research carried out by Raisa Lozinschi ("Mass-media in the Republic of Moldova," June 2008), all national broadcasters and a few local ones are part of the "Communist trust." "Lately there has been a tendency to attract media institutions in press trusts that are loyal to the authorities," said Anatol Golea.

Oligarchs so far have not joined in on media ownership. Big corporations do not show any interests towards media in Moldova, because it has not yet become a profitable business. Similarly, foreign investors are not interested in Moldovan media and this hinders the development of mass media as a business. "There have been no major foreign investments in Moldovan media so far, which is rather a disadvantage for the consumer of information," said Petru Macovei.

Public media institutions fail to cover certain problems in society in order to preserve the image of the ruling party. Stations that show the abusive behavior of police are placed under pressure (for instance, Pro TV). There have been no cases of journalists being harassed for covering minorities. The only troubles minorities have with publishing newspapers in their native language are financial in nature. TRM has programs in Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, and Yiddish. There are also publications in Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, and Bulgarian. The Jewish community publishes a newspaper in Russian. Several private television and radio channels broadcast in Russian, Gagauz, Russian, and Bulgarian.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Moldova Objective Score: 1.65

Most panel participants believed that this objective has developed slower than expected, since in the second semester the development of the advertising market decelerated due to the world crisis. It has been noted that media and auxiliary companies have begun to work more efficiently. However, as in previous years, despite having elaborate business plans, accounting practices, and financial techniques in accordance with internationally accepted standards, only a few media companies are profitable. The lack of investments is another factor that hinders the development of media and printing companies as efficient and professional businesses.

The lack of management and marketing experts is a problem. "In most of the cases, the journalists double up as managers and they don't see media as a business, rather as a way to assert themselves," said Eugen Urusciuc. Dmitri Kalak said, "Few politically unaffiliated media outlets are profitable businesses in Moldova. Most media institutions represent an instrument of political fights and propaganda, therefore profit is not their primary concern. One cannot speak about the editorial independence of such media. Advertising agencies sometimes avoid dealing with politically involved media."

However the majority of panelists believe that covering political topics is not the problem, rather political alignment. "Only media outlets that cover the opposition repel advertising agents," noted Angela Sirbu, director of the Independent Journalism Center. "Various times company managers frankly told *Timpul* newspaper: 'I would rather help you some other way than to advertise with you, otherwise I might receive lots of inspections,'" said Gheorghe Budeanu. At the same time, "Outlets loyal to the government exceed the allowed limit of advertising set by the Broadcasting Code. NIT TV might serve as an example," added Angela Zaharov.

Tudor Iascenco, director of *Cuvantul* newspaper in Rezina contradicted this picture and wondered why there is not more investment in the media. "Considering the poor circumstances, the fact that a number of politically independent media companies have existed for 10 years or more proves that they are viable businesses," he said.

Private media draw funding from a number of sources, such as sales, advertising, and sponsorship. The way that public media receive funding is neither adequate nor assured. It gets money from national or local government budgets, a fact that transforms them into politically dependent media. Unfortunately, media companies operating throughout the country do not have access to advertising services, most

of which are based in Chisinau. Furthermore, advertising agents avoid working with the private media critical of the government, even though their circulation may be higher than that of other media. It is the same situation with state-owned companies, ministries, and government agencies: they advertise exclusively with the media that are loyal to the authorities. According to monitoring conducted by the Independent Journalism Center, state-owned companies chose where to advertise based on loyalty rather than on circulation of the newspaper. Discrimination against private media is more often encountered in the provinces.<sup>6</sup>

Various types of sponsorships and hidden advertising, including political ads, serve as an important source of income for private media. In return, the outlets must adjust their editorial policy and the final product. "The game continues with the aces in the sleeves, beginning with hidden subsidies for loyalty: *Moldova Suvernana* and *Nezavisimaia Moldova* newspapers [both privatized but widely believed to receive hidden subsidies from the state], but also the gift offered to Teleradio Moldova from the state budget. There is no transparency. For instance, because of political reasons *Moldavskie Vedomosti* is boycotted by companies that could potentially advertise in their pages, while others who have special 'sympathies' stealthily buy advertisements as if they are paying services in a brothel," said Vasile Botnaru. "A large number of media outlets receive money from advertising and from foreign sponsorships, but this income is not stable enough to protect them from the editorial interference of the government. Still, the most vulnerable under this system is public media that is financed by public money," said Eugen Urusciuc.

"Moldova has a small advertising market and many newspapers would not be capable of surviving only from advertising revenues. Another concern is the monopoly of Moldpresa, which at times can charge 40 percent of the price of the paper for the distribution. I wonder what occidental investor would undertake the adventure to come to Moldova amid these conditions," said Anatol Caslaru, editor-in-chief of the weekly *ECO Magazin*.

The advertising market in Moldova has seen rapid development recently. According to the AGB Nielsen Media Research data, it was estimated at \$34 million in 2008, compared to \$14 million four years ago. About 59.3 percent of advertising goes into television, 21 percent to billboards, and radio receives 10.3 percent. Print media get 7.4 percent, while Internet and cinemas receive 2 percent.

Moldova continues to have the lowest advertising prices in the region. Even though the amount of advertising going to

print media has grown recently, (with a growth of \$1.5 million in 2006, \$2 million in 2007, and \$2.5 million in 2008), it still remains relatively small compared to neighboring countries. Because they lack money, most newspapers can only afford to be printed in black and white. With a few exceptions, print media do not have marketing departments and the job is handled oftentimes by the director or the editor-in-chief.

Sixty percent of total broadcast advertising goes to a single channel with national coverage, Prime. All of the other broadcasters get the rest. Advertising accounts for about seven to 10 percent of airtime, according to data provided by Anatol Golea. The Broadcasting Code limits advertising to 15 percent of airtime and stipulates that advertising cannot exceed 12 minutes per hour.

Outside of the capital and larger cities, the advertising market is only beginning to develop. There are 140 advertising agencies, but the most significant role is played by only a handful of multinationals. About 60 percent of broadcast advertising is distributed by a local agency, CasaMedia. Veaceslav Tibuleac thought that, "The advertising market is controlled by the Communist government. The advertising agencies are at the beck and call of the governing clique." Angela Zaharov said that, "Advertising agencies work with big TV stations, which are controlled by the authorities, which oftentimes allow for the advertising limit to be exceeded."

With a few exceptions, the share of advertising revenues in Moldovan media remains below generally accepted standards in other countries. Media managers would happily include more advertising, but they lack buyers, especially in the countryside. Most panelists said that 60 to 70 percent of revenues of the print media come from subscriptions and sales.

#### INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

##### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > 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 at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

<sup>6</sup> [ijc.md/Publicatii/presa\\_stat\\_raport\\_final.pdf](http://ijc.md/Publicatii/presa_stat_raport_final.pdf)



As a rule, independent media receive no subsidies from the government, although some private media do. The fact that the government applies pressure on independent media shows that only media that provide positive coverage of the government receive subsidies. In his study "Development of Mass Media Freedom in the context of the implementation of the EU-Moldova Plan of Action," Eugen Ribca points out that, "When the EU-Moldova Plan of Action was adopted, the Moldovan authorities pledged to provide assistance to the print and electronic press according to objective and fair criteria. This did not happen. Unfortunately, the state offers direct financing only to the mass media that places the public authorities in a favorable light."

API members have said on various occasions that if the government is financially able to subsidize media, then all companies should benefit from it equally and transparently. Subsidies are given indirectly through tax facilities and reduced fees for shipping and distributing publications. "In Moldova, direct allocations are a tool for influencing the editorial policies," said Tudor Iascenco. "The government does not subsidize independent media on paper, but it offers assistance to some by endowing technical equipment and advertising with them," believed Dmitri Kalak. For example, a private pro-PCRM channel, NIT TV, recently received discounted antennas and transmitters that were installed by the state company Radiocomunicatii. Eugen Urusciuc said that, "As a rule, the government subsidizes ex-state-owned media that were subsequently privatized. Since they maintain their past editorial policy, they continue being subsidized."

Few media outlets can afford to buy research made from polls and phone surveys, unless sponsors help them. For the time being, the results of the research studies do not have an impact on the quality and attractiveness of the media products. The number of companies that specialize in doing research is small. "Because of the high costs, companies cannot frequently afford to order market studies with the goal to develop their strategic planning or to adapt media products for the public interest," said Petru Macovei.

The local offices of independent international companies such as AGB and TNS do audience measurements. Not all media have the opportunity to access the research results, since specific outlets order them. Advertising agencies recognize this research data, while media institutions are skeptical about its truthfulness, arguing that someone's interests influence it. "Economic and political groups try to direct companies' advertising budgets towards media they own. In order to achieve this goal, they manipulate the advertising agencies that measure the audience and the ratings," said Anatol Golea.

All attempts to create circulation audit agencies in Moldova have failed so far. In November 2008, the Independent Journalism Center organized an initiative group meant to establish such an institution. Most panelists think that circulation disclosed by newspapers is oftentimes phony. "There is no circulation audit. The rating measurements are often ordered and reflect specific interests," asserted Dmitri Kalak.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Moldova Objective Score: 2.11

The role of the supporting organizations was undermined by two factors: first, the lack of solidarity among journalists and media owners who continue to be divided politically, and; second, by the authorities who reward only loyal journalists.

API and Electronic Press Association (APEL) continue to be the only active trade organizations supporting the media. API was founded in 1997 and counts 17 national and regional newspapers and two news agencies as its members. APEL, founded in 1998, represents 22 broadcasters and production studios. It is significant to note that none of the newspapers loyal to the ruling party are members of these two organizations. API has undertaken many activities, including providing legal and technical support to its members, helping outlets attract advertisers, and organizing professional trainings. Meanwhile, APEL focuses on improving media laws with a concentration on the implementation of the new Broadcasting Code passed by Parliament in 2006. It also monitors the process of transforming TRM into a public broadcaster.

The interests of journalists, editors, photographers, and other media professionals are represented by the Union of Journalists of Moldova (UJM), which does not function much as a trade union, rather it focuses on protecting the freedom of expression. UJM is a member of the International Federation of Journalists and associate member of the Romanian trade union MediaSind. Officially, UJM has 1200 members, however only 353 are active. Any journalist who has worked in the field for at least three years can join the organization. The government tends to ignore UJM's requests asking for supporting of independent media.

Journalists who work for government controlled media do not get involved with UJM. Instead, in 2004 they founded the League of Professional Journalists, which has been operational for one year.

There is also the Association of Business Journalists that provides professional assistance to journalists reporting on the economy. The Investigative Journalism Center launched an Investigative Journalists' Club, which brings together investigative journalists from all over the country. They assist and help each other in producing quality journalistic investigations.

The Independent Journalism Center (IJC), API, APEL, the Press Freedom Committee, Acces-Info, and the Center for Young Journalist from Moldova are some of the most noteworthy NGOs supporting independent media and advocating for the freedom of speech and press. These groups monitor media laws, formulate draft legislation, and offer legal assistance to journalists who are sued. They also react on a regular basis to cases of freedom of speech violations, harassment and intimidation of the journalists, and restricting access to public events. Media NGOs perform their watchdog activities in cooperation with international profile organizations from abroad (Article XIX, Reporters without Borders, SEEMO, etc). They are less active in the provinces than in the capital. The government typically ignores the appeals launched by these NGOs and even tries to discredit them by declaring that they serve the opposition or foreign interests.

Journalism schools in Moldova such as State University, International Free University of Moldova, European Studies University, and State University of Comrat lack media specialists because of low wages. They also lack equipment. Therefore graduates do not have the necessary practical training. The exception is the Advanced Journalism School with the Independent Journalism Center. Students have the opportunity to study abroad although some do not return to

Moldova. Even though the number of journalism graduates increases each year, the media have trouble identifying good journalists to hire.

Media specialists have the opportunity of upgrading their professional knowledge in short-term courses organized by IJC, UJM, API, APEL, Access-info, and Media Impact with the support of international organizations. There is a demand for courses in online journalism, photo journalism, management, advertising, design, radio journalism, and television journalism. Usually the employers permit their staff to attend these courses, as they are free of charge.

Newsprint suppliers are private companies and there are no restrictions on newsprint supplies. There are no restrictions imposed on public printers either. In some cases, newspapers belonging to the local public administrations are constrained to use the services of the state-owned printer, despite there being private providers in their town. This is the case for *Farul Nistean* from Rezina. For both private and state-owned printers, there is a problem with the quality of printing services due to lack of investment.

Media distribution is managed by the state. By monopolizing the press distribution system, especially in the villages, the state dictates prices without ensuring speedy distribution. Private distributors have emerged recently in Chişinău and Bălţi, although most newsstands are affiliated with Moldpresa, the successor company to the state-owned Moldsoiuzpechat. The development of private distributors is hindered by the lack of investment in the field. All radio and television transmitters in Moldova are managed by a state company, which can suspend, for various reasons, the transmission of certain broadcasters. Internet services are provided by Moldtelecom and many other private providers, which have to use Moldtelecom's network.

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

##### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

#### List of Panel Participants

**Vasile Botnaru**, bureau chief, Radio Free Europe, Chişinău

**Anatol Golea**, manager, TV 7, Chişinău

**Dmitrii Kalak**, deputy editor-in-chief, *Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie*, Chişinău

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

**Nicolae Pojoga**, photojournalist, senior lecturer, Journalism Department, State University of Chişinău, Chişinău

**Angela Sirbu**, director, Independent Journalism Center, Chişinău

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**Vasile Spinei**, chairperson, Acces-Info Center, Chişinău

**Gheorghe Budeanu**, deputy editor-in-chief, *Timpul de dimineata* newspaper, Chişinău

**Eugen Uruşciuc**, director, Monitor Media Press Monitoring Agency, Bălţi

**Angela Zaharova**, editor and anchor, Elita TV, Rezina

**Tudor Iascenco**, director, *Cuvântul* newspaper, Rezina

**Veaceslav Ţibuleac**, manager, Vocea Basarabiei radio, Chişinău

## **Moderator**

**Nicolae Negru**, editor-in-chief, Mass Media in Moldova, Independent Journalism Center, Chişinău

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