

Moldovan Press Status Index

2017 Report



Chisinau, 2018

The report is part of the project “Media Enabling Democracy, Inclusion and Accountability in Moldova” (MEDIA-M) implemented by the Independent Journalism Center and Internews and funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

ABBREVIATIONS

AGEPI – State Agency on Intellectual Property

APEL – Electronic Press Association from Moldova

API – Association of Independent Press

ATUG – Administrative Territorial Unit of Gagauzia

BCC -- Broadcasting Coordinating Council

BATI –Circulation and Internet Audit Office

CO – Council of Observers

CoE – Council of Europe

EU – European Union

IDC – NATO Information and Documentation Center

IJC – Independent Journalism Center

MIA – Ministry of Internal Affairs

MITC – Ministry of Information Technology and Communications

MP – member of parliament

MPSI – Moldova Press Status Index

NCPPD – National Center for the Protection of Personal Data

NGO – non-government organization

NRAECIT – National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology

OSCE – Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PAG – People’s Assembly of Gagauz-Yeri

PAS – Action and Solidarity Party

PCRM – Communist Party

PDM – Democratic Party

PPDA – Platform Dignity and Truth Party

PSRM – Socialist Party

RPAI – Regional Public Audiovisual Institution

SCJ – Supreme Court of Justice

SCM – Superior Council of Magistracy

USA – United States of America

ZdG – *Ziarul de Garda*

Preliminaries

This report is an assessment of the situation of Moldovan mass-media in 2017 based on two key elements:

- the Moldova Press Index Status (MPSI) methodology (see Annex 1);
- a review and assessment of events during the reference period that had a direct or indirect impact on the media situation.

The MPSI methodology comprises seven indicators for the realities of Moldovan media:

- Legal framework regulating media activity;
- Political context;
- Economic environment;
- Professional environment;
- Quality of journalism;
- Information security from the media perspective;
- Journalists' security.

The seven indicators cumulatively contain 15 statements, each with 5 options for responses. Each answer corresponds to a score on a scale from 0 to 4 in which 4 is the best and 0 is the worst.

The MPSI was established by a team of 14 experts convened by the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) that included two lawyers, three media managers and nine media experts: one from the Transnistrian region, one from the Administrative Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (ATUG), one from the Press Council, one from the audiovisual sector, one from print media, one from online media and three from relevant non-government organizations (NGOs). Each expert completed the MPSI Table (see Annex 2).

The MPSI value is the average of the scores for the 15 statements in all 7 indicators. It assesses the situation of the media during the year as good, relatively good, with serious problems, critical or very critical according to the following scale:

- 60–50: good
- 49–39: relatively good
- 38–28: with serious problems
- 27–17: critical

16 - 0: very critical

The MPSI methodology not only provides a diagnosis for the media as a whole but also one for each aspect/indicator separately. From this perspective, it shows the areas where it would be appropriate to intervene to improve the situation of the media for the benefit of citizens and of society. Each statement and each indicator is therefore also reported separately.

This report is divided into chapters corresponding to the seven indicators. In addition to the results of assessment, each chapter contains a brief chronology of relevant events in 2017 and a summary of the experts' rationales for their scores. The report ends with general conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter I. Legal Framework Regulating Media Activity

This indicator contains three statements.

1. Media law is a) sufficient, b) mostly sufficient, c) largely sufficient, d) sufficient to a small extent, e) insufficient. Score=28 points (serious problems).

2. Mass-media law is a) in line with, b) mostly in line with, c) largely in line with, d) in line to a small extent, e) not in line with the international standards. Score=30 (serious problems).

3. The law is correctly applied a) always, b) most often, c) often, d) seldom, e) never or almost never. Score=24 points (critical).

The average was 27.33 points which means the situation has serious problems. The score was only 0.33 points away from an overall rating of critical.

1.1. Chronology

- In January, Jurnal TV was asked to leave its headquarters in the Sky Tower Business Center allegedly because of arrears in rent. After the station publicly accused the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC) of acting under political pressure to withdraw its broadcasting license, the regulatory institution sought to “clarify” the “Jurnal TV situation.” It vehemently rejected the station’s allegations citing as proof the decision of 17 May 2016 in which the BCC extended the broadcasting license of FCC Jurnal de Chisinau Plus SRL for Jurnal TV until 2023 despite the large number of sanctions (18) the stations had received for failure to comply with the audiovisual law as stated in Article 24(1) of the Audiovisual Code:

The broadcasting license of a broadcaster shall be legally extended upon request if the latter acted in accordance with the provisions of this Code and complied with the terms laid down in the broadcasting license throughout its duration.¹

In doing so, the BCC actually recognized that the law stipulates one thing but that the regulating authority can do something else, so the “clarifications” aiming to “refute the charges” in no way proved that it had acted in accordance with the letter of the law.

- In late January, the Prosecutor's Office of Chisinau Municipality refused to initiate the criminal proceedings against journalist Mariana Rata brought by the ex-commissioner of Chisinau Vladimir Botnari in which he charged that the IJC journalist had accessed and disseminated personal data on him and his family members without his consent.²

¹<http://camarad/news/preciz-rile-cca-referitoare-la-situa-ia-jurnal-tv>

²<http://agora.md/stiri/27351/procuratura-a-refuzat-pornirea-urmaririi-penale-pe-numele-jurnalistei-mariana-rata>

- In mid-February, civil society organizations challenged the draft of the so-called "big brother" law because some of its provisions could impose censorship on a network. Local experts from Promo-LEX Association and the Legal Resource Center of Moldova (LRCM) further requested the expertise of the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law which highlighted a number of gaps in the draft initiated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). Civil society organizations were concerned that the law could affect freedom of expression as law enforcement bodies could intercept and investigate computer data for a large number of crimes which would leave room for abuse. The experts said that, "The law enforcement bodies need effective tools to combat cybercrime and child pornography, but they must not affect citizens' rights".³ The draft developed in 2013 was approved by the government in 2016, and by March 2017 an opinion from the Venice Commission was expected before debate in Parliament.
- To supplement Article 27 of the Audiovisual Code in force, in February a draft law was published on the portal <http://particip.gov.md/proiectview.php?l=en&idd=3909> entitled "Withdrawal of a broadcasting license" whereby the holders of licenses were obliged to start broadcasting within three months instead of one year from the date on which the license was issued. In the informative note accompanying that draft law, the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications stated that, "After obtaining a broadcasting license for the use of multiplex A (most slots had been issued on 1 April 2016; the last three were issued on 7 June 2016), as of 8 February 2017 only 8 of 15 broadcasters holding licenses had concluded contracts with the multiplex provider which has been broadcasting digitally with 7 empty slots since 1 November 2017." According to the ministry, the delay in broadcasting programs not only limited the opportunities for broadcasters that had failed to obtain licenses,⁴ it had also brought significant material damage to the multiplex provider (about EUR 40,000 per month). In practice, if they had become legal such amendments would have been convenient only for the business operator, i.e., the manager of national multiplex A. The goal of digital terrestrial television is to better inform citizens and not to inform them only by operators who can pay the excessively high monthly rate (EUR 5,600) for a multiplex slot. In addition, the draft law did not include regional multiplexes.
- In February, *Ziarul de Garda (ZdG)* announced that a ghost website named ziaruldegarda.com had fraudulently stolen the identity of the publication. An investigation confirmed that an electronic ghost had used the name Ziarul de Garda and

³ <http://radiochisinau.md/societatea-civila-contesta-asa-numitul-proiect-de-lege-big-brother---45782.html>

⁴ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/titularii-de-licen%C8%9Be-viza%C8%9Bi-%C3%AEntr-un-proiect-de-lege-privind-modificarea-codului>

had distributed information that had been written by anonymous authors or that had been stolen from other webpages and which had caused harm to online media consumers. The publication publicly requested that law enforcement bodies investigate the theft and announce the final beneficiaries of this project.⁵ The bodies were not, however, able to respond to the request of the publication and thereby failed to discourage such reprehensible practices.

- In late March in Brussels during the third meeting of the Association Council, the progress in implementing the Moldova-EU Association Agreement was reviewed. Among others, issues faced by Moldovan media were discussed during the meeting. In the joint declaration, the EU expressed concern about the situation in the media sector, in particular about ownership concentration and polarization. In the context of harmonizing media law with European Union (EU), Council of Europe (CoE) and Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) standards, Moldovan authorities were advised to take into account CoE and OSCE expertise when amending the Audiovisual Code to protect media pluralism and independent media.⁶
- On 14 April, Law No 218 entered into force whereby the holders of several broadcasting licenses could keep only two of them in one territorial-administrative unit. This was a return to the original rule set out in the Audiovisual Code but amended in 2010 whereby an owner was allowed to own five broadcasting licenses which led to concentrations of ownership in the audiovisual sector. The new provisions did not, however, specify a time frame for complying with the law.⁷
- In May, Democratic Party (PDM) leader Vladimir Plahotniuc relinquished ownership of two TV stations: Canal 3 and Canal 2. Ownership passed, however, to his public relations adviser Oleg Cristal, the manager of Telestar Media Company which was founded two weeks before the licenses were transferred.⁸
- On 16 May during the debates in the European Parliament in which the situation in Moldova and the prerequisites for macrofinancing for the country were discussed, the members urged Moldovan authorities to ensure the independence of the press and of the judiciary, to implement the reforms laid down in the Association Agreement and to comply with the Venice Commission's opinion on amending the electoral system. Freedom of the press was one of the issues mentioned in most speeches.⁹

⁵ <http://agora.md/stiri/28458/declaratie-zdg-un-site-fals-utilizeaza-numele-ziarul-de-garda--furand-continut-mediatic>

⁶ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/uniunea-europeana-c4%83-%C3%AEngrijorat%4%83-de-concentrarea-mass-mediiei-din-moldova-premierul-filip-%E2%80%9Ene>

⁷ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/intrat-%C3%AEn-vigoare-legea-nr-218-la-c%C3%A2te-licen%C8%9Be-va-trebui-s%C4%83-renun%C8%9Be-vlad-plahotniuc>

⁸ <http://unimedia.info/stiri/vladimir-plahotniuc-a-renuntat-la-2-posturi-tv--canal-3-si-canal-2-au-trecut-in-posesia-consilierului-sau-de-pr--oleg-cristal-132978.html>

⁹ <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/politic/11805/Candu-ini%C8%9Biaz%C4%83-%E2%80%9Ereforma-mass-media%E2%80%9D--Cine-sunt-exper%C8%9Bii-care-%C3%AEI-vor-ajuta-htm>

- In mid-May during a press conference, the Speaker of Moldovan Parliament, Andrian Candu, announced the establishment of a working group on improving media legislation. The objectives stated by the speaker were (i) to improve access to information, (ii) to combat propaganda and (iii) to encourage domestic production by granting tax incentives, establishing regulations for online media and improving information security.¹⁰
- In May, the government excluded a draft law proposed by Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) from the legislative agenda. The draft proposed limits on media ownership including limiting the right of an owner to hold one license for radio and TV. The draft stipulated also that high-level government officials and party leaders as well as their first-degree relatives should not hold shares in broadcasting companies. The government considered that certain articles in the draft were "unjustified" and "unacceptable" and that others "refer to non-existent articles of law," and that furthermore, "In addition, the draft contains some drawbacks concerning the compliance with the rules of legislative technique."¹¹
- On 24 May, the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) rendered a final and irrevocable judgement in which station PROTV was obliged to pay MDL 40,000 as compensation to a teacher from Ungheni who was the subject of an article aired in January 2015 under the headline: "Terrible revenge from ex-boyfriend. A Romanian man filmed his girlfriend, a teacher from Ungheni District, during oral sex." In the lawsuit against the television station the teacher cited, "...the lack of discretion of the outlet's employees regarding the right to private life, respect for honor, dignity, and professional reputation," and she claimed moral damages of MDL 1.5 million. Note that after the broadcast, several media NGOs sent a letter to PROTV management asking for a public apology to the teacher, "...for unjustified interference in her private life." PROTV replied in a public letter saying they regretted these errors and apologized to the teacher and, "...to all those who were offended by the broadcast."¹²
- In late May, the BCC dismissed as unfounded a request filed by a mayor from Straseni District claiming MDL 50,000 from Jurnal TV because it had damaged his honor and affected his political reputation. Jurnal TV aired a report from a press conference in

¹⁰ <http://www.parlament.md/Actualitate/Comunicatedepresa/tabid/90/ContentId/3072/Page/0/language/ro-RO/Default.aspx>

¹¹ <http://agora.md/stiri/32422/doc--guvernul-face-praf-proiectul-inregistrat-de-pas-e-inaccesibil-sa-interzici-partidelor-sa-aiba-posturi-tv-si-radio>

¹² <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/%E2%80%9Epro-tv%E2%80%9D-fost-obligat-s%C4%83-achite-40-mii-mdl-desp%C4%83gubiri-profesoarei-de-la-ungheni>

which the mayor was accused by some villagers of taking about 100 hectares of pasture without consulting them.¹³

- In a decision by the executive in Tiraspol in May 2017, the State Service for Media in the Transnistrian region obtained the right to supervise and control the media and advertising sectors. Previously, the service had been responsible only for developing policies and legal and regulatory acts regulating the sectors concerned.¹⁴ Some analysts regarded these changes as a tool for censorship.
- On 8 June, the BCC publicly called for the active involvement of broadcasters, public entities, non-government media organizations and other stakeholders in the development of the National Media Development Concept by submitting proposals/recommendations/opinions aimed at strengthening media capacity and encouraging the development of the media segment. The BCC stated that in partnership with the Ministry of Justice it would develop and approve the national concept in line with the provisions of the EU-Moldova Association Agenda and of the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Moldova-EU Association Agreement for 2017–2019.¹⁵ It should be noted that the BCC made the call in the month in which according to the action plan the concept should have already been approved.
- In mid-June, the working group on improving media law convened its first session to set priorities, rules of procedure and objectives. Among the priorities were (i) drafting the national development concept; (ii) drafting a new Audiovisual Code; (iii) developing the country's information security strategy; (iv) getting advice on/completing legislation on access to information; (v) drafting a new press law; (vi) improving the Electoral Code on media coverage of election campaigns; (vii) improving the law on advertising; (viii) improving the law on competition and (ix) identifying legal solutions for granting tax incentives for domestic media products.¹⁶
- On 13 June, the draft law proposed by PDM amending and supplementing the Audiovisual Code with provisions on the protection of Moldovan information space was registered in Parliament and made public. The document allowed television broadcasters to rebroadcast information and analytical programs, news and political and military programs from only EU Member States, the United States of America (USA),

¹³ <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/5/26/esecc-pentru-primarul-pd-din-radeni-a-pretins-50-de-mii-de-lei-de-la-jurnal-tv-din-cauza-unui-reportaj-dar-cca-i-a-respins-cererea/>

¹⁴ <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/17-05-31/gossluzhba-smi-poluchit-nadzornye-polnomochiya>

¹⁵ <http://cca.md/news/n-aten-ia-radiodifuzorilor-entit-ilor-publice-i-organiza-ilor-nonguvernamentale-0>

¹⁶ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/grupul-de-lucru-pentru-%C3%AEmbun%C4%83t%C4%83%C8%9Birea-legisla%C8%9Biei-mass-media-s-convocat-%C3%AEn-prima-%C8%99edin%C8%9B%C4%83-ce-s>

Canada and those states that had ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.¹⁷

- At the end of June, the Court of Appeals in Chisinau upheld the judgment of the court of first instance and dismissed the appeal lodged by the BCC seeking in November 2016 to sanction Jurnal TV by prohibiting it from broadcasting advertising for 72 hours on the grounds that it had been biased during the election campaign.¹⁸
- In July, the government endorsed the draft Law on Combating Russian Propaganda proposed by PDM. The President of Moldova stated that he would block the draft law, arguing that it was "a matter of principle."¹⁹
- Based a proposal of Member of Parliament (MP) Valeriu Ghilechi, in July the Legal Committee for Appointments and Immunities of Parliament included the obligation of local radio and TV stations covering parliamentary elections to provide equal access to debates for all competitors in the draft law on mixed voting, including for the candidates from local constituencies. Valeriu Ghilechi defended his proposal by stating that the provision would ensure equal conditions for all competitors as some candidates from local constituencies could be denied access by the local radio or TV station organizing electoral debates.²⁰
- In early October, over 70 representatives of civil society organizations and media outlets and independent experts expressed their concerns about the inclusion of the new Regulation on Publication of the Court Decisions on the agenda of the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) of 10 October 2017. The draft would make all individuals anonymous in court decisions published on the court web portal. This would have created serious impediments for investigative journalists and would have made it impossible for the public to access court decisions on high-profile cases and information on how these cases were tried. Furthermore, voting on the regulation would have been contrary to the commitments undertaken in August by the SCM to review problematic provisions of the regulation by involving civil society representatives and journalists. The SCM was asked to postpone the adoption of the regulation and to return the draft to the working group for the participation of press and civil society representatives according to best practices and on the basis of the draft regulation developed by SCJ.²¹

¹⁷ http://www.realitatea.md/proiectul-pd-privind-apararea-spa-iului-informa-ional-din-rm-facut-public-cum-argumenteaza-autorii_59212.html

¹⁸ <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/6/29/curtea-de-apel-a-respins-cererea-de-apel-a-cca-care-solicita-sanctionarea-jurnal-tv/#update-11952263>

¹⁹ http://www.realitatea.md/aviz-pozitiv-la-guvern-pentru-proiectul-privind-combaterea-propagandei-ruse-in-r-moldova-doc_61255.html

²⁰ <http://www.timpul.md/articol/radiodifuzorii-locali-care-vor-sa-reflecte-campania-electoral-a-vor-fi-obligati-sa-organizeze-dezbateri-cu-acces-egal-pentru-toi-concurenii-112939.htm>

²¹ <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/social/19354/Zeci-de-jurnali%C8%99ti-%C8%99i-redac%C8%9Bii-au-semnat-un-apel-public-c%C4%83tre-CSM.htm>

- In October the BCC refused to legally extend the broadcasting license of station BTV in Balti arguing that analogue broadcasting could disrupt digital broadcasting. In the end, the station had to apply for a cable broadcasting license which was granted without contest, but the BCC delayed the process unnecessarily. BTV qualified this fact as an attempt to intimidate the station for its editorial policy which differed from that of some TV stations close to the government.²²
- In November, CoE experts objected to a proposal for amending the legislation on personal data and presented in Chisinau a set of recommendations on the amendments to the legislative framework made in a new draft law proposed by the National Centre for the Protection of Personal Data (NCPPD). According to the draft law, persons intending to obtain official information containing personal data for journalistic, scientific or artistic purposes must justify the need. In the experts' opinion, it is not the journalist who should justify the public's interest in a particular case but rather the authority concerned that should explain and justify why the information requested by the journalist cannot be provided or why it is not considered to be in the public interest. Furthermore, this provision could lead to more limitations on the rights of journalists to obtain information.²³
- At the beginning of November, the People's Assembly of Gagauz-Yeri (PAG) adopted a new law on the Regional Public Audiovisual Institution (RPAI) aimed inter alia at minimizing political influence on the institution and ensuring predictable financing.²⁴ At the end of November, the Bashkan (governor) of ATUG refused to promulgate the law arguing that the one adopted in March 2016 was sufficient;²⁵ the PAG decided to withdraw the document from the legislative agenda.²⁶
- In mid-November, the Chisinau Court of Appeals decided in a suit initiated by photojournalist Constantin Grigorita against President Igor Dodon that the head of state cannot benefit from immunity granted by the law in cases in which the dispute concerns access to information of public interest. Constantin Grigorita, a member of the Association of Independent Press (API), sued Igor Dodon for restricting access to press conferences organized by the president's office. The court of first instance considered that the head of state had immunity and could not be sued, hence it rejected the journalist's request. The court of appeals, however, deemed that decision unfounded and

²² <http://newsmd.md/news/22646-zayavlenie-associacii-russkoyazychnyh-zhurnalistov.html>

²³ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/%E2%80%8Bexper%C8%9Bii-consiliulul-europei-obiectez%C4%83-%C3%AEmpotriva-unor-propuneri-de-modificare-legisla%C8%9Biei>

²⁴ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=36636>

²⁵ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=3698>

²⁶ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=37561>

noted that the journalist had not contested the views expressed by the president of the country but had rather contested the unjustified restriction of access to information, an issue that did not fall within that immunity.²⁷

- At the beginning of December the government decided to postpone the switchover to digital terrestrial television until 1 March 2020 arguing that broadcasters were not prepared to create regional multiplexes or to commence broadcasting through the national multiplex as they had neither the technical means nor the money. The original deadline was 17 June 2015 which was later extended until 31 December 2017.²⁸
- On 7 December, Parliament voted on the draft law amending and supplementing the Audiovisual Code to combat foreign propaganda in programs rebroadcast on TV and radio. The ban concerned political and military information and informative and analytical programs coming from states that had not ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.²⁹ These changes are usually referred to as the "anti-propaganda law."
- In December, Chisinau District Court rejected the claim filed by Ecaterina Stratan, the head of public television station Moldova 1, against journalist Vasile Nastase as unfounded. She had sued Vasile Nastase, editor of the online publication Glasul, while she was the head of the news department of the station after he suggested during a protest that she give up envelopes received from PDM. In the claim she asked for a refutation and an apology, demanding a compensation of MDL 500,000.³⁰
- In mid-December, the BCC approved the request to reassign TV8's license from ANALITIC MEDIA GRUP SA to AO Media Alternativa. The BCC had delayed an examination of the assignment for half a year. Several media NGOs expressed their concern about this delay considering it to be clearly deliberate.³¹
- On 19 December during a public meeting of the working group on improving media legislation chaired by the Speaker of Parliament, the draft of the new Audiovisual Code and the draft Concept of the National Media Development Policy were presented and debated. These are the first two documents drawn up by national and international experts on the working group platform for adjusting national audiovisual legislation to European legislation.³²

²⁷ <http://topmedia.md/curtea-de-apel-a-decis-ca-presedintele-igor-dodon-nu-beneficiaza-de-imunitate-in-contextul-accesului-la-informatie---100075.html>

²⁸ <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/social/22615/Guvernul-am%C3%A2n%C4%83-trecerea-la-televiziunea-digital%C4%83.htm>

²⁹ <http://www.timpul.md/articol/legea-privind-combaterea-propagandei-ruse-votata-de-parlament--urmeaza-sa-fie-aprobata-de-catre-dodon-124854.html>

³⁰ <http://jurnal.md/ro/justitie/2017/12/12/cererea-de-chemare-in-judecata-a-ecaterinei-stratan-catre-vasile-nastase-a-fost-respinsa/#update-12350419>

³¹ <http://tv8.md/2017/12/14/cca-a-aprobat-cererea-de-cesiune-a-licentei-postului-tv8/>

³² <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/politic/23353/Candu-a-prezidat-%C8%99edin%C8%9Ba-public%C4%83-%C3%AE-n-care-a-fost-dezb%C4%83tut-noul-Cod-al-Audiovizualului.htm>

- In December, PAG's MPs, contrary to the legislation, voted for *in corpore* dismissal of the Council of Observers (CO) members of RPAI appointed in 2016 for a four-year term.³³
- In December, API initiated a procedure to require SE Posta Moldovei to enforce the SCJ judgment rendered three months earlier to provide API with information on public procurement tenders conducted from 2014 to 2016. Posta Moldovei refused to provide the requested information arguing that it was not a provider of information of public interest.³⁴
- In 2017, a broad campaign conducted by the IJC entitled "Better law for journalists, a more informed citizen!" that aimed to improve the legal framework on access to information did not induce Parliament to vote on the amendments to the Law on Access to Information in the second reading that it had voted on in the first reading back in July 2016.³⁵

1.2. Experts' Opinions and Assessments

With regard to the adequacy of the legal framework, its compliance with international standards and how the legislation is applied, the experts noted the following.

- ✓ Moldovan legislation largely covers the activities of traditional media—TV, radio and print press—but there is no clear regulation of the online press. We do not refer to transparent online publications registered as a limited liability company or an NGO. In 2017 a large number of online news platforms appeared that did not indicate the owner, creative team, address of the editorial office or contact details. As a rule, such platforms offer decidedly bizarre content, sometimes even obviously manipulative or inaccurate. At the same time, MoldData does not provide individuals or journalists with information on people who register the domain of those platforms. We refer here mainly to access to information in various state institutions with conditional access, to communication with state institutions, etc. At the same time, the legislation does not regulate the activity of freelancers, bloggers and activists (whose actions sometimes overlap with those of the media).

³³ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=37567>

³⁴ <https://point.md/ru/novosti/obschestvo/posta-moldovei-budet-vynuzhdena-predostavit-api-informatsiiu-o-zakupkakh>

³⁵ <http://www.media-azi.md/ro/stiri/o-lege-mai-bun%C4%83-pentru-jurnal%C8%99ti-un-cet%C4%83%C8%99Bean-mai-informat>

- ✓ There is no operational law on the press in Moldova. A new audiovisual code, which has been under discussion for years, is needed.
- ✓ The times dictate drastic anti-propaganda measures after much more developed countries than Moldova faced multiple challenges during last year's elections. A draft law amending the Audiovisual Code was drawn up in 2017, but the new regulations refer only to TV stations, not to other media outlets, and more closely resemble a settling of scores between the current government and Kremlin officials.
- ✓ In 2017 the domestic regulatory framework continued to show deficiencies in the most important segments essential for the development of the field: lack of clear provisions on diminishing the concentration of media ownership, on the one hand, and ensuring fair competition, on the other; lack of provisions that would ensure the proper operation of the advertising market and the lack of provisions that would eliminate monopolistic practices in the media market.
- ✓ The Audiovisual Code was amended somewhat in 2017. The most important were Law No 50 of 30 March and Law No 189 of 13 June. The former required an 8-hour quota of domestic production in the daily broadcasting schedule between 06:00 AM and 12:00 AM with at least 6 hours in prime time, of which at least 4 hours must be in the Romanian. The new provisions entered into force on 1 October 2017. National and international experts pointed out that such amendments had to take into account the actual production capacity of local broadcasters in particular, but the legislature did not take those suggestions into account. The adoption of Law No 189 aimed to secure Moldovan information space and was directly proportional to the current political context and had been discussed since 2014. The intention of the government to adopt new media legislation was welcome, but in 2017 none of the draft laws drawn up by national experts reached the legislature.
- ✓ Many of the regulations that are needed and that audiovisual experts have talked about in recent years were not implemented during the reference period. No special regulations were laid down for regional and local broadcasters operating under poor conditions; the increasingly accessible audiovisual content online was neglected and media services on request were not regulated.
- ✓ The SCM adopted the Regulation on Publication of Judgments proposed by the SCJ. Even though the SCM abandoned the controversial initiative to make reporting on court decisions anonymous following the protests of civil society, the newly adopted regulation contains several provisions that could partially achieve that outcome.

- ✓ The Government of Moldova extended the term for implementing digital broadcasting until 2020, but no one can guarantee that TV stations, especially local ones, will be ready for digital transition by then which puts enormous financial pressure on them.
- ✓ In the Transnistrian region the Law on Media contains regulations for all types of media but mainly regulates state and municipal media institutions. It is noteworthy that the law does not recognize freelancers as journalists. Although the law forbids censorship, it has in fact become "editorial policy" for official media outlets.
- ✓ The legislation in force could ensure the proper operation of the media in the public interest, but the big problem is the discretionary application of the legislation or even the failure to apply it by competent public structures. There are frequent cases when the legal provisions are not applied in order not to confront politically affiliated owners of media outlets. Overall, these double standards distort the market and imply unfair competition in the field.
- ✓ The application of the legislation is selective. An eloquent example is the first 24-hour monitoring of the program services of 31 TV stations for compliance with the provisions of Article 11(2) and (3) of the Audiovisual Code. The results confirmed that many broadcasters, including those with sufficient financial resources, did not comply with the legal provisions imposing a certain quota of domestic production. In particular, we can mention Prime TV (daily volume of domestic product 4 hours 59 min. 25 sec.), Canal 2 (6 hours 09 min. 53 sec.), NTV Moldova (03 hours 54 min. 34 sec.) and Exclusiv TV (0 hours). Prime TV and Canal 2 were not sanctioned as provided for in Article 38 of the Audiovisual Code and were only warned. Moreover, Prime TV was put on an equal footing with a local television station that obviously did not have the same financial and production capacities. Another example is the complaint of the leader of the Platform Dignity and Truth Party (PPDA) and the president of PAS of 01 August. The subject of the complaint was the truncated images from a press conference held by PAS broadcast by Publika TV on the show "Fabrika" on 27 July. BCC monitoring found several transgressions, but citing the apologies of the show's moderator, most BCC members decided to take note of the complaint without sanctioning the station. In an unusual case, the court prohibited the BCC from monitoring station NTV Moldova. Decision 3/11 of 10 February 2017 required the BCC to conduct general monitoring over a seven-day period. NTV appealed the decision in court requesting measures to suspend the BCC decision as it related to the conduct of monitoring on the compliance with the general concept. The court suspended the

decision in a resolution, thus the BCC was unable to conduct the monitoring until a final decision was rendered.

- ✓ Moldovan media law continues to be applied selectively. An example is the license assignment to TV8.
- ✓ The Law on Access to Information is not observed; various reasons are invented to block or hinder journalists' access to information of public interest. We can recall in this context the invocation of "personal data," the changes made on the websites of the SCM and SCJ and various internal regulations of some public institutions on relations with the press (most recently of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection).
- ✓ The application of the Law on Personal Data Protection continued to create confusing situations in 2017 both for information providers and for journalists. The journalist was obliged to justify the need for the information requested and even to explain to the authorities what constituted the public's interest in it. At the same time, it was not clear which person from the institution providing the information should decide whether or not the information requested was in the public interest. In the same context, the cadastral files of buildings with the status of historical monument are undoubtedly of public interest, especially when it comes to legal entities with shareholdings in offshore areas. Nevertheless, the Law on Cadastre of Immovable Assets stipulates an exhaustive list of persons who can obtain, "...data on the terms of the transaction and copies of the supporting documents that served as grounds for the registration of the rights to the immovable asset," but journalists are not among them. For comparison, in Romania journalists can consult cadastral files.
- ✓ Although in 2017 cases of non-compliance by public authorities with the Law on Access to Information increased, there are few editorial offices that afford paying a lawyer to obtain information through the judiciary.
- ✓ Many state institutions accept scanned versions of a request for information by e-mail or even a simple request in the body of the e-mail while others insist on a hard copy. They argue that electronic requests "do not have legal effects" if they do not have an electronic signature. Even the institutions that accept online requests as a rule send responses in physical form.
- ✓ Late answers to requests for information persist without prior notification of the reason for the delay. The same is true of restricted access due to misinterpretations of the Law on Personal Data Protection. For example, Riscani District Court refused to provide a copy of an unpublished judgment on the court web portal (a judgment which by definition is a public document) that concerned a lawsuit between two legal entities not

subject to the law. Restricted access to searches for judgments by the names of the parties involved on the single court portal persists even though the authorities previously announced that it was a technical lapse and it would be corrected; that has not yet happened.

- ✓ The fact that high-profile cases such as those of Filat, Shor and Platon were judged behind closed doors is not only an express violation of the right of access to information, it is also an infringement of the constitution which clearly stipulates the public character of court hearings.
- ✓ The reason the central authorities did not make the Kroll 2 fully public—"90% of these names are absolutely honest people"—leads one to think that the Kroll 1 report was deliberately made public to direct attention to only Ilan Shor for "the theft of the century."
- ✓ The response to the cloning of web pages of several reliable media outlets reported in 2017 demonstrated the state's inability or unwillingness to penalize such deeds and contributed to creating an environment that is not conducive to quality media.

Chapter II. Political context

The indicator contains one statement:

The political situation is: a) favorable to media activity, b) mostly favorable, c) largely favorable, d) favorable to a small extent, e) unfavorable. Score=19 (critical).

2.1. Chronology

- On 9 January, TV7 moderator Natalia Morari announced that the YouTube page of the station had been blocked immediately after the broadcast of the show "Interpol" featuring Pasa Parfeni, a singer considered by the authorities to be "inconvenient." The moderator also stated that the station had sent two letters of complaint to competent bodies but had not yet received answers. It was instead announced that someone had complained about the violation of some unknown rights.³⁶
- In January, Jurnal TV announced that it was asked to leave the headquarters it rented in 35 days. Unpaid rent, according to Jurnal TV, was just a pretext; in fact, this was the continuation of the attacks, "...from media structures owned by the oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc and the state institutions controlled by him."³⁷
- At the beginning of February, Petras Auštrevičius, the rapporteur for Moldova to the European Parliament, issued a press release calling on responsible state institutions—the Presidency, the Parliament and the government—to do everything possible to fully ensure press independence and freedom in the country. In this context, he expressed his concern about, "...the circumstances under which certain independent media—Jurnal TV and TV 7—are constrained to work." According to this official, the diversity of administrative and legal difficulties faced by the media while performing their tasks "cannot be justified in any way."³⁸
- In February, Vocea Basarabiei TV, which according to some analysts was affiliated with the PLDM, ceased broadcasting. The media disseminated the idea that the BCC had decided to end the broadcasts of the station, but the BCC publicly denied involvement stating that the shutdown was on the broadcaster's initiative.³⁹

³⁶ <http://www.jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/1/9/contul-de-youtube-al-tv7-blocat-imediat-dupa-publicarea-editiei-interpol-care-l-a-avut-drept-invitat-pe-pasha-parfeni/>

³⁷ <http://unimedia.info/stiri/jurnal-tv--somat-sa-paraseasca-sediul-in-35-de-zile-consideram-imposibila-si-inoportuna-activitatea-normala-a-trustului-in-conditiile-actuale-126144.html>

³⁸ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/petras-au%C5%A1trevi%C4%82dius-difcult%C4%83%C8%9Bile-de-ordin-administrativ-%C8%99i-juridic-cu-care-se-confrunt%C4%83-media>

³⁹ http://www.realitatea.md/posturile-de-radio-si-tv---vocea-basarabiei---si-au-interrupt-emisia--cca-neaga-implicarea-sa_52911.html

- At the beginning of April it was reported that Exclusiv Media, a company belonging to Socialist Party (PSRM) MP Corneliu Furculita, became co-owner of the advertising firm Nova TV Grup which had started selling advertising to PSRM-affiliated TV stations Accent TV, NTV-Moldova and THT-Comedy.⁴⁰
- On 5 April in an editorial published on the Russian-language portal NewsMaker.md, journalist Vladimir Soloviov stated that he had been followed by an unidentified car for a long time when he was in a coffee shop or when he traveled by public transport. In his opinion, such spying had become a norm in Moldova. “In Moldova you cannot find people who are in opposition to the governing power and who have never complained about being spied on.” Soloviov explained the situation as a consequence of his activities as a journalist.⁴¹
- In April, Marcel Darie, the leader of the Frontul Salvării Moldovei [Moldova's Salvation Front] and the president of the National Arm Wrestling Federation of Moldova and of the NGO Pro Chisinau became the owner of the TV station Moldova Sport. “As the new owner of the station, I wish to change things in this area and want politicians to pay more attention to athletes and financially to support them when they go to national and international championships where they are victorious and proudly represent our country,” he stated.⁴²
- At the end of May, TV stations CTC-Mega and Familia Domashniy changed ownership. The new owner was Victoria Rusu of Real Radio SRL. Previously, the owner of Real Radio SRL and of the stations was Dorin Pavelescu, General Manager of the advertising firm Casa Media controlled by PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc. Note that the legal address of Real Radio SRL remained unchanged at Ghiocilor 1 where Publika TV, Prime TV, Canal 2, Canal 3, Muz FM, Publika FM, Maestro FM, Like FM, Russkoe Radio, Radio One and Casa Media are registered.⁴³
- In mid-June, the CO of RPAI requested PAG to withdraw the decision in which it assessed as unsatisfactory the work of the CO. The CO justified the request by the fact that ATUG law did not provide for the legislature’s control over the activity of the CO of RPAI.⁴⁴
- At the end of June, a TVR-Moldova team was excluded from the list of journalists who could participate in a discussion with the President of Moldova at the presidential villa

⁴⁰ <https://point.md/ru/novosti/obschestvo/sotsialisty-stali-sovладельtsami-seiz-khausa-nova-tv-grup>

⁴¹ <http://www.europalibera.org/a/revista-presei-moldovene/28413513.html>

⁴² <http://topmedia.md/un-post-de-televiziune-din-r-moldova-are-un-nou-proprietar-este-lider-de-partid--91330.html>

⁴³ <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/teleanaly-ctc-mega-i-familia-domashniy-cmenili-sobstvennika-31619>

⁴⁴ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=33651>

in Holercani, the reason being that, “TVR-Moldova does not fall within the discussion format.” In the end, however, TVR-Moldova journalists were allowed to participate in the discussion club.⁴⁵

- In July, Jurnal TV stated that during the public meeting on 21 July the BCC had to examine the complaint lodged by Andrei Nastase concerning news broadcast on 25 May entitled “Andrei Nastase withdraws from politics.” He lied when he said that he had not promoted uninominal voting on stations Prime TV, Canal 2, Channel 3 and Publika TV belonging to PDM leader Vladimir Plahotniuc and which had a denigrating and misinforming character. The Monitoring Department of the BCC checked those reports and found that they violated audiovisual law. Surprisingly, however, BCC Chairman, Dragos Vicol intervened with a speech in which he focused on the irregularities committed by the stations concerned, adding that after broadcasting that inaccurate report, Jurnal TV also broadcast news referring to the fake items transmitted by those TV stations and would therefore be penalized for having passed judgement without waiting for the BCC conclusion on the report. At the same time, Chairman Vicol pointed out to his colleagues that no sanction should be applied for the time being to the TV stations that had practiced manipulation and also that Jurnal TV should be included in this list. He then postponed the examination of the issue to another date⁴⁶
- At the end of July, photojournalist Constantin Grigorita did not have access to the conference organized by President Igor Dodon at the Presidential Residence in Condrita. Grigorita noted on a social network that although he had requested access to the conference two days before as all journalists had, he neither found his name on the lists of journalists to be admitted nor the reason why he was not included.⁴⁷
- In early August, the editor-in-chief of the publication *Glasul Natiunii* announced that the editorial office had been the target of several attacks. “On 30 July at about 4:00 PM, the employees of *Glasul Natiunii* found thousands of sheets of paper in front of the headquarters of the first Latin publication in post-war Basarabia containing text denigrating the anti-oligarch opposition leaders... We suspect the Ministry of Internal Affairs of this act of hooliganism...”⁴⁸
- On 9 August on the 25th anniversary of the launch of the first state TV station in Tiraspol, the Transnistrian authorities awarded medals, certificates of honor and letters

⁴⁵ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/tvr-moldova-exclus%C4%83-din-lista-de-acces-la-un-club-de-discu%C8%9Bii-cu-pre%C8%99edintele-dodon-din-cauza>

⁴⁶ <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/7/26/jurnal-trust-media-trage-un-semnal-de-alarma-cca-derapeaza-grav-de-la-obligatiile-sale- legale-si-intra-in-cohorta-institutiilor-de-stat- controlate-total-de-clanul-oligarhico-mafiot-declaratie/>

⁴⁷ <http://topmedia.md/fotoreporterul-constantin-grigorita-persona-non-grata-la-conferintele-lui-dodon-api-solicita-presedintiei-explicatii-doc---96778.html>

⁴⁸ <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/8/1/glasul-natiunii-tinta-mai-multor-atacuri-in-ultimele-saptamani-mii-de-pliante-denigratoare-au-fost-imprastiate-si-la-sediul-publicatiei/>

of gratitude to many media employees.⁴⁹ In fact, this is proof that part of Tiraspol's media formed a united front with the government in power.

- In early October, Tiraspol leader Vadim Krasnoselski urged the so-called security minister in the region, Valerii Ghebos, to stop blocking certain media sources because this was a “negative” practice. The request was made after deschide.md wrote that access to their site was blocked for Transnistrians. “These are targeted information leaks from people who do not live in Transnistria. They aim to destabilize the situation in the republic,” stated Ghebos in a dialogue with Krasnoselski who pointed out to the minister of defense that such practices are negative and that the competent bodies should refrain from them. Several readers from the left bank of the Dniester reported that if one uses the IDC provider in the region, the site simply cannot be accessed while other Moldovan sites can be easily accessed. The operators of the IDC provider denied having blocked access for local residents to the deschide.md webpage.⁵⁰
- On 20 October, the BCC meeting was postponed for lack of a quorum. There were several issues on the agenda including the request to reassign the broadcasting license of TV8. BCC member Nicolae Damaschin stated that he did not recall a similar situation happening at the BCC during his six-year mandate. TV8 representatives present in the room stated that, “The lack of a quorum would be related to the examination of the request for assignment of the broadcasting license for TV8.”⁵¹
- At the end of October, the Taraclia District Council conducted an internal audit of the publication *Svet [Light]* that it founded. The reason was allegedly the losses of the publication published materials not paid for.⁵² It is worth noting that a district councilor from the PDM was appointed as the head of the audit commission. According to him, the membership of the editor-in-chief in Partidul Nostru [Our Party] reflected on the editorial policy, and if the founder was the district council, the publication of material free of charge must be agreed with the founder. Analysts qualified the action as political revenge.
- In early December, media NGOs expressed their concern about the latest [statements of Prime Minister Pavel Filip](#) in connection with the media's critical attitude towards the actions of the government. Speaking about Moldova's recent progress in foreign policy,

⁴⁹ <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/17-08-09/vo-dvorce-respubliki-proshla-ceremoniya-nagrazhdeniya-sotrudnikov>

⁵⁰ <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/social/19098/Krasnoselski-recunoa%C8%99te-KGB-ul-de-la-Tiraspol-a-blocat-accesul-la-pagina-Deschidemd.htm>

⁵¹ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/%E2%80%8B%C8%99edin%C8%9Ba-cca-am%C3%A2nat%C4%83-din-lips%C4%83-de-cvorum-cum-comenteaz%C4%83-jurnal%C8%99tii-de-la-tv8>

⁵² <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/v-gazetu-svet-vchitalis-auditory-ubytki-tarakliyskogo-izdaniya-izmeryali-lineykov-34303>

the Prime Minister made it clear that the media were involved in a propaganda campaign aimed at minimizing the impact of successes achieved by the government.⁵³

- On 12 December, photojournalist Constantin Grigorita protested in front of the State Residence about his exclusion from events organized by the office of the president. He filed a lawsuit against the office and President Dodon for restricting his access to information.⁵⁴
- In December, contrary to the Law on Radio and Television which it had adopted in March 2016, the PAG dismissed the entire CO of RPAI. The CO president said that the decision would be appealed in the court.⁵⁵

2.2. Experts' Opinions and Assessments

Referring to the political context in which the media operated, the experts noted the following.

- ✓ Apparently, the political context in Moldova should be favorable for media activity since the government has declared itself as democratic, censorship is against the law and there are no restrictions on establishing informative media outlets with editorial policies of any ideological orientation; however, the excessive concentration of media ownership in the hands of certain politicians or of intermediaries acting in their interests and the extensive use of media outlets as tools for political manipulation and for discrediting political opponents result in a deterioration of the environment for operating media outlets and make them less reliable. Along with the welcomed action of establishing the working group on improving media legislation, there were obvious delays in approving the request for reassigning TV8's broadcasting license by the BCC.
- ✓ Although it was not an election year, as in the previous year, 2017 was marked by a political situation that affected the performance of the mission of Moldovan media. The General Media Group Corp Mediaholding owned by Vladimir Plahotniuc simulated divesting ownership while at the same time another dimension of concentration was observed in the case of TV stations controlled by socialist politicians.
- ✓ Independent media activity has become increasingly difficult as pressure is brought to bear on outlets with positions different from those of the government. The current

⁵³ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/ong-urile-de-media-%C3%AEndeamn%C4%83-autorit%C4%83%C8%9Bile-s%C4%83-nu-discrediteze-jurnali%C8%99tji>

⁵⁴ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/fotojurnalistul-constantin-grigori%C8%9B%C4%83-protestat-%C3%AEn-fa%C8%9Ba-re%C8%99edin%C8%9Bei-de-stat>

⁵⁵ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=37594>

political context favors internal manipulation and propaganda through media controlled by ruling political parties.

- ✓ In the same unfavorable-for-the-media political context, the Prosecutor's Office heard the case of IJC journalist Mariana Rata following a criminal complaint filed by the former commissar of Chisinau, Vladimir Botnari, who in the meantime had become head of the Security Department at Moldtelecom controlled by the PDM.
- ✓ The monopolization of the media market continued in 2017. We can note two large media trusts: the one owned by people close to the ruling PDM and the one belonging to people close to the President Igor Dodon. The few other existing media outlets are far behind in terms of equipment and power to compete with these trusts.
- ✓ Given the monopoly on the TV advertising market and the political affiliations of many media platforms, we can state that the political context is detrimental to the quality of the Moldovan press.
- ✓ The overnight establishment of the Public Services Agency prohibited certain agencies (Cadastru, State Registration Chamber) from providing information, either directly or through paid online services, for several days which delayed the documentation of some topics. At the same time, the establishment of the agency seems to be a centralized way for keeping track of/controlling the flow of information. Moreover, since its establishment, the website www.cadastru.md can no longer be accessed from a computer in Moldova using VPN. In other words, a user must be partially unprotected by disabling VPN to access the website and must accept the risk that other movements/searches may be tracked.
- ✓ The 2017 initiative of the authorities to set legal limits for external funding of NGOs, to make additional financial transparency rules and to provide sanctions, all of which civil society objected to, is in fact a very clear and worrying sign of warnings/pressure for NGOs working on grants. The statement of President Dodon who gave Hungary as an example in the fight against “foreign agents,” is eloquent in this respect.
- ✓ Posta Moldovei is politically influenced and plays the game of the government by preventing to the maximum degree possible the distribution (subscription and sale) of the more outspoken periodicals.
- ✓ Although the working group on improving media legislation was established, it is not certain that draft regulatory acts will be supported by the parliamentary majority.
- ✓ In the Transnistrian region, official and municipal media are used as a tools of propaganda and of public relations for the benefit of the authorities and to fight against political opponents. Private media are often attracted into political games and fights.

Note that Sheriff Holding finances private media supporting the self-proclaimed leader from Tiraspol and the Obnovlenie [Renewal] Party that holds a majority in the legislature of the region.

Chapter III. Economic Environment

The indicator contains two statements.

1. The media are economically a) independent, b) independent to a large extent, c) independent to an average extent, d) independent to a small extent, e) are not independent. Score=18 (critical).

2. The media are editorially a) independent, b) independent to a large extent, c) independent to an average extent, d) independent to a small extent, e) are not independent. Score=18 (critical).

The average score of 18 means that the economic environment is in critical condition.

3.1. Chronology:

- At the beginning of March, the Union of Journalists of Moldova was forced to leave its office in the Press House following litigation with the state-owned agency of that name. The acting chairman of the Union explained, “This situation emerged after the managers of the Press House kept increasing the rent and applying fines until we reached a debt of over MDL 200,000.” Over the years, the Union of Journalists has been appealing to the government to transfer ownership of the building for the use of the professional journalists’ organization, but the appeals have been unanswered.⁵⁶
- In March, specialists from Turkish TV station TRT installed new equipment in the RPAI studios⁵⁷ which the regional public broadcaster could not have otherwise afforded.
- In March, the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (NRAECIT) announced that the number of cable TV service customers had decreased and that the trend had persisted over the last three years.⁵⁸
- At the end of March in an editorial published on the euractiv.com portal, Prime Minister Pavel Filip was convinced that Moldovan media should be backed by foreign investors to develop and to become a real fourth estate. At the same time, he stated that in his upcoming official visits he would meet the representatives of European companies with whom he would speak about the Moldovan media market and urge major media organizations in Europe and the USA to invest in Moldovan media.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/uniunea-jurnali%C8%99tilor-for%C8%9Bat%C4%83-s%C4%83-p%C4%83r%C4%83seasc%C4%83-sediul-din-casa-presei-valeriu-saharneanu-%E2%80%9Evom>

⁵⁷ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=31627>

⁵⁸ <http://radiochisinau.md/scade-numarul-clientilor-serviciilor-tv-prin-cablu---47910.html>

⁵⁹ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/premierul-pavel-filip-crede-c%C4%83-mass-media-din-r-moldova-ar-trebui-sus%C8%9Binut%C4%83-de-investitori>

- At the beginning of April, local/regional TV stations called for the creation of a regional multiplex by the state expressing their fear that after the digital TV switchover on 31 December 2017 they would lose more than half of their target audiences or would even disappear altogether because of lack of money. Media NGOs drew attention in this context to the fact that beyond the technical aspects of the transition to digital television, it would be necessary to take into consideration other important concepts such as the diversity of media content which is ensured by local media.⁶⁰
- At the beginning of May on Press Freedom Days, Prime Minister Filip sent a letter to the leaders of 12 global media trusts urging them to invest in Moldovan media. These included 21st Century Fox, Central European Media Enterprises, Discovery Communications, Liberty Global, RTL Group, Sanoma, Viasat, Mediaset, Funke Mediengruppe-Waz, Ringier, Time Warner and Vivendi.⁶¹ During the reference period, no global media trust responded to the Moldovan Prime Minister's invitation.
- In late May, the parliamentary committee for media organized public hearings on the topic "Status of the Periodic Press: Impediments to the Publishing and Distribution of Periodicals." The talks were attended by MPs and by representatives of Posta Moldovei, the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (MITC), the Chisinau Mayor's Office, civil society and media outlets. Representatives of periodicals accused Posta Moldovei of not negotiating service contracts with the publishers and of imposing additional payments for packaging each newspaper. Representatives of Posta Moldovei countered that they imposed extra costs in order to avoid losses. Vladimir Hotineanu, head of the parliamentary committee for media, suggested that a working group be created to resolve the situation and which should first of all discuss contract provisions.⁶² It should be noted that by the end of the year, relations between the print media publishers and Posta Moldovei had not improved.
- At the beginning of June, the State Agency on Intellectual Property published a resolution of the Chisinau Court of Appeals in which it ordered the seizure of intellectual property from Media Resurse SRL which managed stations Euro TV and Alt TV following the initiation of insolvency proceedings. Euro TV and Alt TV were taken over in September 2014 by Media Resurse SRL founded by Klassika Media SRL. Although the Klassika brand has been associated with Ilan Shor for many years, this time Rita Tvic was indicated as founder of Klassika Media SRL. Her name appears in the Kroll 1

⁶⁰ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/trecerea-la-televiziunea-digital%C4%83-posturile-tv-locale-cer-crearea-de-c%C4%83tre-stat-unui-multiplex>

⁶¹ <http://agora.md/stiri/31784/filip-a-scris-o-scrisoare-catre-12-trusturi-media-globale--rugandu-le-sa-finanteze-presa-moldoveneasca>

⁶² <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/audieri-publice-la-parlament-divergen%C8%9Bele-dintre-editorii-publica%C8%9Biiilor-periodice-%C8%99i>

report in the context of the fraud at Unibank, Banca de Economii and Banca Sociala. The report states that the offshore company Harrogate Consulting LP granted loans to Unibank shareholder Rita Tvic.⁶³

- In June, the CO of RPAI suspended the payment of employees' salaries until September, justifying the action by the debts of over MDL 240,000 that the institution had in this category of expenditures.⁶⁴ Note that both RPAI and the national public broadcaster constantly pointed to insufficient budgets for performing their mission as public broadcasters.
- In June, the online broadcasting portal Privesc.eu concluded partnerships with nine web portals launching a new service for those who organize events and want to reach a larger audience. Privesc.eu broadcast the event live while nine journalists from nine news portals watched it live and wrote about it. The nine portals were agora.md, Deschide.md, diez.md, timpul.md, Moldova.org, Newsmaker.md, unimedia.info, Ziarulnational.md and zugo.md. The partnership agreement stipulated that the money earned should be distributed among the portals proportionally according to the traffic generated during the 72 hours.⁶⁵
- In June, the BCC publicly examined the requests lodged by the following organizations: (i) Real Radio SRL, the founder of TV stations CTC Mega and Familia Domashniy, which asked the BCC to exclude it from broadcasting requirements for Multiplex A because of a lack of financial resources; (ii) Jevise SRL, the founder of station Agro TV, and Canal Regional SRL, the founder of station Canal Regional which asked for an additional six months to implement the project for Multiplex A and (iii) FCC Jurnal de Chisinau Plus SRL, the founder of Jurnal TV which asked for an extension until the first quarter of 2018 for the efficient commencement of broadcasting through Multiplex A. The meeting was attended by MITC representatives and those of the stated-owned enterprise Radiocomunicatii both of which were against accepting the above requests. Finally, the BCC decided to give stations Agro TV, Canal Regional and Jurnal TV until 30 November 2017 to commence broadcasting through Multiplex A. At the same time, the council accepted the request of stations CTC Mega and Familia Domashniy to exclude program service broadcasting through Multiplex A from their scope of activity.⁶⁶

⁶³ <http://agora.md/stiri/33049/intreprinderea-care-administreaza-euro-tv-si-alt-tv-a-intrat-in-insolvabilitate>

⁶⁴ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=33315>

⁶⁵ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/privescue-face-parteneriat-cu-nou%C4%83-portaluri-online-cine-%C8%99i-ce-are-de-c%C3%A2%C8%99tigat>

⁶⁶ <http://cca.md/news/comunicat-de-pres-edin-public-cca-din-08062017>

- In June, TV station Moldova Sport was reorganized into the general station Impact TV after going through several difficult financial periods. The new owner became the politician Marcel Darie, the leader of Frontul Salvării Moldovei [Moldova's Salvation Front] and president of the National Arm Wrestling Federation of Moldova. Mr. Darie is a politician who comes from the business world and who, in 2011 and 2015, ran for mayor of Chisinau.⁶⁷
- Three years after its establishment, Realitatea TV suspended broadcasts starting 29 July for an indefinite period.⁶⁸ Dumitru Tira, the owner of the Realitatea Press Group, invoked financial issues.
- In mid-August, the authorities announced in the context of the digital switchover that the state would provide free of charge more than 70,000 socially vulnerable families with converters, special devices that receive digital signals for old television sets. The amount required to implement that project, according to the estimations of the Ministry of Finance, was MDL 50 million, and it had already been identified.
- At the beginning of August, the news portals agora.md and unimedia.info withdrew from the Internet Traffic and Audience Measurement Survey conducted by the Circulations and Internet Audit Office (BATI).⁶⁹ Representatives of the portals stated that the reason was related to financial issues. The Executive Director of [BATI](#), Stanislav Popov, confirmed the position of the two media outlets and said that they canceled their contracts on their own initiative invoking economic reasons.
- In mid-November, RPAI commenced satellite broadcasting.⁷⁰ This was possible due to the equipment and technical support provided by Turkey.

3.2. Experts' Opinions and Assessments

Referring to the economic environment in which the media operated, the experts noted the following.

- ✓ Moldovan legislation does not currently provide specific regulations for media affairs. The existing legal framework is insufficient to ensure fair competition in the media and

⁶⁷ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/%E2%80%9Emoldova-sport%E2%80%9D-se-reorganizeaz%C4%83-%C3%AEn-%E2%80%9Eimpact-tv%E2%80%9D>

⁶⁸ <http://topmedia.md/realitatea-tv-isi-suspenda-activitatea---96781.html>

⁶⁹ <http://www.timpul.md/articol/unimedia-si-agora-au-parasit-sistemul-oficial-de-masurare-a-audienei-online-din-r--moldova-121301.html>

⁷⁰ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=36814>

advertising markets. We need clear provisions that when implemented will establish order, especially in the ownership regime.

- ✓ Editorial independence is directly proportional to financial independence, but in a quite small market such as Moldova's that is not sufficiently regulated and in which the existing regulations do not work or are applied in a discretionary manner, it is extremely difficult to achieve financial independence. There is dumping in our market, there are no independent audience measurements (especially in the audiovisual field) and the largest advertising firms are monopolies inviting suspicion of cartel agreements among the owners of media holdings aimed at eliminating competitors in the market.
- ✓ Under precarious economic conditions and given that the financial resources that remain to serve traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers) decrease every year, it is increasingly difficult to speak about profitable economic activities. According to unofficial information, with very few exceptions Moldovan TV stations spend far more money than they earn from selling their services. Of course, there are media outlets that live on advertising and strive to resist, but media owners continue to tend to treat their outlets not as businesses but as tools to promote their personal interests and images. This can be detected especially during monitoring activities or election campaigns.
- ✓ In the current situation of Moldova, it is virtually impossible to be economically independent. The advertising market is very weak and the purchasing power of the population is very limited, so editorial offices are forced to keep low subscription and advertising fees in order to keep their readers and attract to advertisers to ensure them a circulation that allows them to survive.
- ✓ There are very few editorial offices in Moldova that can state that they are financially independent. This independence is due largely to projects awarded from abroad or the financial support from other states provided directly to the editorial offices such as Russia (Sputnik), Romania (TVR, Radio Chisinau) or the USA (Radio Free Europe).
- ✓ TV and online media are attractive to advertisers, but the volume of advertising is largely managed by firms controlled by government representatives which greatly influences their decisions to place advertising on certain TV stations, newspapers or radio stations.
- ✓ The financial dependence on political factors of many media platforms makes them unsustainable and low quality.
- ✓ Most media organizations depend on their owners or on donors. In 2017, some online outlets were involved in projects funded by external donors, although web sites require less financing than television, radio or print outlets.

- ✓ The editorial policy of a particular outlet is adjusted to the owner's wishes/interests. Examples are evident: Jurnal Holding which promotes Andrei Nastase, the PDA leader; GMG Holding (Prime TV, Canal2, Canal3 and Publika TV) is the voice and image polisher of the PDM in general and of PDM leader Vladimir Plahotniuc in particular; Accent TV and NTV are affiliated with PSRM and its (ex)leader, Igor Dodon the current president of Moldova among other politically affiliated media outlets.
- ✓ When some media outlets are funded by certain "sponsors," including politicians, they cannot be editorially independent. Nowadays, only the publications and TV stations that obtain grants from external donors or that choose to work more on pure enthusiasm can be editorially independent.
- ✓ In 2017, the concentration of media ownership and the monopolization of the advertising market remained serious issues while some media outlets in Moldova continued to be tools of manipulation and misinformation as they were economically dependent on their owners.
- ✓ The situation at the local level is not better. Many media outlets depend considerably on local authorities: They either rent office space from them or receive advertising or render services for them (publishing acts, decisions, announcements, etc.), and this dependence make them avoid addressing topics that directly or indirectly target the local government or its representatives.
- ✓ At the local level, the economic situation cannot favor editorial independence. The little advertising available does not reach the regions. Local media is practically excluded from the distribution of advertising.
- ✓ In the Transnistrian region, most media are funded from the budget, so they are from the very beginning economic enterprises operating at a loss. In such a case, the editorial policy depends totally on the funder. The few private media outlets must deal with big financial issues. Advertising revenues are very low or are lacking. Some outlets get grants from abroad, but they are sporadic.
- ✓ When a media outlet is economically dependent, it increasingly follows orders instead of practicing quality journalism.

Chapter IV. Professional Environment

The indicator contains two statements.

1. The professionalization of the media is a) sufficient, b) mostly sufficient, c) largely sufficient, d) sufficient to a small extent, e) insufficient. Score=30 (serious problems).
2. The professionalization of the media is a) efficient, b) mostly efficient, c) largely efficient, d) efficient to a small extent, e) inefficient. Score=24 (critical).

The average of 27 points means the situation is critical.

4.1. Chronology

- In January, media NGOs launched a campaign to support investigative journalism and access to information, signaling increasingly frequent cases of the [intimidation of journalists](#) who conducted well-documented investigations on topics of major public interest and of blocking access to [information](#) based on erroneous and abusive interpretations of the Law on Personal Data Protection. Several activities including press clubs and a conference with the participation of experts from the country and from abroad were organized during this campaign. Public authorities were called on to interpret and enforce the Law on Personal Data Protection in a reasonable manner and in line with European standards.⁷¹
- At the end of January, Deutsche Welle from Germany announced an invitation for young people interested in being part of a quality journalism study program with an international media company to travel to Germany. Deutsche Welle provided full assistance to the interns for obtaining visas. The internship was scheduled for September 2017.⁷²
- The annual meeting of the Regional Network of Press Councils from Eastern Partnership member countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and the Russian Federation was held from 2 to 3 March in Chisinau. The agenda of the event included a review of the developments on self-regulation in each of the participating countries.⁷³
- In May, IJC made public the proposal to introduce an optional media literacy course in schools starting in September 2017 and also developing a curriculum for primary

⁷¹ <http://agora.md/stiri/27367/ong-urile-de-media-lanseaza-o-campanie-de-sutinere-a-jurnalismului-de-investigatie-si-a-accesului-la-informatie>

⁷² http://noi.md/md/news_id/205980

⁷³ <http://www.timpul.md/articol/reprezentani-ai-consilierilor-de-presa-din-arile-parteneriatului-estic-vin-la-chiinau--105648.html>

classes.⁷⁴ The course was introduced as part of a pilot project in over 20 schools across the country.

- In mid-May, IJC launched the study titled "Protection of Personal Data vs. Freedom of Expression and Information" by the lawyer Tatiana Puiu. The study was presented during a public debate that brought together representatives of Parliament, the National Center for the Protection of Personal Data (NCPDP), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the SCM and the Legal Resource Center of Moldova in addition to journalists, media experts and media managers. The document provides an x-ray of the current situation with personal data from the perspective of ensuring freedom of expression and access to information; an assessment of the domestic legal framework and how it relates to European best practices and a proposal for new, optimal mechanisms to improve the situation in the field.⁷⁵
- At the end of June, [the students of the 11th Class of the IJC School of Advanced Journalism received certificates](#),⁷⁶ and in August admissions for a new academic course were announced.⁷⁷
- At the end of August, media NGOs publicly condemned restrictions and the practice of restricting access to information imposed by the Moldovan president on photojournalist Constantin Grigorita who was refused access to his briefing without any explanations and/or request for any additional accreditation.⁷⁸
- In November, a case was reported in which several journalists employed by PSRM-affiliated TV stations financially supported the party in the election campaign it had initiated to depose the Mayor of Chisinau.⁷⁹
- On 14 and 15 November, the third edition of the Mass Media Forum organized by the Moldovan Press Council in partnership with API, IJC and the Electronic Press Association of Moldova (APEL) was held in Chisinau. The forum discussed the main issues of the Moldovan journalistic community, potential solutions for those issues and how to promote media reform.⁸⁰
- At the beginning of December, the Press Council nominated four finalists in the contest for the National Award for Professional Journalistic Ethics and Deontology 2017. The

⁷⁴ http://noi.md/md/news_id/213659

⁷⁵ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/protoc%C8%9Bia-datelor-cu-caracter-personal-vs-libertatea-de-exprimare-%C8%99i-informare-cadrul-legal>

⁷⁶ <https://www.civic.md/stiri-ong/37945-studentii-celei-de-a-xi-ea-promotii-ai-scolii-de-studii-avansate-in-jurnalism-au-primit-certIFICATELE-de-studii.html>

⁷⁷ <http://scoaladejurnalism.md/?q=ro/stiri/admiterea-2017-%C8%99coala-de-studii-avansate-%C3%AEn-jurnalism-anun%C8%9B%C4%83-%C3%AEnscrierea-candida%C8%9Bilor-pentru-un>

⁷⁸ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/ong-urile-de-media-condamn%C4%83-restric%C8%9Bile-%C8%99i-practicile-de-%C3%AEngr%C4%83dire-accesului-la-informa%C8%9Bie-0>

⁷⁹ <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/politic/21208/Jurnali%C8%99tii-PSRM-sponsori-pentru-referendumul-%E2%80%9EAnti-Chirtoac%C4%83%E2%80%9D.htm>

⁸⁰ <http://mediaforum.md/event/2017>

winner was announced during the Journalists of the Year 2017 Ceremony (23rd edition) organized by IJC and the Press Freedom Committee on 14 December 2017.⁸¹

- At the end of the year, API launched the portal www.stopfals.md, the online platform of the campaign against fake and tendentious information STOP FAKE! implemented by API in partnership with IJC and the Association of Independent TV Journalists of Moldova during the past two years.⁸²

4.2. Experts' Opinions and Assessments

Referring to the professionalization of the media, the experts noted that there are many guidelines for becoming a professional including the Journalists' Code of Ethics and professional associations among others. In terms of efficiency, however, there are several deficiencies.

- ✓ The staff training system is not well structured or aligned with the real needs of media outlets. It does not provide opportunities to enhance the professionalism of certain categories of media employees especially in management, marketing and sales. Although some curricular changes were made in journalism education, the approach is not a strategic one, and there is no solid connection between educational institutions and media companies to study the need to enhance the professionalism of media specialists.
- ✓ Although, we do quite well in terms of number of faculties of journalism, as a country with a relatively small media market, the situation relating to employers' associations and media trade unions is, in principle, critical. We do not do very well with press clubs as meetings are organized sporadically and, as a rule, as part of projects. Furthermore, they are not systematic and do not address issues of major interest to journalists but rather focus on particular incidents. The Moldovan press can boast a Journalists' Code of Ethics, but there is no local press institution with its own code of ethics.
- ✓ The faculties of journalism annually launch about 100 journalists onto the market, but their level of training leaves much to be desired. Graduates do not have the necessary skills to enter editorial offices as fully fledged journalists, even those with general profiles let alone those specialized in economics, political analysis, social journalism or

⁸¹ <http://topmedia.md/consiliul-de-presa-a-desemnat-finalistii-concursului-pentru-premiul-national-de-etica-si-deontologie-jurnalistica-2017---100341.html>

⁸² <http://diez.md/2017/12/30/asociatia-presei-independente-lansat-portalul-stopfals-md-platforma-online-campaniei-stop-fals/>

investigations. An obvious example is the reporting of beginners in which they place excessive emphasis on their own presence in the material or generate value judgments.

- ✓ Universities in the country have lost their ability to produce qualified staff, and the School of Advanced Journalism has too few students to saturate the media market. With mediocre specialists coming out of universities, editorial offices have to train their reporters.
- ✓ Paradoxically, although there are many programs for training journalists, the techniques have proven to be less effective. University training in journalism does not meet market needs. Young people coming to internships are not ready to go on site and learn how to actually practice journalism in editorial offices. Young journalists either do not have the critical thinking skills or do not know about such notions as fairness and accuracy.
- ✓ Many journalists focus on audiovisual media to the detriment of online or print media. This is also due to higher salaries in television.
- ✓ Professionalization is effective only when journalists do their jobs in good faith. In the vast majority of media outlets that serve certain interests, however, we find increasingly often serious violations of media laws and rules of professional conduct. This generates misinformation and manipulation. In 2017, some Moldovan media outlets continued to publish fake news.
- ✓ The ongoing efforts of non-government media organizations to organize courses, workshops or vocational internships should be appreciated; however, there is a large discrepancy between the knowledge and skills gained at the university or at a vocational training course and the practical exercise of the job. In addition, many of the graduates with good theoretical training quickly “comply” with editorial standards that often disagree with professional ethics.
- ✓ In Moldova, more journalists are trained annually than the market requires; however, local/regional media are constantly lacking staff. Since media is not just for the capital, we believe that professionalization is both insufficient and inefficient.
- ✓ There is a department of journalism at the state university in the Transnistrian region that trains two groups: one full time and the other part time. The number of graduates is sufficient for the region, but their training is more theoretical. Likewise, there are no ongoing training courses for journalists. IJC's School of Advanced Journalism is not entirely convenient because it is far from Tiraspol, and Transnistrian journalists do not know the language of instruction (Romanian). Journalists from the region take part in the training organized by NGOs, but those employed in official media outlets hide this fact from the management for fear of repercussions. Formally, there is a trade union and

a Union of Journalists in the region, but they are still politically controlled. The Union of Journalists developed their Code of Ethics some years ago, but few journalists know about its existence. Although there are several media NGOs registered in the region, only the Media Center operates on a stable basis though often inefficiently due to the political situation and to insufficient funding.

Chapter V. Quality of Journalism

The indicator contains three statements.

1. External pluralism a) exists, b) mostly, c) largely, d) to a small extent, e) does not exist.

Score=36 (serious problems).

2. Internal pluralism a) exists b) mostly, c) largely, d) to a small extent, e) does not exist.

Score=27 (critical).

3. Media quality is a) good, b) mostly good, c) largely good, d) good to a small extent, e) poor.

Score=18 (critical).

The average is 27 which means that the quality of journalism is in a critical situation.

5.1. Chronology

- At the beginning of the year, NRAECIT announced that growing numbers of people were dissatisfied with the quality of the services provided by the mobile and cable TV operators. Most petitions were received by NRAECIT from consumers served by SA Moldtelecom, SA Orange Moldova, SA Moldcell and SRL Starnet Solutii.⁸³
- On the last day of January, the first online radio station for Roma people—Radio Patrîn—was launched in Chisinau. The new station is a subsidiary of the Radio Patrîn Network set up by the Dutch Roma Awareness Foundation and was launched with the support of the Dutch government.⁸⁴
- The BCC publicly warned NTV Moldova and Accent TV during their meeting on 10 February about discriminatory reporting during the election campaign. Note that at the same meeting, the BCC extended the broadcasting license of Accent TV for seven years. Two members of the BCC voted against that decision stating that, “The broadcaster did not respect its viewers during the presidential election campaign.”⁸⁵
- In February the NATO Information and Documentation Center in Chisinau launched the Russian-language magazine *Rubeji* [*Borders*]. During the event, the head of the NATO center, Elena Marzac, said that the population of Moldova, especially that in ATUG and the Transnistrian region, gets news from the Russian press which presents messages about the North Atlantic alliance in a distorted manner: “In Moldova, there is

⁸³ <http://www.realitatea.md/tot-mai-multe-persoane-sunt-nemul-umite-de-calitatea-serviciilor-prestate-de-operatorii-de-telefonie-mobila-i-tv-prin-cablu-numarul-peti-iiilor-a-crescut-in-2016-50938.html>

⁸⁴ http://noi.md/md/news_id/206080

⁸⁵ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/posturile-%E2%80%99Entv-moldova%E2%80%9E-%C8%99i-%E2%80%9EAccent-tv%E2%80%9D-avertizate-public-pentru-instigare-la-ur%C4%83>

little talk in Russian about cooperation between NATO and the Republic of Moldova and here the propaganda attacks are very harsh. We will go to the Gagauz autonomy and we will distribute this magazine. We also intend to disseminate it in the Transnistrian region where 90% of the population watches only Russian TV channels.”⁸⁶

- On 20 February, the BCC initiated a case concerning the documentary “Ukraine on Fire” rebroadcast by Prime TV on 19 February from the Russian television station First Channel.⁸⁷ The movie prompted sharp criticism for its one-sided depiction of the events in Kiev. Monitoring conducted by the BCC revealed several departures from the Audiovisual Code, and Prime TV was sanctioned in a public warning.
- In February, Chiril Lucinschi, an MP from PLDM, announced the transfer of 75% of his shares in TV7 to a journalists’ association. He said that, “TV7 will be led by an association of journalists which is getting registered now and will hold the majority of shares in the television station. A free platform for journalists will be created providing a fair, truth-based source of information, a business incubator for young journalists and an indispensable platform for producing journalists who know what professional journalism means.”⁸⁸
- In May, the portal Gagauzinfo.md launched a mobile version of the website with news available in two languages—Romanian and Russian—that users could access from their phones.⁸⁹
- Early in April, Freedom House published “Nations in Transition Report 2017.” Moldova’s overall score was 4.93 which was worse than the previous year (4.89) and put the country behind Georgia and Ukraine. Referring to the situation in the media, the study noted that although this sector remains one of the most influential pillars in Moldovan society, trust in the media is decreasing due to concentration in the hands of owners who are politicians.⁹⁰
- In April, Promo-LEX Association condemned several instances when its name was used in manipulative news. One was related to the presentation of the association's post-election sociological survey that appeared on the voxpublika.md platform in which Promo-LEX was accused of concealing data and of inviting the press selectively to the launch of the survey. Another case concerned the round of discussions organized by the

⁸⁶ <http://www.report.md/stiri/Revista-%D0%A0%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B8-o-gura-de-adevar-despre-relatia-Moldova-NATO-560>

⁸⁷ <http://cca.md/news/cca-s-autosesizat-cu-privire-la-filmul-documentar-ucraina-n-fl-c-ri>

⁸⁸ <http://agora.md/stiri/28500/tv7-se-reorganizeaza--chiril-lucinschi-cedeaza-75-din-actiunile-sale-unei-asociatii-de-jurnalisti>

⁸⁹ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=32028>

⁹⁰ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/moldova-%C3%AEen-regres-fa%C8%9B%C4%83-de-anul-trecut-potrivit-studiului-freedom-house-%E2%80%9EEna%C8%9Biuile-%C3%AEen-tranzi%C8%9Bie>

legislature on the draft law on the transition to a uninominal voting system. In the news on Publika TV, the Promo-LEX program coordinator's intervention was truncated thus distorting the meaning of the message.⁹¹

- In late April, IJC launched the fifth in a series of monitoring reports: “Elements of Propaganda, Information Manipulation and Violation of Journalism Ethics in the Local Media Space.” It identified, “...new and more severe forms of information manipulation—truncating statements, distorting messages, quoting out of context and forms of propaganda—that are usually characteristic of election periods. In addition, journalists were engaged in propaganda campaigns showing a selective approach to facts and opinions thus protecting the image of some politicians rather than objectively covering reality.”⁹² During 2017, IJC presented three other monitoring reports that each found similar breaches of legal provisions and professional ethics committed by multiple media outlets.
- In early May, the portals point.md and Gagauzinfo.md concluded a partnership agreement for 2020 committing themselves to place each other’s media products on their platforms.⁹³ Point.md is a top portal in Moldova as Gagauzinfo.md is in ATUG.
- In May, the BCC examined the complaints lodged by Constantin Nunu that Ren Moldova and RTR Moldova television broadcasters were using anachronistic transcriptions of settlement names in Russian news headlines: Каушаны [Caushany] instead of Кэушенъ [Causheni], Бендеры [Bendery] instead of Бендер [Bender]; Кагул [Cagul] instead of Кахул [Cahul]; Кишинёв [Kishinev] instead of Кишинэу [Chisinau]. This was contrary to national legislation on the correct spelling and transcription of place names for which the respective broadcasters were sanctioned in a public warning.⁹⁴
- In mid-May, a new, general television broadcaster Impact TV appeared in the Moldovan media market. According to the BCC decision, the broadcasting license of station Moldova Sport was updated for Impact TV.⁹⁵
- In May, Polish European parliament member Michał Boni requested Publika TV to refute and officially apologize for disseminating [erroneous](#) information about his speech in the European Parliament on 16 May during the discussions on the situation in

⁹¹ <http://topmedia.md/asociatia-promolex-condamna-incarcerile-de-a-folosi-numele-sau-in-stiri-manipulatorii-si-isi-exprima-ingrijorarea-fata-de-actiunile-de-denigrare-doc---90600.html>

⁹² <http://www.media-azi.md/ro/stiri/raport-cii-se-constat%C4%83-forme-mai-grave-de-manipulare-informa%C8%9Bional%C4%83-iar-jurnali%C8%99tii-sunt>

⁹³ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=32762>

⁹⁴ <http://cca.md/news/comunicat-de-pres-edin-public-cca-din-12052017>

⁹⁵ <http://topmedia.md/un-nou-post-tv-in-r-moldova-cum-se-numeste-si-cine-este-proprietarul---92884.html>

Moldova. Mr. Boni made a critical speech on electoral amendments and threats to press freedom in Moldova, but the TV channel controlled by the PDM leader presented him as a supporter of the Chisinau government. The European official associated this type of manipulation with the communist period.⁹⁶

- In late May, several NGOs submitted a request to public TV station Moldova 1 which on 20 May broadcast a manipulative news item during the main newscast about the announcement of civil society to organize a new protest against the change of the electoral system in Moldova. According to the signatories of the request, the news did not present the main message of the event, that citizens were urged to join the peaceful protest to be held on Sunday 11 June 2017 in the square in front of the Moldovan Parliament building. Information about the event was reported in the same article as the protest of a party. It suggests to uninitiated people that the NGOs that organized the press conference would promote the agenda of some political parties which was false. Thus, the NGOs called for the publication of a new news item refuting the information erroneously presented previously and disseminating important facts for society as well as fair coverage of the information presented by civil society in the future.⁹⁷
- In June, PPDA President Andrei Nastase accused public television broadcaster Moldova 1 of showing favoritism toward the opposition and civil society protests. The PPDA leader stated that he had received no response to his request and was not given the right to reply in accordance with legal requirements. Andrei Nastase's request referred to a report on the main newscast "Messenger" in which a politician made many accusations against the PPDA leader without his having the opportunity to reply.⁹⁸
- In late June, station TV8 Moldova was launched. It had stated from the very beginning that it wanted to promote objectivity and quality in the audiovisual area.⁹⁹
- In July, the online blogtop.md platform was launched aimed at connecting all bloggers and vloggers in Moldova on a common platform. Blogtop.md proposed relaunching the Moldovan blogosphere and also boosting the "vlogosphere" which is just starting in our country. Blogtop.md presented itself as a social, non-commercial and apolitical project designed to support and promote independent online content creators. According to unofficial statistics, there are at least 70 vloggers (a rapidly growing number) and over

⁹⁶ <http://jurnal.md/ro/politic/2017/5/22/eurodeputatul-michal-boni-solicita-scuze-oficiale-de-la-televizunea-lui-plahotniuc-intr-o-societate-libera-nimeni-nu-va-tolera-un-astfel-de-comportament/>

⁹⁷ <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/5/24/societatea-civila-a-expediat-un-demers-postului-moldova-1-dupa-difuzarea-unui-reportaj-manipulator-despre-protestul-din-11-iunie-stirea-nu-a-prezentat-mesajul-principal-al-evenimentului/>

⁹⁸ <http://jurnal.md/ro/politic/2017/6/20/conducerea-postului-public-moldova-1-acuzata-de-atitudine-tendentioasa-fata-de-opozitie-nu-i-a-oferit-lui-andrei-nastase-nici-raspuns-si-nici-dreptul-la-replica/>

⁹⁹ <http://topmedia.md/a-fost-lansat-postul-tv8-moldova-scene-din-spatele-camerei-video---95343.html>

3,000 bloggers in Moldova. The www.blogtop.md platform was launched by the Czech organization Transition Online with the support of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Endowment for Democracy.¹⁰⁰

- In July, the BCC approved a new regulation on the access of people with hearing and visual impairments to program services. Thus starting 1 September 2017, broadcasters with national coverage must ensure the gradual provision of their services to people with visual or hearing impairments and should deliver a daily newscast between 5:00 PM and 11:00 PM in sign language or with simultaneous subtitling in Romanian for people with hearing impairments and with sound signals for visually impaired people. Programs of major importance or their summaries and emergency, security, or public health messages should also be broadcast in sign language. The subtitles inserted into these programs should appear at the bottom of the screen, be of a readable size at an average reading speed and match the essence and images broadcast. The weather forecast should be broadcast in both video and audio format. Starting 1 January 2018, television broadcasters must ensure accessibility for people with hearing or visual impairments to program services during election campaigns. The decision also provides for promoting a positive image of people with disabilities in audiovisual media services.¹⁰¹
- In August, IJC presented a survey on the quality of local journalism that was appreciated by the journalists themselves. Note that when asked whether the media in Moldova represents an instrument for manipulating public opinion, 39% of the respondents totally agreed, and 42% affirmed they tended to agree.¹⁰²
- On 22 August, Unimedia-info portal launched a new, more advanced and interactive comment system to make it easier for users to express their opinions. It is the first Romanian site to apply such an innovation; it was done in partnership with [SpotIM](#), a comment system used by major international publishers such as TimeInc., AOL, The Huffington Post, SkySports, RT and others.¹⁰³
- In October, Jurnal.md was required to enforce a decision of the Chisinau District Court concerning Speaker of Parliament Andrian Candu and to publish the following text: “The portal www.jurnal.md informs the public that the denigrating information

¹⁰⁰ <http://topmedia.md/a-fost-lansata-platforma-online-blogtopmd-care-vine-sa-conecteze-toti-bloggeri-si-vloggerii-din-republica-moldova---95931.html>

¹⁰¹ <http://cca.md/news/comunicat-de-pres-edin-public-cca-din-21072017-i>

¹⁰² <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/studiu-cii-calitatea-jurnalismului-autohton-apreciat%83-cu-o-not%83-medic-de-c%83tre-reprezentan%839Bii>

¹⁰³ <http://unimedia.info/stiri/permalink-138281.html>

concerning Mr. Andrian Candu posted on 27 November 2014 is not true, for this reason www.jurnal.md apologizes to Mr. Andrian Candu.”¹⁰⁴

- In October, the Press Council in a regular meeting took note that some media outlets had violated the Journalists’ Code of Ethics in terms of the rights of the child and the accuracy of information and its verification by means of two independent sources. The complaints concerned Publika TV and Curaj.TV. At the same meeting, the council also examined complaints lodged by businessman Andrei Magalu who considered himself a victim of a denigration campaign and manipulation of public opinion in the newscasts of Publika TV, Prime TV and Canal 3 and of Publika FM radio station when they aired an article taken from a clone of website jurnalul.md. The Press Council also took note of material that appeared on Кр.md: “Human Bombs Walking Around Chisinau” [Russian “По Кишиневу ходят люди – бомбы”] which, according to members was contrary to the spirit of professional ethics and used language that was unacceptable for an item intended for the press. Council members recommended that the editorial office remove the material from the website as they found it offensive.¹⁰⁵
- In late October, the Parinti Solidari [Parents in Solidarity] association asked Publika TV, Canal 3 and Prime TV to refute the fake news they had broadcast after they distorted an event. The association stated, “Our message was distorted into a politically manipulative one. With the flashmob, we wanted to draw the attention of society and of decision makers to the serious problem in educational institutions—that the state does not provide kindergartens and schools with the strict minimum standards for children's hygiene—but this fact did not appear in the news on the media outlets mentioned. We deeply regret that the problem is likely to remain unsolved simply because there are media personalities and civil servants who are ready to disseminate fake news and to denigrate an active group of citizens just to distort the essence of the problem and gain political dividends.”¹⁰⁶
- In late October, public library George Munteanu in Bravicea Village, Calarasi District, publicly presented the community newspaper *Curierul de Bravicea* [Courier of Bravicea] which had been published since 2015. The articles are written by pupils, teachers and local councilors, and the entire newspaper is published by volunteers. In all, 200 copies of the newspaper are distributed monthly.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/10/4/dezmintire/>

¹⁰⁵ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/consiliul-de-pres%C4%83-constatat-mai-multe-%C3%AEnc%C4%83lc%C4%83ri-ale-drepturilor-copilului-%C3%AEn-mass-media>

¹⁰⁶ <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/10/25/asociatia-parinti-solidari-cere-dezmintiri-de-la-publika-tv-canal-3-si-prime-pentru-difuzarea-stirilor-false-dupa-ce-acestea-au-denaturat-un-eveniment/>

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.timpul.md/articol/aa-da-satul-bravicea-are-propriul-ziar-articolele-sunt-scrise-de-elevi-profesori-i-chiar-consilierii-locali-122844.html>

- In October, the newspaper *Знамя* [*Banner*] in Ceadir-Lunga introduced electronic subscriptions for readers. According to the editor, the newspaper would also be accessible to those outside the ATUG.¹⁰⁸
- In November, public television station Moldova 1 launched the show “Butonul Rosu” [Red Button] requested by political parties. We recall that the participants in the protest organized on 17 September (PAS, PPDA and their supporters) called for the demonopolization of the media market and the depoliticization of the National Public Audiovisual Institution Teleradio-Moldova by providing airtime to the extra-parliamentary opposition at least once a week in prime time in order to express its position on the socio-political situation in the country. Following talks with the representatives of political parties, Moldova 1 management showed its willingness to produce a show for all political parties which was challenged by PAS and PPDA, arguing that they are the only parties enjoying the real support of the people.¹⁰⁹
- In late November, agora.md launched Fact-Checker, a module to combat lies and propaganda. The portal promised that the site would check statements by public figures as well as information distributed by propaganda outlets. Each check would also get a rating based on figures and statistics: True, False, Manipulative or Partially False. FACT-Checker is a new website section available at <http://www.agora.md/fact-checker>. The site checks statements with facts, figures and no interpretations. The idea for implementing such a module was inspired by the American press. In the USA, media outlets often do fact/figure checking to show if a politician is telling the truth. The tool has become very popular in recent years, along with the increasing volume of fake news and propaganda practiced in both traditional media and on social networks.¹¹⁰
- In late December, the Pilgrim-Demo NGO in Comrat, ATUG launched the website www.nokta.md. The portal is committed to providing information on the most important events in ATUG, all over Moldova and in the world; quality journalism including data journalism and analytical articles, reports and news covering facts, events and opinions. The portal differs from dozens of other media sources in ATUG by presenting its staff and because the authors sign their articles.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=36380>

¹⁰⁹ <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/social/21849/FOTO--Moldova-1-a-lansat-%E2%80%9EButonul-Ro%C5%9Fu%E2%80%9D---emisiunea-revendicat%C4%83-de-partidele-politice.htm>

¹¹⁰ <http://agora.md/stiri/39432/agora-lanseaza-fact-checker---un-modul-de-combatere-a-minciunii-si-propagandei>

¹¹¹ <http://topmedia.md/nokta-proiect-media-lansat-in-gagauzia-portalul-va-prezenta-informatii-despre-cele-mai-importante-evenimente---100612.html>

- At the end of the year, the agora.md office was equipped with an innovative piece of equipment: a magnetic whiteboard. This will allow the portal to develop projects and tutorials in 2018 for the public and its customers.¹¹²

5.2. Experts' Opinions and Assessments

Regarding the external and internal pluralism of the media and the quality of media products, the experts found the following.

- ✓ External pluralism exists for the most part. We have over 470 media outlets in different areas. Most of the media, though, is private and is concentrated in Chisinau. Thus, 70% of the events that the media report on take place in Chisinau.
- ✓ In some administrative-territorial units there are no newspapers or local TV/radio stations. The level of internal pluralism is low. Media outlets haven't given too much thought to diversifying their products. Most of the time, they stick with the same formats and concepts and stereotypes, with political topics on the priority list of news programs. The same is true for TV programs as the same protagonists appear on different TV stations without paying too much attention to diversity which reduces internal pluralism. Next, we need to mention that for the most part, the media does not follow an agenda reflecting the information needs of the public. The easiest way to make news is by putting the microphone in front of an MP or in front of a minister to make a statement that is usually populist which makes the journalists think they did something very important. Meanwhile, acute social problems are disregarded.
- ✓ The requirement for eight hours of local content imposed on broadcasters since 1 October 2017 led to an increase in the quantity of media products. TV and radio stations are no longer rebroadcasting TV shows; they launched their own talk shows and other products. In 2017, more debate programs appeared on TV. Because of the different editorial policies, one is often under the impression that media outlets operate in different realities which confuses consumers. Politics prevails on the agenda of the media to the detriment of social or economic issues.
- ✓ A thorough analysis of all existing information sources revealed that there is a link between most of them. Some television stations, online platforms and printed

¹¹² <http://agora.md/stiri/40705/video--perete-magnetic-in-studioul-agora-inovatie-care-va-duce-proiecte-si-tutoriale-deosebite-pentru-public-si-clienti>

newspapers form an informational chain that originates from the same control point. The same information, like a carbon copy, moves from one source of information to another and thus shapes (misinforms) public opinion; hence, the conclusion that some sources of information, whatever they may be, continue to be used by politicians as tools to misinform and manipulate public opinion. Obviously, this situation also leads to poor information quality and to false or biased news.

- ✓ Even though there are different types of media sources, media products are not that diverse, and there is much room for improving quality. More often than not, many outlets do no more than take over news and even “steal” it from their colleagues which is very unfortunate. Television broadcasters have few quality programs, many of them addressing only political issues. Investigations took momentum, though, which is a positive trend.
- ✓ External pluralism is relative given that two media holdings strongly connected to Moldovan political decision makers are developing in synchronization while alternative voices are inhibited or are confronted with artificial difficulties (see TV8, BTV, etc.). Because a meaningful part of the local media depends strongly on politics, internal pluralism inside these institutions is low. At the same time, even in non-politicized environments, there is a lack of internal pluralism.
- ✓ The influence of politics pushes media platforms to separate into hostile camps instead of focusing on quality journalism.
- ✓ Overall, the Moldovan media market is diversified enough; however, entertainment content is clearly superior to informative-analytical content, especially on TV and radio. In the case of newspapers and online platforms, the situation is, as a rule, the other way around; the content is predominantly generalist.
- ✓ Most media outlets have their own specificities in terms of approaching topics, of the subjects they pick or in terms of their journalism genres. Geographically, most of the topics are focused on Chisinau, particularly on politics. News or information that crosses this border is related to traffic accidents, various tragic incidents or crimes.
- ✓ There is a diversity of media sources in the Transnistrian region. Foreign media outlets prevail in Russian. The periodicals on the right bank of the Nistru River are not marketed in the Transnistrian region. Although radio/TV programs are missing, those interested in what happens in Chisinau can surf the internet. The media offers various journalism genres, but the analytical and investigative genres are seldom seen. There are almost no information pieces about human rights or the work of NGOs. Only one article tackling

Moldovan-Transnistrian relations does not mean there is a balance of information sources. In election campaigns, the media often spread propaganda and often misinform.

- ✓ Media products are developed tendentiously, sometimes with serious deviations from deontological norms except by some media outlets that observe professional standards. Such practices are strongly rooted in the media outlets that are part of GMG Holding. “The criminal mayor Renato Usatii” enjoyed “special” treatment, as well as ordinary citizens who became the heroes of the Unitatea de Garda [The Guard Unit] broadcast by Canal 3. At the same time, the holding carried out an unprecedented manipulation campaign by developing several products on the problems in Balti and by associating them with the “runaway mayor.”
- ✓ Unfortunately, media manipulation peaked in 2017, and the general state of Moldovan media is currently deplorable. The phenomenon of information emerging from somewhere and immediately taken over by dozens of media outlets without any basic verification has become ubiquitous and has affected even official media outlets (the Moldpres case and the World Bank’s response that allegedly supported the government’s initiative to decriminalize economic crimes that was later refuted by the international institution).
- ✓ Technical rules are respected but not professional ones. In 2017, there were at least two situations in which the same information was treated differently by the media with international institutions having to come up with clarification regarding officials’ statements.
- ✓ We cannot say we have quality journalism in Moldova as more and more complaints are filed with the Press Council regarding the broadcasting of films containing violence against children, the publication of unverified information leaks without asking for the opinion of the persons concerned and the deliberate dissemination of false information for purposes of manipulation. All these reveal that journalism in Moldova is in quite a bad situation.
- ✓ The dissemination of fake news for purposes of manipulation is quite common. Among the most prominent cases were those that required the Delegation of the European Commission and the World Bank to make public statements about the misinterpretation of statements or events that concerned the activities of the Government of the Republic of Moldova.

Chapter VI. Information Security from the Media Perspective

The indicator contains two statements.

1. There are local media outlets in the information space that contribute to strengthening information security a) fully, b) mostly, c) largely, d) to a small extent, e) not at all. Score=19 (critical).

2. There are foreign media outlets in the information space that affect information security a) not at all b) to a small extent, c) largely, d) mostly, e) fully. Score=16 (very critical).

The average is 17.5 which means that the situation is critical.

6.1. Chronology

- In February, alexa.com published a rating of the most-viewed Moldovan websites. Half of the top 10 were in Russian including: ok.ru, vk.com, mail.ru, Google.ru and Yandex.ru.¹¹³
- In late April, API experts presented the results of monitoring five of the most important Russian television stations rebroadcast in Moldova by local outlets: Pervyi Kanal, RTR, REN TV, NTV and STS. The authors concluded that the, "...Russian TV stations' rebroadcasts in Moldova are Russian information propaganda tools used in the information war against the EU, the US and NATO."¹¹⁴ As a response to the monitoring results, the US Embassy in Moldova stated, "The API report shows the excessive extent to which the newscasts and Russian programs distort public speaking in Moldova via propaganda and half-truths. Moldova needs to strengthen its information security."¹¹⁵
- In June in the report "Breaking down democracy: Goals, Strategies, and Methods of Modern Authoritarians" Freedom House stated, "The Russian Federation led by Vladimir Putin is an example of an authoritarian regime that uses various techniques to influence neighboring states. At least three of them are being applied against Moldova. These are propaganda attacks, commercial levers and frozen conflicts."¹¹⁶
- At the beginning of December, the Moldovan Parliament voted on the draft of the Law Amending and Supplementing the Audiovisual Code that was supposed to ensure information security. The draft law provided for limiting rebroadcasts of TV and radio

¹¹³ <https://point.md/ru/novosti/obschestvo/opublikovan-reiting-samykh-poseshchaemykh-saitov-v-moldove>

¹¹⁴ <http://www.api.md/news/view/en-tv-stations-from-the-russian-federation-misinform-and-deliver-propaganda-messages-1505>

¹¹⁵ <http://www.timpul.md/articol/ambasada-sua-r--moldova-trebuie-sa-i-consolideze-securitatea-informaionala-113347.html>

¹¹⁶ <http://agora.md/stiri/33194/freedom-house-regimul-autoritar-al-lui-putin-aplica-diverse-instrumente-pentru-a-intimida-republica-moldova>
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/breaking-down-democracy-goals-strategies-and-methods-modern-authoritarians>

programs with informative, analytical-informative, military or political content on Moldovan territory from states that had not ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. The initiative would provide new norms to protect individuals, society and the state from any attempts to misinform or inform by means of manipulation with information coming from outside and would also not permit media challenges oriented against Moldova. The rebroadcast of such programs produced in EU Member States, the USA, Canada and states that have ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television would be permitted.¹¹⁷

- In mid-December, the results of the Public Opinion Barometer survey conducted by the Institute for Public Policy were made public. According to the data, almost 45% of Moldovans had great confidence or some confidence in the media in the country (the results in April 2017 showed 64%¹¹⁸), about 40% had confidence in the Russian media (in April 56%), and about 37% gave their vote of confidence to EU media (in April 52%). The least confidence was given to Romanian media at 30% (in April 49%).¹¹⁹ In the event of a referendum, 33% of the citizens would vote for Moldova's unification with Russia, 40% would vote against unification and 22% would vote for union with Romania.¹²⁰
- At the end of December, Parliament endorsed the Concept of National Information Security in the final reading. The document provides a basic aim and objectives in information security, identifies the main threats to information security and the methods used and outlines prevention and counteraction and the strategic and tactical directions that the state is going to follow. The concept will serve as a basis for developing state policy and legislation and will improve and coordinate the work of public authorities by enacting sector programs to ensure information security by creating a unique information protection system.¹²¹

6.2. Experts' Opinions and Assessments

¹¹⁷ <http://www.moldova.org/legea-anti-propaganda-fost-votata-parlament/>

¹¹⁸ <http://ipp.md/old/libview.php?l=en&idc=156&id=820>

¹¹⁹ <http://tv8.md/2017/12/25/bop-2017-moldovenii-au-mai-multa-incredere-in-presa-rusa-decat-in-cea-din-romania-si-ue/>

¹²⁰ <http://agora.md/stiri/40151/bop-2017-1-3-dintre-cetatenii-r--moldova-ar-vota-pentru-unirea-cu-rusia>

¹²¹ <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/social/23441/Concept%C8%9Bia-securit%C4%83%C8%9Bii-informa%C8%9Bionale-adoptat%C4%83-%C3%AEn-lectura-final%C4%83.htm>

Referring to the information security of the country from a media perspective, the experts noted the following.

- ✓ Domestic media institutions somehow contribute to strengthening information security, although a large number of the television stations that rebroadcast programs from the Russian Federation—RTR Moldova, Accent TV, NTV Moldova—also broadcast movies produced in Russia thus promoting an eastern living environment and Russian values. At the same time, TVR Moldova and 10TV promote rapprochement with Romania and openly promote the union of the Republic of Moldova with Romania, a fact that is qualified by some as subversion of statehood.
- ✓ Although there has been much talk about the need to secure national media space from attempts at manipulation and misinformation from outside, until now the authorities have not taken any serious actions to counteract outside propaganda, in this case from the Russian Federation. Many Moldovan television stations continue to operate as parasites rebroadcasting programs from Moscow and not only do not contribute to strengthening information security but indirectly contribute to weakening it. On the networks of the three main operators in the market, media services continue to be dominated by Russian TV offerings which account for a majority share.
- ✓ We cannot speak of information security when Russian TV and printed press that publish/disseminate false news for manipulation or propaganda are very popular in Moldova. The local press does not have sufficient capabilities and resources to balance the negative influence of the Russian media, especially since the press in the Russian Federation enjoys the sympathy of media consumers despite its shortcomings.
- ✓ Domestic media institutions contribute to fortifying information security only sporadically. For example, the public broadcaster Teleradio Moldova does not have its own educational products for media consumers.
- ✓ Information security has not become a priority for Moldovan media institutions.
- ✓ Moldova's audiovisual media is mostly “Russified.” National press institutions cannot compete with the millions of rubles invested by Moscow into television, no matter how much they want to. Credible polls showed which TV channels are most watched in Moldova; according to the December 2017 Barometer of Public Opinion first place went to Prime TV which rebroadcasts the main station in Moscow. And, if the USA which does not rebroadcast Russian channels on its territory as Moldova does accuses Russia of interference in the presidential election, what degree of interference should we expect

as long as information security institutions in Chisinau do not take appropriate measures?

- ✓ Russian films predominate, especially those related to World War II in the Soviet postwar period or the series about criminal gangs in the 1990s and the heroism of the militia in fighting them.
- ✓ The excessive presence of the Russian press effectively contributes to dividing society by geopolitical criteria as well as to the continuous fueling of Romanian/European/American-phobia, especially among the Russian-speaking population. Exclusively in Russian and only partially subtitled in Romanian, they mostly reflect topics related to the Russian Federation and show, sometimes indirectly and other times directly, the Kremlin's position on various issues: the war in eastern Ukraine, relations with NATO and the USA, the war in Syria, etc.
- ✓ The number of Russian television stations broadcasting programs that could affect Moldova's security remains high; there is no social immunity to propaganda or manipulation.
- ✓ The Moldovan media market is dominated by information products from abroad, mainly from the Russian Federation, which poses very high risks for the country's information security given that most of the Russian information sources are portals of official Kremlin policy to discredit the EU and the USA, opposition political forces and activists who support and promote European democratic development and instead promote Eurasian integration. The inconsistency of political decision makers and the passivity of the BCC as a public authority whose task is to guarantee the public's interest in audiovisual media have led to a worsening of the situation in security (examples: granting a license to NTV Moldova although BCC reports confirm the propagandistic character of the news and political analyses it broadcasts and the lack of concrete actions to protect the local information space from Sputnik's expansion through local radio stations among others).
- ✓ After 2015, the BCC did not act on reports regarding the observance of the principle of social-political balance on information-analytical programs on TV stations that rebroadcast services from the Russian Federation. In May 2017, the BCC became aware of the need to conduct monitoring, but it was not done. We have instead only a few notifications about certain rebroadcasts from the Russian Federation. Even though as of 1 October 2017 the legal provision requiring 8 hours of local production came into force, toxic products are still present not only from outside, but also from inside, developed and promoted by local media outlets.

- ✓ “Satellite” media outlets of Russian stations/sites are pursuing either a pro-Russian or Moldovan orientation. At the same time, the Moldovan media market has outlets funded by external projects that promote Western politics.
- ✓ The audience on the left bank of the Nistru River considers that Transnistrian and Russian media contribute to the information security of the region. At the same time, however, the influence of the press on the right bank of the Nistru River on the situation in the self-proclaimed republic is very insignificant given that it is not distributed freely in the area. Note that most of the media is in Russian.
- ✓ In 2017, several associations such as the Youth Media Centre, the Academy for Innovation and Change through Education and the IJC organized media education courses for young people and for teachers. At the national level, we do not have a functioning system of media literacy, and consumers are vulnerable to media propaganda.
- ✓ The media in ATUG cannot contribute to the information security of the country. The ATUG authorities have declared more than once that they will not comply with the policy of Chisinau when it comes to limiting access to information sources in the region from the Russian Federation.

Chapter VII. Security of Journalists

The indicator contains two statements.

1. Journalists did their job safely in a) all cases, b) in the absolute majority of cases, c) in most cases, d) in only some cases, e) were not safe. Score=27 (critical).

2. The work of journalists entailed a) no consequences, b) only minor consequences, c) consequences of average severity, d) serious consequences, e) very serious consequences. Score=33 (serious problems).

The average was 30 which indicates serious problems.

7.1. Chronology

- In mid-January, media NGOs reacted to verbal assaults against journalists by representatives of certain political parties. Alina Radu, the Director of *Ziarul de Garda*, was verbally assaulted by Veaceslav Burlac, the Chair of Criuleni Chapter of the PDM, and by Ion Harghel, the Deputy Chairperson of the Democratic Youth, when her paper tried to discover the criteria Teleradio-Moldova used to award the honorary title of the most effective campaign for the protection of children's health in rural areas ever conducted in Moldova—the Revive Moldova: Mobile Pediatric Office Campaign conducted by the Edelweiss Foundation of Vlad Plahotniuc. Cornelia Cozonac, the IJC Chairperson, was verbally assaulted for publishing a story on the anticoruptie.md portal stating that the owner of Noroc TV was Iurie Topala, the general counsellor of Moldova's IS Calea Ferata Director. She was also intimidated by journalist Vasile Grozavu. Media NGOs asked the political parties to stop using reprehensible language and to adopt a constructive, fair attitude toward journalists and the media.¹²²
- In 2017, Vladimir Botnari, the former Commissioner of Chisinau Municipality, demanded the criminal prosecution of IJC journalist Mariana Rata invoking the unjustified grounds (as found by the court) that the journalist accessed and disseminated personal data on him and his family members without his consent.¹²³
- In March, the journalists of Gagauzinfo.md who were reporting on a demonstration by drivers in Ceadir-Lunga were detained by the police. According to the portal, the police made the journalists write an explanation as to why they had filmed the demonstration.

¹²² <http://unimedia.info/stiri/ong-urile-media-reactioneaza-la-agresarile-verbale-in-adresa-jurnalistilor-din-partea-unor-reprezentanti-ai-partidelor-politice-126178.html>

¹²³ <http://unimedia.info/stiri/fostul-comisar-al-capitalei-cere-tragerea-la-raspundere-penala-a-unei-jurnaliste-de-investigatie-126500.html>

In addition, the number plates were removed from their vehicle. The journalists were told that they had been detained on the order of the Head of the Ceadir-Lunga Inspectorate, Nicolae Arnaut. The portal described the case as an attempt to intimidate and restrict freedom of speech.¹²⁴

- In early April, the Editor-in-Chief of the NewsMaker portal, Vladimir Soloviov, said in an article that he was pursued by four individuals who filmed him in various places: on his way to work, in a coffee shop in the capital where he had a meeting with a politician, then on public transport. The stalkers were travelling in a car that followed even the trolleybus in which the journalist was riding.¹²⁵ Media NGOs qualified this case as, “...an act of persecution and serious infringement of the right of journalists to exercise their profession freely.”¹²⁶
- In early May, journalist Vasile Nastase said his family were followed by unknown individuals. According to the journalist, they were repeatedly seen next to their family car.¹²⁷
- On 9 May, while a *ZdG* team filmed a ceremony of placing flowers at the Eternity Memorial Complex with a drone, a person who initially did not introduce himself asked them to bring the drone down. Later, after *ZdG* journalists began filming and insisted that he introduce himself, he told them he was a lieutenant-colonel and insisted that journalists bring the drone down “to take pictures of it and check it.” Since they continued to film, another person approached them and also asked them to stop filming and to show him the “license” for piloting a drone although Moldova has no such regulation so there are no licenses for piloting drones.¹²⁸
- At the end of May, a *ZdG* reporter was stopped by the police for photographing buildings in the public space. According to *ZdG* Director Alina Radu, the journalist was working on a report about energy efficiency. “The police threatened they would detain her and take her to the police station” without showing her an identity card. “The GBC building was nearby,” Ms Radu noted.¹²⁹
- At the end of May, the Association of Romanian Journalists Abroad based in Canada was worried about the persecutions of PDA member journalist Nicolae Josan. The association clarified that following some statements made at a press conference, Mr.

124 <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=32025>

125 <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/popali-pod-nablyudenie-kak-v-moldove-sledyat-za-zhurnalistami-30708>

126 <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/organiza%C8%9Bile-de-media-condamn%C4%83-urm%C4%83rirea-redactorului-%C8%99ef-al-newsmakermd-%C8%99i-cere-investigarea>

127 <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/5/5/familia-jurnalistului-vasile-nastase-urmarita-de-indivizi-necunoscuti/>

128 <http://unimedia.info/stiri/video-jurnalistii-de-la-zdg--somati-de-serviciile-de-securitate-sa-coboare-drona--le-a-fost-interzis-sa-filmeze-la-memorialul-eternitate-132766.html>

129 <http://unimedia.info/stiri/o-reportera-a-ziarului-de-garda--oprta-in-strada-de-politie-pentru-ca-fotografia-cladiri-din-oras-133819.html>

Josan had opened himself up to a criminal charge and asked the authorities to monitor the situation of dissident journalists, "...who put their freedom and lives at risk for democratic ideals."¹³⁰

- On 11 June, a Publika TV team was assaulted by several protesters in Parliament Square where citizens were protesting the change in the electoral system. The Publika reporter was surrounded by several protesters who chanted "Down with Publika TV."¹³¹
- In June, media NGOs demanded that PDM MP Vladimir Hotineanu resign as Chair of the Parliamentary Committee for Mass-Media following his aggressive behavior toward a reporter from Jurnal TV. Non-government media organizations condemned the aggression against journalists and the restriction of their right to information as well as the attempts of some officials to intimidate media representatives when they tried to investigate issues related to corruption, abuse of power and other matters of public interest. According to the story "Properties of MP Hotineanu" broadcast on Jurnal TV on 17 June 2017, the reporter in charge tried to ask MP Hotineanu some questions; however, instead of answering, the PDM MP pushed and verbally assaulted the journalist calling him a "moron."¹³²
- In June, media NGOs condemned the aggressive behavior of the persons who assaulted a press photographer of *Jurnal de Chisinau* for taking a picture of an expired product and labeled the aggressive actions of the shop owner in Ciocana inadmissible. Photographer Nadejda Roscovanu entered a shop to buy food, but after taking a picture of the expired product tag and leaving that place, the shop owner and the shop assistant ran after her, assaulted her physically and verbally and also hit her several times. The incident was filmed by the press photographer as well as by passers-by.¹³³
- In July, the SCM summoned journalist Mariana Rata of the anticoruptie.md portal to a court hearing on the grounds that a judge in the capital had complained that the judge had been wrongly mentioned in an article. The journalist admitted that an error had been made but said it was due to difficulties in accessing information. The SCM members nevertheless competed to give her lessons in journalism. "It seems that I was called to be chewed out," the journalist said. At the same hearing, the violations that several judges had committed that were mentioned in the article were not brought up.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ <http://jurnal.md/ro/social/2017/5/27/asociatia-jurnalistilor-romani-de-pretutindeni-ingrijorata-de-dosarul-penal-deschis-pe-numele-lui-nicolae-josan/>

¹³¹ <https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/politic/13025/No-comment-Echipa-PublikaTV-agresat%C4%83-la-protestul-societ%C4%83%C8%9Bii-civile-din-Chi%C8%99in%C4%83u.htm>

¹³² <http://media-azi.md/en/stiri/media-ngos-we-demand-mp-vladimir-hotineanu-dpm-resign-chair-parliamentary-committee-media>

¹³³ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/condamn%C4%83m-comportamentul-agresiv-al-persoanelor-care-au-atacat-o-pe-fotoreportera-jurnal-de>

¹³⁴ <http://jurnal.md/ro/justitie/2017/7/18/lectii-de-jurnalism-la-consiliul-superior-al-magistraturii-o-judecatoare-din-capitala-s-a-plans-ca-a-fost-vizata-gresit-intr-un-articol/#update-12003615>

- In August, a producer at NTV Moldova and Elena Pahomova, the former director of Pervyi Prednestrovskii, were not able to cross the Nistru River to the Transnistrian region. She was supposed to have a private visit, but the reason she was denied access was not stated. Ms Pahomova was the director of the state TV station of the self-proclaimed republic during the mandate of the former leader, Evgheni Shevchuk.¹³⁵
- In August, a video posted by *ZdG* showed how the press was assaulted and sworn at when trying to film a big party organized during the Fast of the Dormition of the Mother of God by Archimandrite Nicholas (Rosca), the confessor-administrator of the Ciuflea Monastery in Chisinau, at Capitoles Park, a restaurant in the capital. The footage shows a guard at Capitoles Park assaulting the reporter claiming that, "...five meters should be enough for you, stop meddling" and even made a remark about a journalist's clothing: "She came in sneakers. Rube...".¹³⁶
- In late August, socialist MP Grigore Novac attacked journalist Ana Gherciu, Editor-in-Chief of Moldova.org, on Facebook stating that along with other "pseudo-journalists" from other sites financed from abroad, she would "propagandize openly for the interests of the states financing them." In her turn, the journalist stated that the MP did not refer to any articles published by her that violated ethical norms.¹³⁷
- In October, the Editor of *Правда Приднестровья* newspaper [*Pravda Pridnestrov'ya*] Nadejda Bondarencu was fined for "defamation." Ms. Bondarencu reported an accident involving a relative of a high-ranking official in Tiraspol in which a minor died. The journalist was accused of broadcasting defamatory information on social networks that would have damaged the honor and dignity of the so-called minister of internal affairs in the region.¹³⁸
- At the end of November, while visiting the Centru District Administration Office in Chisinau a *ZdG* journalist was intimidated by an employee who introduced himself as the Head of the Social and Economic Department of the Centru District Administration Office. The journalist, who was investigating a story about unjust enrichment, was manhandled and forced out of the office by this employee. Several official requests for information had been previously filed by the publication, including a request for an interview.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ <http://agora.md/stiri/35768/fostului-director-al-televiziunii-din-tiraspol--elena-pahomova--i-a-fost-refuzata-intrarea-in-transnistria>

¹³⁶ <http://agora.md/stiri/35995/video--v-au-dat-5-metri--unde-va-bagati--reporterii-prezenti-la-petrecerea-duhovnicului-de-la-ciuflea-bruscati-de-paza>

¹³⁷ <http://unimedia.info/stiri/deputatul-socialist-grigore-novac-ar-fi-atacat-verbal-o-jurnalista--ce-l-ar-fi-motivat-sa-recurga-la-acest-gest-138527.html>

¹³⁸ <https://ru.crimemoldova.com/news/social/zurnalistku-iz-pridnestrovya-kotoraya-soobshchila-ob-avarii-v-parkan-oshtrafovali-za-klevetu/>

¹³⁹ <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/ong-urile-de-media-condamn%C4%83-bruscarea-unui-jurnalist-de-la-zdg-de-c%C4%83tre-un-func%C8%9Bionar-public-0>

- In early December, a policeman from Soroca who was angry with journalists from *Observatorul de Nord* newspaper [*Northern Observer*] for publishing pictures of police cars parked unlawfully near the Soroca Police Inspectorate two days in a row threatened the reporter, Vadim Sterbate, in a comment on Facebook: “You have not been knocked on time and now you are out of your mind.” The incident was made public by Vadim Sterbate on his Facebook page.¹⁴⁰
- At the end of December, Cardiax-Plus SRL which owns the Meat House commercial brand, asked agora.md news portal to remove all the articles about the spoiled sausage scandal that outraged public opinion after the conference organized by the National Investigative Inspectorate and the Municipal Public Health Center. In a request sent to the editorial office, it was mentioned that the company reserved the right to sue agora.md if it did not refute the information which it described as slanderous and defamatory.¹⁴¹

7.2. Experts’ Opinions and Assessments

Regarding the security of journalists, the experts mentioned the following.

- ✓ Fortunately, Moldovan journalists did not face life-threatening situations in 2017 as was the case in other countries (one recent example is the case of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia killed in Malta). Prohibiting the access of journalists to public events can be attributed to the poor political culture in Moldova.
- ✓ Serious hazards to the security of journalists in Moldova did not exist in 2017. At the same time, however, campaigns to denigrate and intimidate “inconvenient” journalists and those who dealt with high-profile investigations by means of public humiliation on social networks and on dubious sites were organized, and the number of lawsuits against journalists, especially against investigation journalists, increased (RISE Moldova, *ZdG*, anticoruptie.md).
- ✓ The general climate in society is not favorable which makes some journalists avoid participation in activities that would somehow threaten their security.

¹⁴⁰ <http://unimedia.info/stiri/un-politist-din-soroca-ameninta-un-jurnalist-n-ai-fost-trasnit-la-timp-si-acum-iti-iesi-din-minti-144169.html>

¹⁴¹ <http://agora.md/stiri/40699/doc--meat-house-cere-de-la-agora-sa-dezminta-informatiile-referitoare-la-scandalul-mezelurilor-alterate-si-sa-stearga-toate-articolele-de-pe-site>

- ✓ The tendency to intimidate and offend journalists also existed in 2017. The general public acquires the attitudes instilled by politicians' aggressive messages. During the spring and summer protests of 2017 against the proposed change in the electoral system, journalists were often intimidated by protesters, often displaying the same hostile behavior inspired by the organizers.
- ✓ There were cases in 2017 in which the professional activities of journalists were restricted through intimidation, threats and verbal assaults. Remember the cases journalists Mariana Rata, Vladimir Soloviov, Vadim Sterbate and Nadejda Roscovanu were involved in. There were no violations of their physical security, but this should not diminish general concern for their protection.
- ✓ Approximately half of the journalists working in official and municipal media outlets were dismissed during the year in the Transnistrian region. Many reasons have been adduced, but the real cause for these massive dismissals was that journalists supported the former Tiraspol leader.

General Conclusions

With a value of 23.69 points, The MPSI for 2017 was lower than that in 2016 by 2.97 points (26.66) which indicates that the media in Moldova is in a critical situation. The MPSI is the average of the scores awarded by the experts who evaluated the seven indicators.

Indicator I: Legal framework for regulating the media activity. This scored 27.33 points, a drop of 1.33 points compared to the previous assessment and confirms the serious situation of the media in this regard. The experts took into account the fact that legal regulations exist only for the work of traditional media, although they are not sufficient either. No special regulations exist for regional and local broadcasters operating under poor conditions; the increasingly accessible audiovisual content in the online environment is neglected; media services on request are not regulated and minimal rules for online media (at least those outlets that would require the display of contact data) are completely lacking. Experts mentioned the creation and work of the working group on better media legislation, but the real impact can be assessed only over time. Most deficiencies were ascribed to the discretionary application of legislation or even the failure to apply it by competent structures. The decisions of some key institutions for media development are often politically influenced which further generates the practice of double standards. Although significant changes were made to the Audiovisual Code during the reference period, the results did not meet expectations. Thus, we are still witnessing a real concentration of media ownership and unfair competition in the media and the advertising markets.

Indicator II: Political context. The score was 19.00 points in 2017, an advance of 5 points compared to 2016, which nevertheless highlights the ongoing critical situation the media in this regard. The previous year was an election year; the situation was described as extremely critical. The experts noted that there is excessive media ownership concentrated in the hands of politicians or their representatives and that there is extensive use of media outlets as instruments of political manipulation and to defame political opponents which affects the fulfilment of the mission of the media and makes it appear untrustworthy. The PDM leader paid only lip service to the deconcentration of audiovisual ownership while at the same time the phenomenon of concentration also spread to television stations controlled by PSRM politicians. Experts believe that the delay in transferring the license to TV8 was also based on political reasons. Independent media outlets that promoted positions other than those of the government faced various

pressures which favored internal manipulation and propaganda via media outlets controlled by the ruling political parties.

Indicator III: Economic environment. This indicator scored 18.00 points, a decline of 0.50 points from the previous year which means that the situation is critical. In assessing the economic environment, the experts invoked several arguments including: the financial dependence of certain influential media on party money which has a bearing on their sustainability and quality; the underdeveloped, monopolized advertising market concentrated in the capital that local/regional media have no access to; the presence of dumping policies in the advertising market; the lack of credible audience measurements; the strong dependence of media on external donors; the lack of state policies to support media (including tax policies), in particular at the local/regional level, and the clear tendency of media owners to promote their own interests or their own images. The experts believe that there are few economically independent media outlets which significantly affects the independence of editorial policies in general.

Indicator IV: Professional environment. The score was 27 points a drop of 4.50 points from 2016 which indicates that the situation remains critical in this regard. Though appreciating the efforts of media NGOs in the professionalization of the field, the experts also highlighted several issues that have remained unresolved over time. University faculties educate too many specialists in certain categories but partially or totally ignore the training of specialists in other necessary categories such as media managers, marketing specialists or sales experts. In all cases, publishers have big problems with university graduates, especially because they have insufficient fieldwork skills. Although the Journalists' Code of Ethics exists in the Republic of Moldova, few have committed to observing it, including some of those who signed it. At the same time, there are no professional rules for online media. Thanks to the contribution of media NGOs, journalists have the opportunity to attend various professional training courses, but experts found that their effectiveness did not always meet expectations because when the trainees went back to their employers they had to follow their instructions.

Indicator V: Quality of journalism. This scored 27 points, 1 point less than the previous year. The situation is therefore still critical. The experts explained that the quality of journalism decreased first and foremost because of the influence of the political factor which makes media fulfil ideological functions rather than the natural one of informing. In 2017, misinformation and manipulation through the media peaked. A certain external pluralism was noted, but as

most of the media outlets are concentrated in the capital, it does not provide the expected benefits. The experts signaled that internal pluralism is restricted, partly because most of the subjects are about events in Chisinau. The experts also mentioned the dissemination of fake news for purposes of manipulation, recalling at least two prominent cases when the Delegation of the European Commission and the World Bank found themselves in the situation in which they had to make public statements about the misinterpretation of statements or events that concerned the Government of the Republic of Moldova.

Indicator VI: Information security from a media perspective. This indicator received 17.50 points, 4.50 points lower than 2016, so the situation is still critical. All the experts believed that the media environment in Moldova is not and cannot be considered safe as it is dominated by information products from abroad, mainly from the Russian Federation. Most sources of Russian information are mouthpieces of the Kremlin's official policy and aim either to discredit the EU and the USA and those who support and promote the European democratic development or to promote Eurasian integration. The situation deteriorated in 2017 due to the inconsistency of the political decision makers and the passivity of the BCC as an authority that should have genuinely guaranteed the public's interest in the audiovisual area. In 2017, several civil society organizations organized media literacy courses that could become a factor in fighting propaganda. Even public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova, however, does not have its own media education products for media consumers. There is no functional system of media literacy at the national level, so citizens remain vulnerable to media propaganda.

Indicator VII: Journalists' security. The score was 30 points which was a drop of 6 points from the previous year, so the indicator still has serious problems. Experts mentioned that in 2017, journalists generally worked securely, but cases of personal intimidation and insults; threats and verbal assaults; campaigns to denigrate "inconvenient journalists," especially those who do high-profile investigations, and discrediting and publicly humiliating journalists on social networks and on dubious sites persisted. At the same time, the experts drew attention to a worrisome phenomenon: some journalists avoided engaging in activities that could threaten their security.

According to experts, the most problematic segments of the media in 2017 were the security of the media space, the economic environment and the political context.

Recommendations

The legal framework for regulating media activity should be supplemented with currently missing provisions in national legislation and adjusted to the standards of European legislation. The legal rules should be implemented in a manner that would ensure the exercise of the natural mission of the media to the benefit of all society.

It is necessary to promote and apply broad media policies that lead to a real depoliticization of both decision makers and the entire media sector. The vicious practices of political interference in media activity, of involving the media in political matters and of using the media controlled by politicians for ideological purposes should stop.

A favorable economic environment for media development should be created by supplementing, adjusting and properly implementing economic legislation. Rules that would limit ownership concentration in the media should be established and complied with, and anti-competitive practices in the media and in commercial advertising should be stopped. The funding of media outlets should be more transparent which would diminish media activity funded by obscure financial sources that can affect editorial independence.

The programs of training institutions in this field should be adjusted so as to meet the needs of the media, including the need for managers. Professional associations should extend their training activities to include all categories of employees. The Journalists' Code of Ethics should be supplemented by self-regulation for online media. The practice of encouraging professionals to comply with professional norms should continue.

Risk factors to the external and internal pluralism of the media should be periodically identified and removed. Quality journalism should be supported while pseudo-journalism should be condemned.

All actions that lead to making the media space safer should be supported. The implementation of the Information Security Concept on the Media Segment should be monitored. The media should be supported in its efforts to increase the volume of local, quality media products. The efforts to introduce a media literacy course at all levels of the education system should continue. There should be conditions allowing the media to operate in absolute security. The obstruction of journalists in their attempts to report on events should be firmly deterred. The response of law enforcement bodies should be monitored every time they are informed about intimidation, threats or aggression that journalists were subjected to.

Annex 1. Moldova Press Status Index Table

| Indicators | Statements | Score |
|---|---|---------------|
| I. Legal framework regulating the media activity | 1.1. Media legislation is sufficient, mostly sufficient, largely sufficient, sufficient to a small extent, insufficient | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| | 1.2. Media legislation is in line with the international standards, mostly in line with, largely in line with, in line to a small extent, is not in line with | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| | 1.3. The legislation is correctly applied every time, most often, often, seldom, never or almost never | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| Total Indicator I: | | |
| Rationale for the score | | |
| II. Political context | 2.1. The political situation is favorable to the media activity, mostly favorable, largely favorable, favorable to a small extent, unfavorable | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| Total Indicator II: | | |
| Rationale for the score | | |
| III. Economic environment | 3.1. The media are economically independent, to a large extent, to an average extent, to a small extent, are not independent | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| | 3.2. The media are editorially independent, to a large extent, to an average extent, to a small extent, are not independent | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| Total Indicator III: | | |
| Rationale for the score | | |
| IV. Professional Environment | 4.1. The media professionalization is sufficient, mostly sufficient, largely sufficient, sufficient to a small extent, insufficient | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| | 4.2. The media professionalization is efficient, mostly efficient, largely efficient, efficient to a small extent, inefficient | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| Total Indicator IV: | | |

| | | |
|--|---|---------------|
| Rationale for the score | | |
| V. Quality of journalism | 5.1. There is external pluralism, mostly, largely, to a small extent, there is not | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| | 5.2. There is internal pluralism, mostly, largely, to a small extent, there is not | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| | 5.3. The media is of quality, mostly, largely, to a small extent, it is not of quality | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| Total Indicator V: | | |
| Rationale for the score | | |
| VI. Information Security from the Media Perspective | 6.1. There are local media outlets in the information space that fully, mostly, largely, to a small extent, not at all, contribute to strengthening the information security | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| | 6.2. There are foreign media outlets in the information space that do not affect, affect to a small extent, largely affect , mostly affect, fully affect the information security | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| Total Indicator VI: | | |
| Rationale for the score | | |
| VII. Security of Journalists | 7.1. Journalists worked securely in all cases, in the absolute majority of cases, in most cases, in some cases, insecurely | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| | 7.2. The work of journalists did not entail any consequences, entailed minor consequences, entailed consequences of average severity, entailed serious consequences, entailed very serious consequences | 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 |
| Total Indicator VII: | | |
| Rationale for the score | | |
| Total score: | | |

Annex 2. Panel of Experts for 2017

| No | Assessment experts | Position |
|-----------|---------------------------|---|
| 1. | Alexandru Lebedev | Diez.md, manager |
| 2. | Raisa Lozinschi | <i>Ziarul National</i> [National Newspaper], journalist |
| 3. | Nicolae Cuschevici | RISE Moldova, journalist |
| 4. | Dorina Iurcu | Public Broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova, journalist |
| 5. | Lucia Bacalu-Jardan | <i>Expresul</i> , Ungheni, manager |
| 6. | Petru Macovei | API, Executive Director |
| 7. | Tatiana Puiu | legal expert |
| 8. | Olga Gututui | Broadcast Coordinating Council, member |
| 9. | Vitalie Zama | Legal expert at Lawyers for Human Rights |
| 10. | Vasile State | Radio Chisinau, editor |
| 11. | Luiza Dorosenco | Media Centre Director, Tiraspol |
| 12. | Elizaveta Rotari | ATV, Comrat, ATUG, manager |
| 13 | Inga Burlacu | Press Council, member |
| 14. | Ion Bunduchi | AEP Executive Director |

Annex 3. Score Sheets for 2017

| Indicators / statements | Experts / Individual assessment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Score statement s/ indicators |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| | Ex.1 | Ex.2 | Ex.3 | Ex.4 | Ex.5 | Ex.6 | Ex.7 | Ex.8 | Ex.9 | Ex.10 | Ex.11 | Ex.12 | Ex.13 | Ex.14 | |
| Ind. I | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1. | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 28 |
| 1.2. | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 30 |
| 1.3. | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 24 |
| Total | 8 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 27.33 |
| Ind. II | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1. | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 19 |
| Total | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 19.00 |
| Ind. III | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.1. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 18 |
| 3.2. | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 18 |
| Total | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 18.00 |
| Ind. IV | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.1. | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 30 |
| 4.2. | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 24 |
| Total | 2 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 27.00 |
| Ind. V | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5.1. | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 36 |
| 5.2. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 27 |
| 5.3. | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 18 |
| Total | 7 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 27.00 |
| Ind. VI | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6.1. | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 19 |
| 6.2. | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 16 |
| Total | 4 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 17.50 |
| Ind. VII | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7.1. | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 27 |
| 7.2. | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 33 |
| Total | 4 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 30.00 |
| Total | 29 | 28 | 21 | 36 | 32 | 21 | 30 | 24 | 21 | 23 | 19 | 29 | 23 | 31 | 23.69 |