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MOLDOVA

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From a social and political perspective, Moldova experienced an exceptional year in 2010—the first year of the Alliance for European Integration government, formed after July 2009 parliamentary elections. After eight years of predictability, a series of intense events unfolded on the political scene.

After the parliamentary elections of 2009, four attempts by the parliament to elect a president failed. Furthermore, parliament failed to reach a consensus or to achieve a quorum on the issue of amending Moldova's constitutional provisions on electing the president; this could have ended the political crisis. Instead, Moldovan citizens were invited to participate in the first constitutional referendum since the country's independence. The referendum aimed at directly involving the voters in amending Article 78 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, to enable the country's president to be directly elected by its citizens. The referendum, however, failed as a result of insufficient participation by voters, possibly weary from so many electoral campaigns. The dissolution of the Moldovan parliament became inevitable.

Parliament was dissolved on September 28, with early elections set for November. Twenty political parties and the same number of independent candidates joined the race. In 2010, the Electoral Code was amended to (1) lower the vote threshold for political parties to enter parliament; (2) allow electoral blocs; (3) remove the prohibition of parliamentary candidates with dual citizenship, and; (4) liberalize provisions regarding reporting on elections in the mass media. These changes and the authorities' interest in encouraging electoral competition and participation in voting marked a departure from previous campaigns with educational initiatives, interactive electoral debates, and unprecedented opportunities for electoral propaganda. Nevertheless, the results of the November elections confirmed the political polarization in society. Almost half the voters gave their votes to the Communist Party, while the other half voted for democratically oriented parties.

Many aspects of the media sector progressed during 2010. First, boosted by an infusion of significant foreign investments, new print and electronic media appeared. With a revival of competition, standards of quality for media products increased. The regional media, however, especially outlets in Gagauzia, still survive on donations of a political nature.

Indeed, all objectives showed strong improvement in score compared to last year. After years of stagnation in the middle of the "unsustainable, mixed system" scoring category, Moldova has achieved its highest overall score and its first time achieving a score in the "near sustainability" range, even if by a fairly small margin.

MOLDOVA AT A GLANCE

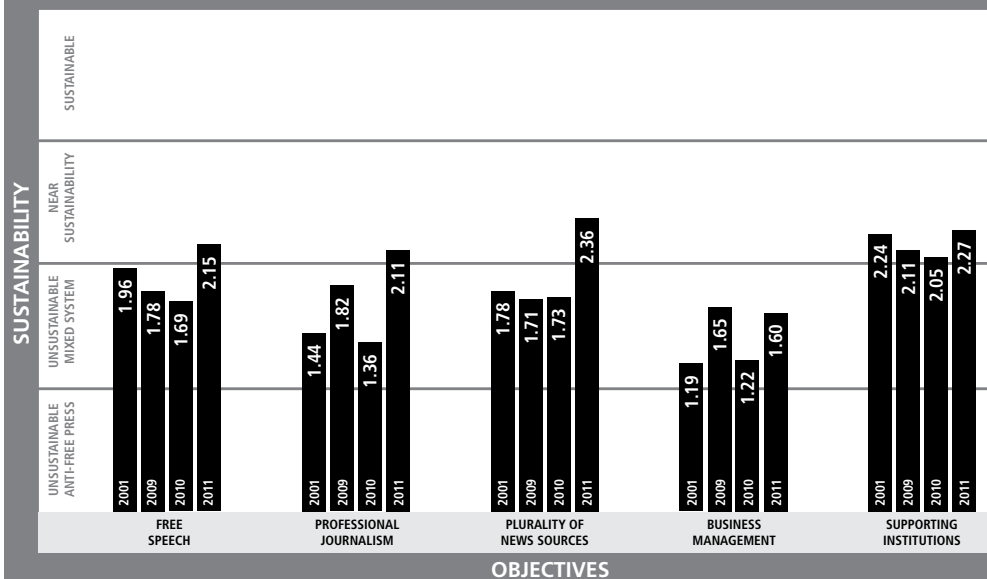
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 4,317,483 (July 2010 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)
- > **Religion (% 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 (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$5.568 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$3,010 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 99.1% (male: 99.7%, female: 98.6%) (2005 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** Acting President Mihai Ghimpu (since September 11, 2009)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print media: about 170 newspapers and magazines with local and national coverage in Romanian and Russian (www.moldpresa.md); Radio stations: 48; Television stations: 50 (www.cca.md)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics (total circulation and largest paper):** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** TV Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova, both state-owned, are the highest rated broadcasters.
- > **Annual advertising revenue in the media sector:** Television: €16 million; Newspapers: about €5 million; Magazines: €1 million; Radio: €1.5 million (National Agency for Competition Protection)
- > **News agencies:** Infotag, Basa-press, Moldpres (state-owned), Info-prim Neo, InfoMarket, Deca-press, Novosti-Moldova, Monitor Media
- > **Internet usage:** 1.333 million (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MOLDOVA



Scores for all years may be found online at http://www.irex.org/system/files/EE_msiscscores.xls

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.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Moldova Objective Score: 2.15

MSI panelists agreed that Moldova achieved visible progress on Objective 1 this year, reflected in a significant jump in the score and crossing the threshold into near-sustainability. All indicators shared in receiving better scores from panelists, with the exception of indicator 3 (market entry) and indicator 9 (free entry into the journalism profession). Despite improvement, however, indicator 2 (media licensing) still lagged behind the objective score by more than half a point. Indicator 8 (media access and use of domestic and international news sources) and indicator 9 both scored more than half a point higher than the objective; historically these have been the highest scoring indicators in this objective.

Moldova's constitution guarantees the freedom of expression and access to information. Not only speech is protected as a form of expression, but expression through images or any other means is guaranteed as well. Constitutional norms also stipulate cases for limiting freedom of expression which, in addition to those listed in paragraph (2) of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, include "defamation of the country and the nation."

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 or public media.
- > Libel is a civil law issue, public officials are held to higher standards, offended party 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.

"Jointly, these actions could lead to the consolidation of legal norms protecting the freedom of the media," Macovei claimed.

Nevertheless, this indicator progressed due to the adoption of two extremely important laws on freedom of speech and information. "Last year saw some changes in the liberalization of the media market, the adoption and enforcement of the Law on Freedom of Expression, the adoption of the Law on the Denationalization of Public Periodicals, and work on the development of a new broadcasting code," said Petru Macovei, executive director of the Independent Press Association (IPA). "Jointly, these actions could lead to the consolidation of legal norms protecting the freedom of the media," Macovei claimed. Carolina Budesco, editor of the online outlet azi.md, considers the guarantees provided by the new law extremely important for the freedom of speech, and representative of European standards in the field. "The Law on the Freedom of Expression secures the right of every person to criticize the authorities; the confidentiality of sources is protected by this law, so that people who disseminate information received from confidential sources to the public cannot be obligated to disclose the identity of the source in a civil or criminal trial," Budesco said. Moreover, a person's refusal to disclose the source of information does not deprive him or her of other guarantees for defendants in judicial proceedings. In addition, the law stipulates that prosecuting agencies or courts can oblige a person to disclose a source of information in criminal proceedings only if several conditions are met simultaneously.

NGOs in the country, namely the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) and IPA, helped to develop and advocate for the two new laws. IJC has worked on the Law on Freedom of Expression since 2006. IJC advocated for its adoption with the previous parliament, but only after the parliament gained a democratic majority in 2009 was passage possible. IPA developed the other law, on the denationalization of public periodicals.

Yet Eugen Luchianiu, blogger and co-founder of the privesc.eu online portal, believes that journalists' freedom of speech is directly proportional to the freedom "allowed" by their employers or funders. Valentina Ceban, a journalist at the public broadcasting company in Gagauzia, expressed a similar opinion—except she went a step further and asserted that there are no independent media outlets. "Any media outlet, be it television, radio, print, or online, directly belongs to some political party, and if it is not owned, it nevertheless

Matei described some common types of harassment journalists face. "Journalists may be harassed by politicians' bodyguards, they may be ordered to film from a certain standpoint, or they must present their accreditation to at least 10 people before being allowed to film an event," she said.

supports some political group," Ceban said. "Examples in this regard can be *Chas Pik*, the online *Gagauzlar*, and the public broadcasting company Teleradio Gagauzia, which openly supports the Communist Party," Ceban added.

Also, panelists agreed that enforcement of the law is deficient in Moldova. Veaceslav Perunov, director of the periodical *SP* in Bălți, noted that court decisions on the freedom of speech are not always correct. "Legal texts generally comply with international standards on human rights and freedom of expression, and journalists can litigate cases violating their rights, but they cannot be sure of the independence of the judiciary," confirmed Vasile State, of the Electronic Press Association (APEL).

Periodicals and broadcast outlets are subject to registration. A registration certificate for print media is equivalent to a license for broadcast media. Unless a print outlet bears a registration number, a fiscal code, and a VAT code (assigned at registration) it cannot operate as a legal entity. Thus, periodicals are registered at either the Ministry of Justice or the State Registration Chamber, while the Broadcast Coordinating Council (BCC) licenses broadcast media. As for online publications, they are not subject to registration, although Eugen Urușciuc, director of the Monitor Media News Agency, recalled that in 2010 the BCC requested that parliament oblige live streaming online media to obtain a BCC license. The status of this request is not clear, but the panelists did not believe it likely that parliament would consider the request.

Panelists agreed that there are no difficulties with the registration procedures for periodicals and news agencies, but the press law prohibits unregistered newspapers and news agencies. As for the licensing procedure for broadcasting outlets, panelists strongly criticized the BCC's actions. The majority of panelists held that BCC is an easily manipulated institution, and that the licensing and distribution of frequencies is non-transparent and corrupt. State said, "Licensing is a weak point in the development of Moldovan

radio and television." He added, "In 2010, just like in previous years, the BCC licensed some broadcasting outlets of questionable merit." Licensing procedures lack transparency, and it is not clear to ordinary citizens why one broadcaster is granted a new radio frequency or a new television channel and another one is denied.

Panelists described the remarkable BCC session of October 19, 2010, when 10 frequencies of the 11 up for tender were taken by a single broadcaster: VDT—a virtually unknown outlet competing against important stations Jurnal TV and Publika TV. Later, VDT refused eight of the frequencies granted. In the same session, the BCC granted four of the seven radio frequencies up for tender to a single radio station—Maestro FM. Panelists emphasized that the media reported that the two winning outlets belonged to one businessman, but the simple fact that nearly all television frequencies were granted to one broadcaster raised doubts about the impartiality of BCC decisions.

In 2010, parliament modified Article 66, paragraph (3) of the Broadcasting Code to stipulate that a broadcasting outlet could hold a maximum of five licenses in one *raion* or other sub national division (previously, a broadcaster could hold only two). Rodica Mahu, editor-in-chief of *Jurnal de Chisinau*, pointed to this decision as further evidence of influence and lack of transparency regarding the BCC.

Panelists agreed that entry into the media market is free and unlimited. All print, online, and broadcasting outlets, apart from official registration requirements, are absolutely free to launch their media businesses. "It seems that print media enter the market more easily, although maintenance is as difficult as it is with broadcasting media," said Mahu. On the other hand, Perunov expressed the view that mass media must be treated preferentially, to protect local content and enable financial independence for local media.

Rodica Matei, reporter and editor on TV Elita in Cimislia, however, said that media enterprises are disadvantaged compared with other sectors. "We pay a 20 percent VAT, while agricultural enterprises pay an eight percent VAT; furthermore, we are additionally charged a five percent local advertising tax," Matei said. Discrimination against the mass media is also evident in the way rental charges for premises in public buildings are calculated. "While before the Tarlev government the media were treated like art and music associations in calculating rental charges, now a media outlet must pay as much as a bank," Matei added.

Panelists expressed their disagreement with the 2010 introduction of the local advertising tax, which requires media outlets to pay five percent of advertising revenue. According to Macovei, "The taxation of media continues

to be a hindrance for the development of the media market, and in 2010 authorities repeatedly pushed the local advertisement placement tax. The protests of mass media organizations, especially of the IPA, were followed by the introduction and vote in the first reading of a draft law annulling this tax, which so far has not been voted on in a final reading," Macovei said.

Generally, violations against the media are penalized like violations against any citizen. Moldovan legislation stipulates no special penalties for violations against journalists. Violations against media professionals are not frequent, though occasionally defense and security services intimidate working journalists. Also, isolated cases of hooliganism or threats against journalists take place as well. Perunov believes that the intensity of these incidents increases during electoral campaigns, and that in most cases the aggressors escape punishment.

Mahu explained that she awarded this indicator the lowest possible score based on her personal experience. Mahu tried to bring to justice the policemen who kidnapped her during the civil unrest in April 2009. "Although international opinion was more scandalized than that of Moldovans, no one was punished," Mahu said. "The two policemen who detained and interrogated me had two administrative proceedings instituted. The second ended in March 2010 with their appeal, and nothing happened to them; they retained their positions," she explained.

Uruşciuc presented several examples of violations of journalists' rights in 2010. "On April, 7 journalist Ernest Vardanyan was arrested in the separatist region of Transnistria, which is not controlled by the Chisinau authorities, and was accused of espionage for Moldova. Also, in several instances journalists were harassed on duty—including Victor Ciobanu [Jurnal TV] and the Publika TV team of journalists. There were also several cases of preventing the media from accessing events—including a case when a magistrate ordered journalists out of a court session on a high-profile case [that of Iacob Gumenita, Chisinau's ex-police chief who was arrested for his role in the violent crackdown on protestors in 2009], and the intimidation of a journalist from *Ziarul de Garda*, and a robbery at the *Capitala* office in July."

Matei described some common types of harassment journalists face. "Journalists may be harassed by politicians' bodyguards, they may be ordered to film from a certain standpoint, or they must present their accreditation to at least 10 people before being allowed to film an event," she said. "Journalists are not treated favorably, especially if they seem to be investigating a case," she concluded.

Many bloggers say they are not recognized as news sources since they have more limited access to information than journalists at traditional media outlets.

The constitution, the Broadcasting Code, and the Law on the Freedom of Expression prohibit censorship or any other interference with the editorial policy of the media, especially that of public institutions. Although legal guarantees for the editorial independence of public media have existed for a long time, censorship and interference with editorial policy have never been punished, because the legislation failed to stipulate sanctions for such violations. In 2010, at the initiative of civil society groups, the parliament registered a draft law inserting two new violations into the Criminal Code: censorship and illegal, deliberate hindrance of the activities of mass media or intimidating a person for offering criticism. This draft, however, has not been voted on yet in a parliamentary session.

While the public company Teleradio Moldova has been heavily criticized in recent years by national and European experts for its editorial policy favoring the governing party, in 2010 it began to visibly abandon this practice. Studies monitoring the company's journalistic products—conducted by civil society organizations including IJC and APEL, by BCC, and also by the company's own monitoring department—reported this progress. Investments by European organizations, including the European Commission's media program and the Council of Europe, supported the improvements. The panelists said that two steps, in particular, were instrumental in breaking Teleradio Moldova's subservience to the government: appointing five new members to the Supervisory Board, and appointing new leadership for the company.

On the other hand, partisan practices, self-censorship, and subservient journalism are still promoted at the regional public company Teleradio-Gagauzia and at print media outlets founded by local public authorities. The situation at Teleradio-Gagauzia greatly depends on the director's will and character to resist the political and economic influence. Teleradio-Gagauzia's problems are linked to the administration's political bias. In the case of public print media, the Law on the Denationalization of Periodicals is expected to remove these media outlets from the state's financial and editorial control.

Ceban explained that she awarded the lowest score to this indicator on the basis of her personal observations as an employee at Teleradio-Gagauzia. "For two weeks already I have been watching the non-execution of the Supervisory Board's decision on the dismissal of the company's president." She explained, "The selection of the public company's leadership is done on the basis of their political affiliation; members of the editorial board are appointed according to the same political criteria, although they are formally independent."

Perunov believes that in Moldova there are no editorially independent media except for Teleradio-Moldova. "*Raion* and municipal newspapers founded by local authorities are totally dependent on the will of the leadership and on party interests," said Perunov. "Although the law forbids public authorities from founding broadcasting companies, in Bălți BTV still operates and is de jure owned by the municipal council—and de facto by the municipality, as it is funded from the local budget," he added.

Defamation in Moldova is a civil offence. Still, the Contravention Code provides that libel and slander are unlawful deeds punishable by fines, community service, or arrest. However, with the entry into force of the Law on Freedom of Expression, public figures are less shielded from criticism, the parties in a case bear the same burden of proof, media bank accounts cannot be seized, and the press enjoys more freedom to criticize the state.

Free access to information is a constitutional right. Moldovan citizens are free to access official information on the basis of both the Law on Access to Information and the Law on Transparency in Decision Making. There are no specific legislative provisions that would grant the media additional privileges in accessing information of public interest. "No changes occurred in 2010 regarding access to information, except for greater openness from the State Chamber of Registration in this area," said Macovei. "It is still problematic to obtain information from the Cadastral Service or the General Prosecutor's Office."

Tudor Iașcenco, director of *Cuvantul* in Rezina, is convinced from experience that the authorities are open to the media and citizens only when it comes to information that contributes to their positive image—and that they are very reluctant when asked to provide inconvenient information that may reveal unsavory facts.

On the other hand, Urușciuc believes that officials and politicians have recently displayed greater openness to the media, and that the degree of access to public information is higher than in previous years. "Some government institutions increased the degree of transparency for the media. Cabinet

meetings became accessible to the public by creating opportunities for viewing them online on the government's website [www.gov.md], and launching the *Government Monitor* newsletter," he explained. Also in 2010, the government declassified a series of documents relevant to the previous government by means of a specially created website: www.secret.gov.md.

However, while panelists agreed that at the national level media access to public figures had improved, at the local level the situation remained stagnant. Local public authorities do not hesitate to order the press out of public sessions, or to restrict journalists' access to public information—especially regarding public procurements. Angela Zaharova, an editor at Moldova 1, said that local public authorities rarely employ press officers, and although they do designate an employee responsible for public relations, this person typically does not know the specifics of the work or is insufficiently trained.

The mass media's access to international news and sources of information, including the Internet, is not restricted in any way. Journalists and editors can use the Internet to access international news and other information. There is no prohibition with regard to relaying news and information from foreign news agencies. Television stations have the right to retransmit programs from foreign European television channels, and from countries that are signatories of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television on the basis of the free retransmission principle.

Entry into the profession is free; anyone can choose to become a journalist. However, bloggers have no access to most state institutions. Journalists need special accreditation to attend parliamentary sessions, even if they have a press card. Also, journalists need accreditation to report on the government. Many bloggers say they are not recognized as news sources since they have more limited access to information than journalists at traditional media outlets.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Moldova Objective Score: 2.11

Just as with the previous objective, visible progress has been made in Moldova. Many panelists agreed that due to the competition that appeared in the media market in 2010, the quality of journalism products offered by the media has improved, and accordingly, MSI scores for this objective went up. All indicators received higher scores and all scored close to the indicator score. However, there is still room for improvement.

Some panelists highlighted the negative effects on professional standards stemming from heavy political campaigning in recent years. "Overall, the quality of journalism products is average to good," said Macovei, "but the election campaigns of recent years and excessive political influence on the media have eroded the basic principles of responsible journalism, and some media outlets publish biased, poorly documented reports that do not comply with ethical principles of two sources, the presumption of innocence, and the right of reply." According to State, despite some overall progress compared with previous years, there are still plenty of gaps in terms of reporters observing professional standards. "Events are often reported superficially and tendentiously, journalists' subjectivity seeps into reports, and audiovisual production values do not always meet professional standards," he remarked. Participants agreed that some journalists fail to verify information using several sources and give space to the views of all parties concerned, and that when that happens, it is done to benefit certain persons, parties, or subjects.

Uruşciuc believes that compliance with ethical norms by professionals is one of the main problems of journalism in Moldova. "Manipulation, interpretation, juggling facts, and taking statements made by sources of information out of context are typical of a number of media outlets in the country; in an election year like 2010, the media used these techniques extensively," Uruşciuc said.

Also, panelists noted that the departure of some prominent journalists from certain television stations shows that the editorial policy of these institutions still seems to be influenced by particular factors and situations. Panelists

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.
- > Facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exist (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Matei said, "I have been working in the field for over three years and I cannot deny that there have been some cases in my career when I was forced either not to publish an article that was already prepared or to keep silent on a certain situation."

referred to the cases of Vitalie Calugareanu, who left Jurnal TV, and Natalia Morari who left Publika TV. "We cannot blame the two journalists; they were put in a position to accept self-censorship and to compromise, but their decision indicates that the management of media outlets requires employees to comply with certain rules," added Uruşciuc.

In this regard, the situation in Gagauzia is much worse. Ceban believes that there are virtually no journalists in Gagauzia who collect all points of view for an article. Ceban added that this phenomenon is directly related to the fact that Gagauzia has practically no independent media outlets, except for the public radio station, the Ajyn Achyk television station, and *Znamja*.

Participants also discussed that in principle, journalists accept ethical standards, but do not appear to prioritize compliance. According to State, "The problem is that those who violate the rules of professional ethics generally escape punishment. Moreover, they find ways to circumvent ethical rigors by somewhat unusual methods, such as distorting messages by mixing information and comments, even in news programs, as in the case of NIT TV's editorial policy favoring the Communist Party." Panelists believe that use of these media effects aimed at subtly manipulating public opinion have become alarmingly common.

In recent years, Moldova has taken some concrete steps toward increasing the accountability and credibility of the media to society, and to promoting quality journalism based on specific ethical standards. Media NGOs, including IPA, drafted and edited the "Guide to Ethical Style," and in 2009, the National Press Council was founded. Its basic function is to examine complaints about the editorial activities of newspapers and magazines, news agencies, and web editions and information portals in Moldova, and to develop recommendations to enhance professional standards in the media and promote responsible journalism. In 2010, media and civil society representatives launched a consultation campaign on changing and improving the Journalists' Code of Ethics adopted in 1999, which many consider poorly structured and confusing. Furthermore, upon its adoption

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in 1999, only a few organizations co-signed, and organizers of the 2010 campaign hope to draw in more media organizations through a subscription process. Finally, the Code of Ethics lacks provisions pertaining to self-regulation that are so necessary; the National Press Council needs to have clear and thorough obligations and responsibilities spelled out.

Regarding ethics for journalists in Gagauzia, Ceban said, "There is a guide on ethical norms, but it is not widespread in the editorial offices of Gagauzia." Iaşenco, director of a publication that is an IPA member, said that the IPA distributed the "Guide to Ethical Style" to a large number of editorial offices, but the enforcement of these rules in most cases depends on a director's will. Ceban added that she personally knows of Gagauzian journalists who agreed to receive gifts or payments in exchange for coverage of some event.

As for plagiarism, the phenomenon is widespread among journalists in Moldova. This problem has been addressed with growing frequency in editorial offices, journalistic circles, seminars, and at conferences. Luchianiuc, representing online media, said that journalists in Moldova fail to respect copyrights.

Discussing self-censorship, all panelists agreed that it still exists in editorial offices of Moldova. Matei said, "I have been working in the field for over three years and I cannot deny that there have been some cases in my career when I was forced either not to publish an article that was already prepared or to keep silent on a certain situation." Perunov commented, "Self-censorship is most common in the state media, although there are cases when it is encountered in the independent media when the outlet's economic interests are at stake." Some journalists practice self-censorship for various reasons: fear of losing their jobs or of upsetting authorities or economic interests. Editors and publishers also practice self-censorship, imposing it on journalists and photojournalists. According to Ceban, "Editors and publishers deliberately force reporters to resort to self-censorship; such situations are common in public television in Gagauzia as well." Additionally, the lack of transparency regarding mass

media ownership leads to interference in media outlets by political or economic groups that aim to use the media to manipulate public opinion. As a result, journalists at these outlets are unable to report on certain important events and situations, and in some cases practice self-censorship.

Journalists mostly manage to report on important events occurring in the country; however, the media outlets' agendas frequently reflect the official agenda. According to State, "As a rule, over half of the issues broadcast are prepared based on press conferences by official or unofficial actors." Uruşciuc noted that, "Overall, the Moldovan media report on the most important events of the day, but it should be mentioned that the media bask in political topics at the expense of social and community issues." Panelists believed that the Moldovan press is politicized as a result of the "chronic electoral process" that afflicts the country. "Moreover, the Chisinau media are strongly centralized; they report mostly on daily events occurring in the capital, and less on events in other regions," Uruşciuc said. Luchianiuc offered that traditional media organizations do not always report on events that are important to society, and that sometimes bloggers write more about such topics than journalists. Moldova is not yet seeing a large extent of coverage on such topics on social networking tools, such as YouTube, Twitter, or Facebook.

In 2010, two new television stations appeared in the media market. As a result, competition heated up, and job offers for journalists materialized. Broadcasting in general evolved dramatically this year. Competition forced producers and directors to enrich television schedules with interactive programs, political debates, and similar offerings. All these developments generated a massive migration of journalists and media professionals working in the NGO sector to accept flattering offers from media outlets. These offers, however, came from private media, and public broadcasters lost many employees because they could not match salary offers.

The situation outside the Moldovan capital is different. According to Matei, "Although there are some very good regional journalists, they are paid poorly in comparison with journalists working in Chisinau, and this drives some to practice political partisanship." Iaşenco, from Rezina believes that for this reason, many good journalists prefer a decent salary at the cost of denying their own beliefs and opinions. She added, "Being a reporter in the region, I get frustrated when I hear about my Chisinau colleagues' salary for the work they do, while I am both a reporter and video editor." Uruşciuc shared this opinion, and said, "Low pay for journalists is a handicap for the media industry in Moldova; the low wages of journalists, especially outside Chisinau, can lead to corruption and editorial subjugation by political or financial powers.

Ceban noted that in Gagauzia, the media owners themselves openly tell their employees to accept projects from other media outlets to augment their income, as the average salary paid to journalists in Gagauzia is not more than MDL 2,500 (\$210). “In our region, there are too few media outlets for journalists to be able to work for several publications, and for this reason one has to work 12 hours a day instead of eight,” added Ceban.

All panelists agreed that journalists in Moldova have to work at several jobs in order to secure their existence financially. The participants also said that print journalists earn lower salaries than television journalists. However, journalists—especially television journalists—in Moldova are paid much better than teachers and civil servants, for example.

Participants agreed that so far, entertainment and political programs in the Moldovan press are balanced. Perunov believes, however, that the new stations Jurnal TV and Publika TV hint at a trend for information programs to eclipse entertainment shows. According to information on the BCC website, Jurnal TV devotes 77 percent of its airtime to informative and analytical programs, and 23 percent to entertainment programs; Publika TV declared a similar ratio. On the other hand, some panelists noted that the print press is filled with political news items and articles at the expense of entertainment. “If radio and television maintain a certain balance, I can hardly remember the last time I read in newspapers anything other than news,” remarked Ceban.

Regarding the media’s use of modern equipment and facilities, the panelists were unanimous that there are certain differences between the situation of regional media and that of media outlets in the capital, between print and electronic media, and between public and private media. The panelists representing online media declared that their technical equipment is satisfactory. In the regions, however, there is less investment in the media, and for this reason technical performance indicators are very low. Public broadcasting professionals noted that public company Teleradio-Moldova is decidedly lacking in high-performance equipment, which reduces the quality of the products provided to the public. However, the progress in independence and professionalism shown this year by the public broadcaster resulted in increased interest from foreign donors and European institutions in supporting this progress through personnel training programs and the provision of technical equipment. For example, in November 2010 the government of the Slovak Republic offered Teleradio-Moldova technical equipment worth €100,000. Media consumers expect quality programs and shows as a result of these investments.

Meanwhile, the problem of obsolete and outdated equipment at Teleradio-Gagauzia remains acute. “For

television, this issue is urgent; it has a crucial influence on the quality of journalism in the region,” said Ceban. “Old and unprofessional cameras often fail during filming, and obsolete antennas cannot cover the entire region,” she added.

Panelists said that although there are journalists who specialize in certain areas—economics, medicine, sports (Radio Sport, the first specialized radio on sports, launched in November 2010)—investigative journalists are too few. Perunov believes that one reason could be poor training and lack of material resources. According to him, “Media managers consider in-depth investigations prohibitively expensive.” He added, “Investigative journalists are not financially motivated to produce such complicated products.” This is true in the sense that journalists are not financially supported to cover the costs of in-depth reporting, nor are they compensated in terms of better pay if they are willing to take on the extra risk and put in the extra time that such reporting calls for. Mahu said that while some journalists do conduct investigative reporting, they lack quality. “A quality investigation—not a story inspired by a file leaked by the political opponent of the object under investigation—is difficult. It takes time and resources to make a genuine social exploration for the benefit of the entire community,” explained Mahu. Furthermore, very few reporters and editors are professionally prepared to do the investigations. In universities and in newsrooms, only superficial attention is paid to this type of reporting.

While in Chisinau niche and investigative journalism is weak, in Gagauzia it is missing altogether. “Media report only on political events, and investigative reporting is non-existent,” said Ceban.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Moldova Objective Score: 2.36

Public access to multiple sources of information has improved: broadcasters that received licenses for broadcasting via satellite made serious efforts to persuade as many cable broadcasters as possible to include these stations in their program lineups. In addition, access to objective and accurate information improved as well, due to changes in the editorial policies at television stations with national coverage, such as Moldova 1, 2 Plus, and Prime. All indicators improved, and indicator 2 (citizen access to media) improved to the point of exceeding the objective score by more than half a point. Indicator 3 (public media are nonpartisan) and indicator 6 (transparency of ownership), however, were not able to

“The low income of the population is the factor that restricts access to information the most, and television remains the most inexpensive source of information,” said Perunov. “At the same time, local and regional television stations are still quite fragile and cannot bridge the gap of diverse and pluralistic information in rural communities,” said State.

improve enough to finish near the objective score, and lagged by a bit more than half a point.

The amount of media options grew very rapidly in Moldova in 2010. At the beginning of the campaign for early parliamentary elections, the BCC published a list of television and radio stations with national coverage (meaning more than 60 percent coverage). Thus, Moldova 1, Prime, 2 Plus, NIT, and Euro-TV Chisinau are national television stations, and Radio Moldova, Prime FM, Vocea Basarabiei, Noroc, Hit FM, and Europa Plus Moldova are national radio stations. According to data published by the BCC, 50 television stations plus 14 Moldovan television channels and 48 radio stations currently operate in Moldova. Of these, 25 television stations, seven Moldovan channels, and 18 radio stations have their headquarters and broadcast in regions beyond Chisinau.

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) exists 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 non-partisan, 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.

As for print media, according to National Bureau of Statistics from 2008, 518 outlets (magazines, periodicals, and newspapers) operate across the country, while www.moldpres.md counted 170 media titles published in Moldova. Although no data exist on the number of online media, more than 20 news portals can be accessed in Moldova. Also, there are about eight currently functioning news agencies. In addition to these media that operate exclusively online, most television, radio, and print companies manage their own websites. In general, media consumers in Moldova have access to many sources of information. According to the Public Opinion Barometer (POB) that surveyed 1,100 people, as of November 2010, almost 10 percent of respondents believe they have a great deal of free access to information, more than 40 percent said they have some access, and about 36 percent said they have little access.

According to the POB, nearly 75 percent of respondents turn mainly to television for their news, about 10 percent rely on the Internet, and 6.7 percent count on radio. Newspapers are the main source of information for just 2.3 percent of the respondents. The most popular television channels serving as the main source of information for citizens are: Moldova 1 (27.8 percent), Prime (24.9 percent), NIT (16.7 percent), and Pro TV (15.1 percent).

In terms of the quality of programs broadcast by television channels with the largest audiences, Moldova 1 led with just over half of the respondents believing that it reports events with the most truth and objectivity.

Monitoring reports conducted by the BCC and media NGOs during the election campaign of October-November 2010 pointed to fairly decent standards of behavior of the media monitored. The only television channel that aggressively engaged in political partisanship in favor of a political party was NIT. According to the final report on media monitoring in the election campaign,¹ NIT decidedly favored the Communist Party (PCRM), behaving like its “pet station.” Journalists accompanied PCRM candidates to the majority of meetings with the electorate and openly campaigned for this party. At the same time, NIT failed to feature other candidates and ensure a pluralism of opinions in its news bulletins. In response, the BCC applied three sanctions to NIT during the last election campaign.

All panelists agreed that access to pluralistic sources of information is more difficult in the regions, where, panelists said, the population has already been brainwashed by NIT and Moldova 1, which before 2009 was absolutely subservient

¹Independent Journalism Center. “Media Monitoring in the Election Campaign for the Early Parliamentary Elections of November 28, 2010.” Available at: http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/monitorizare/Report_elect_final_en.pdf

to the communist government. "As for social networking websites, especially odnoklassniki.ru, access to them is becoming more frequent in rural areas," said Zakharova.

National legislation does not in any way hinder citizens' access to national and international media. Although access is free, the international media presence in the Moldovan market is not significant. Recently, the first television station in Romania, TVR, resumed its retransmission in Moldova through the 2 Plus television channel (after the BCC withdrew this station's broadcasting license in 2007). Prime, which used to retransmit the programs of Russian channel Pervyj Kanal on state network III, displeased Russian media consumers and the Russian authorities after it reduced the Russian station's retransmission time and enriched its broadcast schedule with its own programs and shows in Romanian. A total of 500 veterans from Moldova sent an open letter to the Russian leadership and to Pervyj Kanal in which they accused Prime of broadcasting only 40 percent of the authentic Russian product.²

"The low income of the population is the factor that restricts access to information the most, and television remains the most inexpensive source of information," said Perunov. "At the same time, local and regional television stations are still quite fragile and cannot bridge the gap of diverse and pluralistic information in rural communities," said State.

Considering whether or not public media outlets reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are not partisan, and work in the public interest, the panelists said that, unfortunately, this statement is valid only for the public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova—and only since 2010. Indeed, after appointing new members to the company's Supervisory Board and a new administration at the beginning of January 2010, Moldovans and international observers recognized the public broadcaster's progress in establishing an independent editorial policy and pluralistic and fair coverage of events. Monitoring reports on the national public broadcaster's behavior performed by the BCC and civil society during the 2010 election campaigns demonstrated this company's commitment to professional media standards. At the same time, Mahu noted that the people who had been openly favoring the communists for eight years remain in office, and they sabotage the principles of a balanced, impartial, and fair editorial policy. According to Mahu, "The style of these stations [Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova] remains obsolete and often primitive, even if they try to cover the areas of public interest [educational and cultural programs] ignored by their colleagues in private broadcasting companies."

²Media Monitor, October 6, 2010.

As for blogs, Mahu commented, "I do not think that bloggers produce original content; I believe that they basically comment on the major news—or, frequently, on rumors. In all cases, bloggers are not a source themselves."

Unfortunately, local media funded by public authorities are not independent; they depend entirely on the founder's will financially and editorially and are nothing but a mouthpiece for the authorities. "The state media do not serve the public interest; they devote attention mostly to local authorities," said Perunov. In Moldova, there are about 40 periodicals founded by public authorities that will soon be subject to privatization under the Law on Denationalization of Public Periodicals adopted in the autumn of 2010. The implementation of this law will contribute to strengthening the editorial and creative independence of the periodicals, will develop media competition and will attract investment.

Ceban remarked, "In Gagauzia, the leaders of many public and state media formally declare that these media serve readers' or viewers' interests while in fact the situation is exactly the opposite." According to the monitoring report conducted by APEL on the manner in which Teleradio-Gagauzia reported on the elections, the regional public broadcaster presented unbalanced and disproportionate amounts of political/electoral news, ignored its function of educating the radio listeners and television viewers through educational programs, and violated legal provisions on electoral debates.

While the television and electronic media market became more dynamic, news agencies faced a crisis, according to Uruşciuc. He explained, "The speed with which information began to circulate somehow 'confused' news agencies. News agency executives say they lost many subscribers this year because access to promptly produced, quality information has become easier via television and web information resources." All news agencies have been affected equally, working to fight the demand for swift information at the expense of accurate information. Also, although news agencies offer news services on the web as well, other web portals provide the same information free of charge. In terms of international agencies, Mahu noted that major agencies—Reuters, Associated Press, or Agence France-Press, have only a handful of subscribers in Chisinau; media outlets also receive news via Agerpres and ITAR-TASS. Mahu added, "The online portal jurnal.md, which is in fact a news agency, does not subscribe

to any international news agency, not even to Agerpres.” Ceban noted that there are no news agencies in Gagauzia.

Almost all private television and radio stations produce their own news, as media market competition has virtually forced broadcasters to enhance their broadcasting schedules with their own news bulletins and programs. In 2010, two television news stations—Jurnal TV and Publika TV—supplemented the media market with hourly news broadcasts. In addition, noted Urusciuc, “Prime made serious investments in its production, and it has launched a series of news bulletins, debates, and entertainment talk-shows.” According to Ceban, Gagauzia has television channels and newspapers that produce their own news, including the private TV2 Komrat and Eni Aj. She added that sometimes the news produced by private stations differs from the news broadcast by public stations, but only with regard to the politicians who appear on screen.

As for blogs, Mahu commented, “I do not think that bloggers produce original content; I believe that they basically comment on the major news—or, frequently, on rumors. In all cases, bloggers are not a source themselves.”

The subject of transparency of media ownership became a heated topic of discussion in 2010 in journalistic circles and civil society. The Broadcasting Code does not include any provisions to increase the transparency of ownership. A civil society initiative, however, prompted an amendment to the electoral code requiring broadcasters, at the beginning of an election campaign, to provide the BCC with a list of owners and the editorial policies adopted during the campaign. Nevertheless, those provisions have not reached their target because the real owners of the stations remain unknown. Media NGOs argue that it is essential to add provisions in the Broadcasting Code to increase transparency of ownership in broadcasting by revealing the names of owners, founders, shareholders, members, and owners of parent companies.

In most cases, media owners are intermediaries. Newspapers publish only the name of the editorial company—not the people involved. Furthermore, party newspapers deny being the press bodies of political parties, thus misleading readers. “For example, *Argumenty i Fakty v Moldove* belongs to a member of the PCRM, *Gazeta MD* in Bălți also belongs to—and is funded by—some PCRM members, *Novoe Vremja* belongs to a politician, and so on,” Perunov said. He added that the country has no law requiring the publication of such information. “There are both monopolies and oligarchies in the media market,” he concluded. Ceban said that in Gagauzia, on the other hand, the public knows the media owners because they are very few.

Budesco said that despite the lack of official data, it was said during communist rule that there was a so-called “Voronin media trust” that included several television stations, newspapers, and news agencies (Moldpres, Basa-press, OMEGA), as well as public broadcasting institutions, because their editorial policies favored the PCRM. “Currently, there is information about the creation of another media trust, that of businessman Vlad Plahotniuc who owns several television stations and most local radio stations,” said Budesco, adding, “Foreign oligarchs who expanded their businesses in Moldova are already being spoken about openly—the controversial businessman from Romania, Sorin Ovidiu Vantu, who launched Publika TV in Chisinau, and Dinu Patriciu, owner of *Adevarul* in Romania who launched *Adevarul* and *Click*.”

As mentioned above, the panelists believe that the media in Moldova focus more on political issues than on any other subject. Some participants explained that this is due to the political crisis that the country has faced over the past two years, and as a result, most of the topics broadcast in news bulletins and talk shows are political, and the figures most often seen on screen are politicians. Moldovan media report very infrequently on issues relating to equality between the sexes, ethnicity, or religion. The reasons are not obstacles raised by the authorities, but a lack of interest by editors, media executives, and even reporters. Although domestic violence, trafficking in women, and migration are some of the most serious problems experienced by Moldovan society, they are under-represented in the media, although some outlets do organize campaigns aimed at raising awareness.

In terms of minority language media, Iașenco commented, that the number of Russian-language publications that circulate in Moldova almost equal offerings in Romanian. Perunov noted that while Moldova has newspapers in minority languages, the legislation requires broadcasters to devote at least 70 percent of broadcasting time to programs in the official language. Ceban said, “In Gagauzia, because people speak Gagauz and Russian, there is only one television station that broadcasts both in these languages and in the official language.” Budesco added, “The trend in Moldova is that speakers of other languages receive information from the Russian-language media, especially those originating from the Russian Federation.”

Most of the panelists believe that Moldovan media provide the public with information of local, national, and international interest, though it is still insufficient. Overall, in the media outlets with national coverage and in those from the capital, topics of national interest prevail, while local and international topics attract their interest only in cases with sensational elements. Nevertheless, the public has access to information of international interest due to the

presence in the media market of TVR 1, Radio Free Europe, Pervyj Kanal, and several other retransmissions from foreign channels and newspapers published in Russia. A number of local broadcasters produce news of community interest, encouraged with technical and financial support from foreign donors. Teleradio-Moldova, with its mission to cover a wider range of consumer interests, broadcasts news and programs of local interest to a greater degree.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Moldova Objective Score: 1.60

Despite improvement in the score of this objective, panelists concluded that the media in Moldova are not well-managed businesses and this complicates editorial independence. Indeed, this objective is the only one to remain in the “unsustainable, mixed system” scoring category. All indicators showed improvement except for indicator 5 (government distortion of the market) and indicator 6 (market research). However, all indicators scored very close to the objective score, meaning panelists’ criticisms are well founded.

Independent media managers try to organize their businesses so that they are profitable. According to market rules, a quality product normally means more sales and higher profits. Unfortunately, Moldova is not normal in this regard. Advertising flows continue to be directed not by market forces, but rather to businesses loyal to or dependent on political or economic groups. In other words, in Moldova the best does not always win. Politicization of media businesses

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.

Uruşciuc, who manages his own media business said, “The country’s precarious economic situation directly affects the media industry... News-oriented print media, especially in the regions, often lives on the edge.”

is a known fact. Many managers see mass media not as businesses but as propaganda tools. This fact became even more evident during electoral campaigns. According to State, “Although there are signs of recovery, the situation is not satisfactory and there is room for improvement.”

Iaşenco believes that, “Most media outlets are kept afloat by grants from various international bodies...because the income from the sale of publications and advertising space does not fully cover production costs.” Independent media in Moldova are at best sustainable, but they are neither effectively managed nor produce substantial profit. Media rarely develop business plans because they lack the skills to do so. Moreover, the media do not have sufficient resources to employ specialists in marketing or finance, in particular because such specialists are few. “The operation of the media in Moldova is not stable or efficient,” said Perunov.

Uruşciuc, who manages his own media business said, “The country’s precarious economic situation directly affects the media industry.” He added, “Only media outlets that exist on grants by local or external donors—Jurnal TV, Publika TV, Prime—or media with an economic character—*Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie, Economis*—can be considered prosperous. News-oriented print media, especially in the regions, often lives on the edge.”

There is no transparency in the use of taxpayers’ money by the public media, because they do not have adequate and secure sources of income to exclude political intervention. Advertising has a negative influence on the editorial policies of all media, regardless of ownership. Prices are primarily dictated by advertisers and not by media outlets.

Most of the country’s media outlets receive income from different sources. Mahu said, “Short advertisements bring very little, insignificant income to *Jurnal de Chisinau*. Jurnal Trust Media has its own advertising agency, Reforma Advertising. As for us, we at *Jurnal de Chisinau* make the most of election campaigns, providing space to all political advertisers except for the PCRM. In fact, during these campaigns we have a rare opportunity to feed our rather modest budget. Actually, *Jurnal de Chisinau* is financed

from subscriptions and sales of advertising and has shown a modest profit.”

According to Perunov, “The country’s poor economy does not allow the local media to have reliable sources of income that would ensure their stability and sufficient funding.” Ceban said that media outlets in Gagauzia, in most cases, are funded from a single source. She added, “The regional public company is financed from the local budget, draws additional income from advertising and renting antennas, and is under pressure from the main funder: the local administration.”

In October 2010, Veaceslav Ionita, an economist, told Jurnal TV that the advertising market in Moldova is in an embryonic stage, and is nearly monopolized by one advertising agency that decides which media outlets get advertising money. Luchianiu said that 80 percent of the television advertising market is concentrated in a single advertising company, which works preferentially with a limited number of television stations owned by the same holding as the advertising company. Analysts say the main obstacle to the development of advertising is the existence of media monopolies, and the fact that local businesses have small budgets for advertising. Most of the money in the advertising market comes via foreign companies. Advertising specialists say that corruption and violations of copyright prevent the flow of more advertising. Media owners, however, talk about the crisis in media advertising in stronger terms. Val Butnaru, the director of Jurnal Trust Media who founded Reforma Advertising, his own advertising agency, told the same television channel that television advertising is pure thuggery; there is no law that would establish clear rules, such as a requirement to advertise in the official language or to exclude foreign broadcasters from the Moldovan advertising market.

If in 2009 organizations specializing in assessing the advertising market found a decline of nearly 10 percent in the global advertising market, in 2010 they found an increase, despite pessimistic forecasts at the end of 2009. According to Zenith Optimedia, in 2010 global advertising expenditures rose by a surprising 4.9 percent; however, experts predict that from 2010 to 2013 expenditures on advertising in magazines and newspapers will fall by 2 percent while spending on online advertising will increase about threefold. In Moldova, similar to the global trend, placing advertisements with online media is a growing trend among advertisers. According to the Totul.md portal, banner advertising has very low prices, about €0.55 to €3 per 1000 clicks, while the average price in Europe, Russia, and Romania is more than €10 per 1000 clicks.

Panelists identified a number of problems that affect media advertising. First of all, advertising from public institutions is unfairly channeled, mainly to publications controlled by the authorities. Second, legal provisions limiting the amount

of advertising (which is not subject to additional taxes) in social and political newspapers to 30 percent are a serious impediment to the development of print media businesses. Third, massive public funding of public media that also sell advertisements and granting various advantages of access to information create conditions of unfair competition. Finally, fees for distributing publications are based on the number of pages and are arbitrarily applied by Posta Moldovei, which hampers the increase in the volume of newspapers.

According to the panelists, the majority of newspapers pull 60 to 70 percent of their revenue from subscriptions and sales. Managers would be happy to place more advertising in the stations’ programs or on the pages of newspapers, but they receive no offers, especially in the regions. In print media, journalists/editors/directors themselves solicit advertisements, while television stations tend to have on-staff commercial directors to handle this role. “Not all media companies get high revenues from advertising. Regional television stations will never be able to compete with public stations or even with television stations newly appearing on the market because of unequal conditions of competition,” said Matei, representative of a regional channel. Perunov added, “Advertising in newspapers is unprofessional. According to law, in a commercial newspaper advertising cannot exceed 30 percent of the space, and in my opinion this restriction should be removed to allow each newspaper to decide advertising percentages—while publications with over 60 percent advertising should be considered advertising publications and charged VAT.”

State-owned and public media have the right to offer space and broadcasting time for advertising, which private media owners consider unfair competition. The panelists expressed outrage that state-owned media receive all the announcements, articles, and information from public authorities. In Moldova, the government does not provide subsidies for the private media; there are, however, media outlets funded from local budgets that are granted low rent or free space and absorb all the advertising from public authorities. From this point of view, private media are discriminated against compared to state-owned media.

“There are no legal regulations on financial assistance for mass media except for provisions on funding for the child-oriented press, said Macovei.” (The Press Law provides that periodicals dedicated to children are financed by the state.) Macovei continued, “However, in 2010, a parliamentary commission on culture, education, research, youth, sport, and mass media developed and examined the draft Law on State Aid to Periodicals, which provided for the establishment of a special fund that could be used to provide grants. Later, however, the government rejected this draft for

the reason that it involves additional expenses from the state budget,” said Macovei.

According to Uruşciuc, “There are very few examples when media outlets can afford the luxury of ordering professional market studies. Publications reject market studies for two reasons: either they have no funds for such research or they consider it unimportant.” Mahu noted, “Unfortunately, in Moldovan reality one cannot talk about professional, credible market studies—which in fact are nonexistent. Media market research is mainly performed empirically, by deduction, by comparison, or by use of unofficial sources.”

Monthly audience measurements are published by TV MR MLD, the official representative of the international research network AGB/Nielsen Media Research, which monitors 15 television stations and eight national radio stations. “Television stations in Chisinau treat audience measurements differently; the public most often regards this data as research, the [favorable] results of which have been bought,” said Zaharova. “Media ratings are produced by some untrustworthy organizations,” said Perunov.

Local stations do not have full access to such services. Before 2010, large audience measuring companies refused to assess the audiences of small television stations. “In 2010, local radio broadcasters that formed into networks launched contracts on audience measurement and research on public preferences,” added Zaharova.

In the print press sector, the Audit Bureau of Circulation and the Internet in Moldova (ABCI) was established in 2009, and it is to launch the first circulation audit in January 2011. ABCI includes 16 media outlets, five advertising agencies, and two advertising clients. Perunov added that there are no organizations that provide audience information at no cost to media outlets—such information must be purchased for a high price.

As for the Internet, there are several websites that publish statistics on Moldovan website audiences: *metrica.md* (180 sites listed), *alexa.com*, and Google Analytics. Many media outlets check their statistics regularly; there is tight competition among online media.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Moldova Objective Score: 2.27

Panelists awarded modestly higher scores for this objective, and indicator 2 (professional associations), indicator 4 (academic journalism programs), indicator 5 (short-term training), and indicator 6 (access to media equipment and

printing) all received noticeably higher scores. Indicator 3 did not change, but remained the highest-scoring indicator with a score a little more than half a point higher than the objective. The new indicator 8 (ICT infrastructure), however, lagged behind all others, receiving a score about half a point lower than the objective.

The official register of NGOs, updated by the Ministry of Justice, includes several trade organizations of radio broadcasters and cable television providers—some with similar names and unclear pursuits. Thus, the register contains the Employers’ Association of Cable Television Providers NORD, the Employers’ Association of Broadcasters of Moldova, the Association of Directors of Independent Radio and Television Stations of Moldova Meridian, the Moldovan Employers’ Association of Broadcasters, and the National Employers’ Association of Broadcasters of Moldova. Unfortunately, the panelists could not confirm that all these organizations are active in defending the interests of media businesses.

Panelists were positive about the emergence of the National Employers’ Association of Broadcasters of Moldova in August 2010; the press wrote that it was the first of its kind in the country. The Association includes seven radio stations (Radio 7, Megapolis FM, Europa Plus, Retro FM, Publika FM, Pro FM, and Radio 21) and seven television stations (Publika TV, TVC 21, Pro TV, Accent TV, TV 7, TNT, and N4). This organization managed to annul the 5 percent local tax on revenue from advertising imposed by the Chisinau Municipal Council.

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 (e.g., 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.

Some panelists said that the Employers' Association of Broadcasters of Moldova, registered in 2004, is active and includes 40 cable operators and broadcasters that cover some 150 localities. According to the association's president, Vladimir Topal, the association represents about half of all cable operators.

Foreign donors, including USAID and SOROS Foundation Moldova, have recently invested in establishing networks of local television outlets to enhance their ability to defend their interests and support their development. Examples of such networks include the Regional Broadcasters Association, MERIDIAN; the TV AICI Network, which consists of seven television channels, two cable channels, two newspapers, and two radio stations covering the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria, and; a network of local television and radio stations founded in February 2010 that includes 13 local radio stations and 15 local television stations.

Unfortunately, there are no journalists' trade unions in Moldova to defend and promote the professional, financial, and social interests of journalists and other workers. Mahu said, "There are two national associations of journalists; one was founded in strictly political interests and disappeared, and the other, the Union of Journalists of Moldova, is in a state of vegetation—reviving just a little during congresses when its management seeks re-election." She added, "There are also some thematic associations, whose endeavors, if they exist, are known to only the few people who are members." The Register shows that two other professional organizations were registered in 2010, the Media Center and the Association of Russian Language Journalists in Moldova. Both advocate in support of media independence and pluralism in Moldova.

The most active supporting NGOs, which constantly and publicly defend the rights of journalists and organize professional training for them, are: IJC, IPA, APEL, Committee for Free Media, Journalist Investigations Center, and Acces-Info Center. Also, the IJC and the Committee for Free Media regularly organize the Press Club, while the Journalist Investigations Center organizes the Journalist Investigations Club. Although their core activities are concentrated in Chisinau, these organizations pay a lot of attention to local media. For instance, IPA's members are exclusively local media, and IJC focuses on media in Gagauzia and Transnistria. Recognizing that in the past, Chisinau journalists were spoiled with too much attention at the expense of regional journalists, professional organizations now orient their activities primarily to local media.

"[These organizations] played and continue to play the main role in changing the mentality of journalists, building and adapting their capacities to new realities and conditions of

work. Their support helped the majority of independent periodicals to get started and to remain afloat. They consequently defend the interests and rights of journalists and media outlets in all areas. This is the reason why these NGOs receive support and are respected and appreciated not only by most workers in the field, but also by society. Media NGOs actively defend the freedom of speech and independent media, but they have not yet managed to achieve solidarity of the media as a guild that could influence public policies," said Macovei.

Mahu added, "They immediately react to any violation of media freedom and provide counseling and legal assistance for journalists and media outlets (covering all expenses)." Although these organizations make attempts to be present in regions as well, they manage it to a lesser extent. Nevertheless, events are organized in the northern capital of the republic as well as in Gagauzia; in-house training is organized at editorial offices in the regions and local journalists are invited to events in Chisinau.

"The quality of training received by young journalists is poor," said Rodica Russu, from Radio Moldova. "Gaps are bridged by engaging foreign experts in the field to train journalists and managers of Moldovan media; this training is, however, expensive and can rarely be afforded by public broadcasters or specialized NGOs that access funds for this purpose." Zaharova added, "The existing programs aimed at young journalists provide practical training, but mostly at NGOs and less at universities."

Instead, students can obtain degrees abroad. There are exchange programs to help students continue their studies in Europe or the United States, but usually students do not return to Moldova after studying abroad. "As for journalism schools in the country, employers remain dissatisfied with the quality and level of training of graduates," Zaharova said. Gagauzia has just one university with a journalism department, but for two years the department has been dormant because of lack of student interest. "I cannot understand why, but young people are not willing to learn journalism," said Ceban. "I can honestly state that the best journalism training program is the School of Advanced Journalism [ŞSAJ] in Chisinau, which mainly offers practical training; after graduating from ŞSAJ, it is very easy to get a job," added Ceban. ŞSAJ is an IJC project in which young people are trained for 10 months in a newsroom regime. Studies at ŞSAJ are mainly focused on practical activities. The 10th month is the internship month—media managers are keen to have students work with them and see this as an opportunity to lure future employees. "ŞSAJ graduates in recent years have proved to be far more competitive than graduates of Moldova State University's Department of

Journalism, not to mention other local institutions that have departments of journalism," said Mahu.

There are few short-term training courses provided in the workplace. Recently, training has been organized at the public television station led by western experts. Unfortunately, even the opportunities offered by various media NGOs are not fully exploited; they are sometimes ignored by journalists or editors who are not pleased by the absence from work of employees engaged in short courses. When invited to short courses abroad, journalists often refuse them because a few weeks' absence from work at a media outlet will cost them their salaries. "Few people are willing to participate in seminars, because that leaves newsrooms empty," remarked Mahu.

Perunov suggested online courses as one solution. Luchianiuc said that online journalists do not participate in such courses because they do self-training on the Internet. "We held seminars focused on media ethics in Cahul, and managers did not send people from the newsroom; no one from the university wanted to come, either," said Alexandru Cañțir, director of the Committee for Free Media.

Regarding sources of media equipment, newsprint, and printing facilities, Perunov commented, "Suppliers of consumables for print media are not politicized, but they are practically monopolies as there are only two or three of them." Also, there is an acute shortage of quality modern printing companies in the capital and in the regions, and the poor quality of printing hinders the press, according to Perunov. Mahu said the director of the state-owned printer pressured *Jurnal de Chisinau* after it published an article about the printing director's collaboration with the KGB, "... and we refused its services and were forced to abide by the often inconvenient conditions imposed by a private printer."

Some media distribution channels are politicized. Relations between Posta Moldovei and newspaper editors are still tense, because of its media distribution monopoly. Editors say that the enterprise absorbs about half of their revenue and that business dealings are not transparent. In October 2010, IPA organized a discussion between the prime minister, Vlad Filat, and a group of newspaper executives to discuss the problems between Posta Moldovei and newspaper editors.

Other media distribution channels (kiosks, transmitters) are mainly owned by the state. The radio transmission network is state-owned and, under some pretexts, it can halt the broadcasts of some stations—although in 2010, no such cases were reported. Panelists noticed no difficulties in other areas related to media distribution.

Information technology and communications infrastructure do not meet the needs of the media, according to some panelists. "The Internet is slow, mobile telephony is expensive, mobile Internet is very expensive, and so the practice of media information transmission through mobile telephony is not widespread," said Perunov, adding, "In villages the situation is even worse." Panelists noted that to date there is a discrepancy between taxes on Internet services for consumers in rural and urban areas. "For example, a person from a region sometimes pays twice as much as someone in the capital, for the same Internet service. People living in regions are limited to a single service provider that monopolizes the local market. Chisinau and Bălți suppliers offer much lower prices for the same quality parameters because there is competition."

List of Panel Participants

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Eugen Luchianiuc, blogger, www.privesc.eu and www.luchianiuc.com, Chișinău

Vasile State, expert, Electronic Press Association, Chișinău

Petru Macovei, executive director, Independent Press Association, Chișinău

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

Eugen Urușciuc, director, Monitor Media Press Monitoring Agency, Bălți

Rodica Russu, news director, Radio Moldova, Chișinău

Alexandru Cañțir, director, Press Freedom Committee, Chișinău

Rodica Matei, reporter and editor, Media TV, Cimișlia

Turdor Iașcenco, founder, *Cuvântul*, Rezina

Veaceslav Perunov, founder, *SP*, Bălți

Valentina Ceban, reporter and editor, Teleradio Gagauzia, Comrat

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