MAPPING DIGITAL MEDIA:
MOLDOVA

OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS

Mapping Digital Media: Moldova

A REPORT BY THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

WRITTEN BY

Victor Gotisan (lead reporter)

Olivia Pirțac, Vitalie Dogaru, Roxana Teodorcic, Cristina Mogîldea,
Tatiana Ețco (reporters)

EDITED BY

Marius Dragomir and Mark Thompson (Open Society Media Program editors)

Rita Ruduša (Regional Editor)

EDITORIAL COMMISSION

Yuen-Ying Chan, Christian S. Nissen, Dušan Reljić, Russell Southwood,
Michael Starks, Damian Tambini

The Editorial Commission is an advisory body. Its members are not responsible
for the information or assessments contained in the Mapping Digital Media texts

OPEN SOCIETY MEDIA PROGRAM TEAM

Meijinder Kaur, program assistant; Morris Lipson, senior legal advisor;
and Gordana Jankovic, director

OPEN SOCIETY INFORMATION PROGRAM TEAM

Vera Franz, senior program manager; Darius Cuplinskas, director

10 January 2012

Contents

Mapping Digital Media

The values that underpin good journalism, the need of citizens for reliable and abundant information, and the importance of such information for a healthy society and a robust democracy: these are perennial, and provide compass-bearings for anyone trying to make sense of current changes across the media landscape.

The standards in the profession are in the process of being set. Most of the effects on journalism imposed by new technology are shaped in the most developed societies, but these changes are equally influencing the media in less developed societies.

The **Mapping Digital Media** project, which examines the changes in-depth, aims to build bridges between researchers and policymakers, activists, academics and standard-setters across the world. It also builds policy capacity in countries where this is less developed, encouraging stakeholders to participate and influence change. At the same time, this research creates a knowledge base, laying foundations for advocacy work, building capacity and enhancing debate.

The Media Program of the Open Society Foundations has seen how changes and continuity affect the media in different places, redefining the way they can operate sustainably while staying true to values of pluralism and diversity, transparency and accountability, editorial independence, freedom of expression and information, public service, and high professional standards.

The Mapping Digital Media project assesses, in the light of these values, the global opportunities and risks that are created for media by the following developments:

- the switch-over from analog broadcasting to digital broadcasting;
- growth of new media platforms as sources of news;
- convergence of traditional broadcasting with telecommunications.

Covering 60 countries, the project examines how these changes affect the core democratic service that any media system should provide—news about political, economic and social affairs.

The **Mapping Digital Media** reports are produced by local researchers and partner organizations in each country. Cumulatively, these reports will provide a much-needed resource on the democratic role of digital media.

In addition to the country reports, the Open Society Media Program has commissioned research papers on a range of topics related to digital media. These papers are published as the **MDM Reference Series**.

Mapping Digital Media: Moldova
Executive Summary

Since 2006, Moldova has experienced three parliamentary elections, two constitutional gridlocks, one referendum and one popular uprising—dubbed the Twitter Revolution—that ended the Communist Party's rule. This period of radical political change coincided with, and was partly assisted by, the rapid rise of online news resources and social networks. The media were heavily affected by both political and digital developments and are now freer and more diverse, but this diversity is not available to all.

The Communist Government—in power from 2001 to 2009—deliberately delayed drafting regulation for digital switch-over and so, under four years before the June 2015 switch-off date, Moldova has only the draft Transition Strategy at its disposal, which is yet to be approved by Parliament. This document states the intention to make digital television accessible and affordable to everyone, but no details as to how the Government plans to reach this objective have been made public so far. Technical specifications of the transition and must-carry rules are also missing, and public awareness of the forthcoming change remains low.

Development was much more pronounced in other areas, particularly regarding the internet. Between 2005 and 2010, the number of personal computers (PCs) in households increased fivefold, reaching 36 percent of the total; internet penetration and access speed also grew, and now nearly all connections are broadband. A third of the population uses the internet regularly and for 24.2 percent (2010) it is the main source of news: this is considerably more than the number of people relying on newspapers. Newspapers have lost their place among the top three sources of news and are experiencing a steep decline, as is radio.

Television continues to be the number one source of news for most (83.6 percent), and its overall audience has even increased slightly. To some extent, this growth may be attributed to the emergence of new players in the television sector as well as to the reforms in the public service broadcaster (PSB) following the political changes of 2009. Under its new, non-political management, the PSB started moving away from being a Government mouthpiece toward more balanced reporting, gradually building audience trust and higher ratings. However, its funding model, based on direct subsidy, remains a potential loophole for political interference.

The television audience is mainly rural (58 percent), while high-speed internet remains largely a domain of the urbanites, but not by choice. The lack of infrastructure and access to equipment in the rural areas has created new inequality—while the wired part of the population can choose from a myriad of analog and digital platforms, those outside the 'loop' have to rely on less plentiful, and less varied, traditional formats. However, the gap between city and village has recently started shrinking, albeit slowly: internet penetration in the rural areas grew from only 2 percent in 2005 to 7 percent in 2010.

The rise of digital technologies has brought new dynamic players to the media scene: pure play online outlets, such as Unimedia.md (200,000 unique visitors per month), that offer swiftly updated and diverse news content, employing the latest online tools. News aggregation was their starting point, but the proportion of original content is steadily growing along with the variety of news formats and user-generated content (UGC). Traditional media outlets were generally slow on the uptake, with the exception of the investigative newspaper *Ziarul de Garda* and a few others, and to this day many outlets use the internet only to replicate the content of the hard copy. Digitization has been particularly sluggish at the PSB: it has no purpose-built news site, the random news featured on its corporate website is presented in a chaotic manner, and there are no interactive features.

Even if progress with digitization has been uneven, the impact of digital media on news offer and quality is largely positive. There is a greater volume and variety of news products, higher speed of delivery, and new ways to supplement news with in-depth information and follow-up.

That said, the competition for speed among media outlets also has negative side-effects. On the one hand, digitization has made it easier for journalists to find topics for coverage, to do research (a significant plus for Moldova's budding investigative reporting scene), to include new voices in their stories, and to verify information. On the other hand, these advantages are sometimes overlooked for the sake of rapid delivery and then news is superficial, lacking in diversity of opinion, has factual errors, and violates ethical norms. (A common trend is news theft—a practice not explicitly forbidden under Moldovan copyright law.)

Digitization also means that there is less legwork in the daily life of a Moldovan journalist and "Google journalism" is replacing first-hand accounts, depriving the audience of detail that only an eyewitness would spot. Whilst being more desk-tied, a journalist is expected to have a wider range of skills than his predecessors in the analog era. Writing, video and audio editing, and photography are now routinely done single-handedly. Prospects for journalists with these skills are good: the few new jobs that were recently created in the small Moldovan media market all called for multimedia journalists.

In the days of Communist rule, when traditional media were largely under Government control, digital platforms provided an opportunity to exercise freedom of expression. So it is no coincidence that the mass protests following the fraudulent April 2009 elections originated on Facebook and Twitter networks (hence the nickname, the Twitter Revolution). They later spilled into the unwired parts of the population, bringing 20,000 people into the streets of Chisinau. The protests eventually led to new elections.

The remarkable numbers of social network users in Moldova (Odnoklassniki has nearly a million and Facebook has 180,000) make them a powerful tool in digital mobilizations. Local experts believe the record high voter turnout in the November 2010 parliamentary elections was largely down to the active online campaign encouraging voters to participate, which mobilized, among others, young voters from the extensive Moldovan diaspora living in the European Union (EU).

In recent years, the media in Moldova have seen an influx of investment from foreign companies such as the Romanian media holding Realiteta–Catavencu and the German company Rheinstein Media Management. However, at least half of the market (two out of four leading media groups) is controlled by politically affiliated local owners. The lack of ownership transparency makes it hard to determine the beneficial owners, but media reports and editorial policies indicate that one is Vlad Plahotniuc, a leading figure in the Democratic Party, and that the other is the Communist Party. The rest of the market is in the hands of Realiteta–Catavencu and Viorel Torpa, a local businessman. The dominance of these groups makes it hard for smaller independent outlets to survive; hence the extensive dependence on international donors.

If the identity of true media owners remains unknown to the public, this is set to change, at least for broadcasters. The new Broadcasting Code, presently at the drafting stage, will introduce clear requirements for ownership transparency and safeguards against excessive market dominance. Media support organizations welcome and eagerly await the new Code, but its fate hinges on the Government's speed in developing the long overdue legal framework for digital switch-over. More specifically, the umbrella laws regulating the technical aspects of transition to digital broadcasting need to be drafted so that the Code can use them as reference.

Very few laws in Moldova make explicit reference to the internet and general media-related provisions are usually applied to internet content. However, there are two specific provisions and both are questioned by civil society. First is the norm in the Regulation Regarding the Administration of Names in the Domain of Superior Level .md, which permits the .md domain administrator MoldData to delete a domain name, without the right to retrieve it, if a website is suspected of publishing unlawful content. The other is the Law on Copyright and Associated Rights, which also allows the authorities to block a site if it is suspected of violations. Critics note that both norms are disproportionate and open to politically motivated abuse. There have been precedents: for instance, in 2009, the popular news website Unimedia nearly lost its domain name because of the user comments, which the Prosecutor General saw as undermining the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova. Civil society protests helped to prevent the loss of the domain name.

The Report finds that, overall, the combination of digitization and political change has increased the diversity of media outlets and their news, the plurality of opinions, and the transparency of public institutions, while it has diminished political interference in the media.

Yet the lack of independence of regulatory institutions, the non-transparent media ownership structure, and the slow pace of digital switch-over continue to undermine these achievements. In order to reinforce positive change, the Report proposes four kinds of reform. Firstly, the legal framework for digital switch-over must

be completed in the near future if the country is to be ready for the transition before the switch-off date. The provisions for public interest, access, and affordability should be given priority and, for this purpose, participation of civil society groups in the drafting process is vital.

This framework will also speed up the adoption of the new Broadcasting Code, a historic document that will end the era of non-transparent media ownership, the second area that needs urgent reform. Thirdly, with public awareness of the purpose and implications of switch-over virtually non-existent, an information campaign and public debate on the issue need to start without delay.

Finally, the independence of two key institutions, the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (CCA) and the PSB, needs to be strengthened. In both cases, this can be done by changing funding models and adopting clearer regulatory safeguards against government interference.

Context

In the first decade of the new millennium, Moldova was regularly listed as one of the poorest countries in Europe. In 2010, GDP per capita was about US$1,600, one of the lowest in the region. The average monthly wage in 2010 was US$255, a significantly lower figure than in neighboring Romania (US$480) or Bulgaria (US$450).

The economy heavily depends on agriculture, mostly wine production, fruit, vegetables, and tobacco. There is little security and almost no diversity in Moldova's energy supply: the only provider of natural gas is the Russian Federation and over 50 percent of the electricity is imported from abroad, primarily from Ukraine. In the last five years, following a 2006 agreement between the Government and Russia's state-owned corporation Gazprom, the price for Russian gas has nearly tripled.

Consumption is supported from an unsustainable source: the remittances sent by the Moldovans working abroad. The remittances amount to about 30 percent of the GDP. Tax evasion is another major problem: official statistics estimate a figure amounting to 13 to 15 percent of the GDP.

Furthermore, the population is ageing rapidly. Most young people prefer to emigrate in search of a better-paid job and better living conditions. The data provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) show that about 311,000 Moldovans are estimated to be residing and working abroad (2010), mainly in the EU and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (primarily Russia).

Moldova was the first former Soviet country to elect a Communist president, Vladimir Voronin. For nearly a decade, the Communist Party (*Partidul Comuniștilor din Moldova,* PCRM) also held the parliamentary majority. During Voronin's presidency (2001–2009), the media were constantly harassed, a reality that made Moldova linger among the 'not free' countries in the Freedom of the Press list compiled by Freedom House.[1] The July 2009 parliamentary elections marked the end of the Communist rule. After a narrow victory,

---

1. See, for example, Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2009*, available at http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fop/2009/FreedomoftheP-ress2009_tables.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

Moldova's four opposition parties, the Liberal Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Democratic Party, and the Alliance Our Moldova, formed a coalition, the Alliance for European Integration (*Alianta pentru Integrare Europeana*, AIE). However, the change of power was followed by a political gridlock, as the composition of the Parliament made it impossible to collect the necessary majority and elect a new President. A constitutional referendum in September 2010 on legal changes that would enable direct presidential elections failed due to low voter turnout, triggering the dissolution of the Parliament and new elections on 28 November 2010.

The end of Communist rule rapidly improved press freedom in Moldova enabling the country to move from 'not free' to 'partly free'. However, development in the media sector, which was badly hit by the economic crisis, remains slow.

Social Indicators[2]

Population (number of inhabitants): 3.564 million (end-2009)
Number of households: 1.209 million

Figure 1.
Rural/urban breakdown (% of total population)

Rural (61.3%)   Urban (38.7%)

Source: National Census from 2004.

Figure 2.
Ethnic composition (% of total population)

Bulgarian (1.9%)
Romanian (2.2%)
Gagauz (4.4%)   Other (1.4%)
Russian (5.9%)
Ukrainian (8.4%)   Moldovan (75.8%)
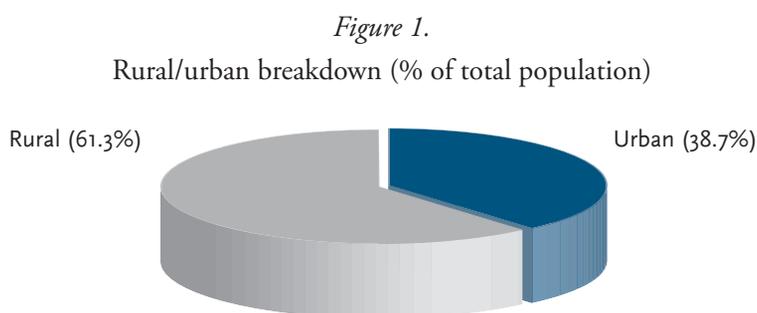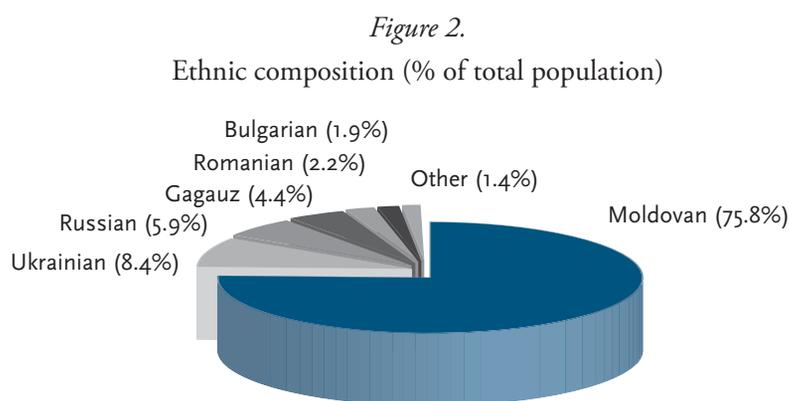
Source: National Census from 2004.

---

2.   The National Bureau of Statistics (*Biroul Național de Statistica din Moldova*, BNS) and National Census from 2004.

Most major independent media outlets accused the Communist authorities of manipulating the 2004 census results, while many local experts noted flaws in the conduct and interpretation of the census. Sociologist Petru Negura believes the census results concerning ethnic and linguistic composition are flawed. "The census interviewers compromised their neutrality by suggesting that the correct answer is the 'Moldovan nationality' and 'Moldovan language' [rather than Romanian]." He suggests both options should have been presented as alternative versions of the same answer: "The nationality and language category results can be considered accurate only if the answers Moldovan/Romanian are listed as a single option, and not separately. As long as a part of the population clearly believes that it belongs to a certain group, census officials must record them as such, whether they like it or not."[3]

Figure 3.

Linguistic composition (% of total population)

Gagauz (3.1%)   Bulgarian (1.1%)
Ukrainian (3.8%)   Other (0.8%)
Russian (16.0%)   Moldovan (58.8%)
Romanian (16.4%)
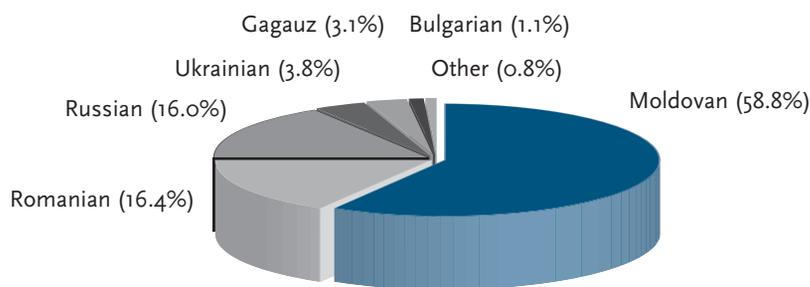
Source: National Census from 2004.

Figure 4.

Religious composition (% of total population)

Other (1.1%)   Preferred not to say (2.2%)
Other Christian (3.4%)   Christian-Orthodox (93.3%)
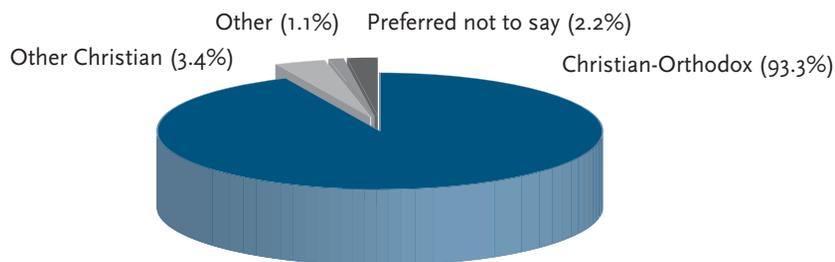
Source: National Census from 2004.

3.   Interview with Petru Negura, sociologist and lecturer at the State Pedagogical University "Ion Creanga" and at the Moldova State University in Chisinau, 15 April 2011.

Economic Indicators

Table 1.

Economic indicators

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010f	2011f	2012f
GDP (current prices), total in US$ billion	2.988	3.408	4.401	6.055	5.403	5.205	5.552	5.958
GDP (in US$ current prices), per capita	830	949	1,228	1,694	1,514	1,460	1,560	1,676
Gross National Income (GNI) (current US$), per capita	2,650	2,860	3,000	3,320	3,010	n/a	n/a	n/a
Unemployment (% of total labor force)	7.3	7.6	5.1	4.0	6.4	7.5	6.5	6.0
Inflation (average annual rate in % against previous year)	10.037	14.081	13.111	7.339	0.441	9.0	5.0	5.0

Note: n/a: not available, f: forecast.

Sources: International Monetary Fund (GDP, data on inflation and data about unemployment rate estimate 2011–2012), World Bank (GNI); The National Bureau of Statistics and Expert–Group (unemployment data for 2005–2010).

1. Media Consumption: The Digital Factor

1.1 Digital Take-up

1.1.1 Digital Equipment and Literacy

Analog media remain dominant. However, digital media are on a rapid ascent. The number of television sets and PCs is growing along with internet penetration rate and access speeds. In 2008, there were 54,000 subscribers for broadband internet services, and, by 2010, the number of subscribers had increased six-fold, reaching 231,000 subscribers.[4]

Table 2.

Households owning equipment

	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	No. of HH ('000)[30]	% of THH[31]	No. of HH ('000)	% of THH	No. of HH ('000)	% of THH	No. of HH ('000)	% of THH	No. of HH ('000)	% of THH	No. of HH ('000)	% of THH
TV set	937,000	89.4	1,211,000	90.0	1,114,000	91.3	1,118,000	92.5	1,120,000	93.0	n/a	n/a
Radio set	973,000	72.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
PC	95,000	7.0	86,000	6.4	112,000	9.2	157,000	13.0	220,000	18.5	440,000	36.9

Notes: HH = households; THH = total number of households in the country; PC = personal computer; n/a = not available.

Source: ITU (data for 2005 and 2010); National Bureau of Statistics (data for 2006–2009).

---

4. National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology, *Market Evolution: Data Transport and Internet Access Sector*, available at http://en.anrceti.md/files/u1/transpdate2010tr4_en.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

Television continues to be the main source of information. It was the primary source of information for 84 percent of the population in 2005, and the data from May 2010 shows that the figure now stands at 90 percent.[5] The number of households that own television sets has increased from 90 percent in 2006 to 93 percent in 2009. In terms of absolute numbers, there are 100 television sets per 100 households.[6]

Despite a 72 percent radio set penetration,[7] the preference for radio as the first source of information is declining. In 2005, 44 percent of the people named radio as their primary source of information, but by May 2010 the figure had dropped to 36 percent.[8]

More and more people tend to equip their households with computers: the number of PCs in households has tripled between 2005 and 2010 from six per 100 households to approximately 20 per 100 households.

Media literacy is low, due partly to the fact that Moldova has a predominantly rural population (see Figure 1), with limited access to diverse sources of information. Another factor is the massive outward migration of young people.[9] In 2009 alone, about 400,000 citizens, or about 30 percent of the total workforce, stayed or worked abroad (the main destinations are Russia, Italy, Ukraine, Portugal, Turkey, Greece, France, and Spain).[10] Unemployment, poverty, and low salaries at home are the main causes of migration.[11] Older people have lower levels of functional and media literacy: nearly 85 percent of all the illiterate persons[12] are aged 50–80.[13]

5.   Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion* (BPO), December 2005, available at http://ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=156&id=461 (accessed 13 April) (hereafter, Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, December 2005); Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion* (BPO), May 2010, available at http://ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=156&id=552 (accessed 13 April) (hereafter, Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010).

6.   National Bureau of Statistics, *Aspects of the Standard of Living of the Population in 2009* (Results of the Household Budget Survey), p. 109, available at http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=ro&idc=263&id=2206 (accessed 13 April 2011).

7.   International Telecommunication Union (ITU), December 2010.

8.   Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010 and Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, December 2005. Data for 1. Primary option and 2. Secondary option.

9.   International Organization for Migration (IOM), *The Socio-Economic Impact of the Economic Crisis on Migration and Remittances in the Republic of Moldova. Early Findings—Spring 2009,* available at http://iom.md/attachments/110_2009_06_02_socio_economic_impact_eng.pdf (accessed 13 April 2011); and IOM, *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, June 2007, available at http://iom.md/materials/5_patterns_eng.pdf (accessed 13 April 2011) (hereafter, IOM, *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*).

10. See Publika.md, "Potrivit datelor neoficiale, în străinătate sunt plecați aproximativ un milion de moldoveni" (According to Unofficial Data, Around One Million Moldovans Have Left the Country), available in Romanian at http://www.publika.md/potrivit-datelor-neoficiale--in-strainatate-sunt-plecati-aproximativ-un-milion-de-moldoveni_93531.html (accessed 5 July 2011).

11. IOM, *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, p. 25–26, available at http://www.iom.md/materials/5_patterns_eng.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

12. According to the 2004 National Census, 1.3 percent of Moldovans are illiterate, while 2.6 percent have not attended school but still have writing and reading abilities. See National Bureau of Statistics, *2004 Population Census. Population Aged 10 Years and Over by Educational Attainment and Area, in Territorial Aspect*, available at http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=295&id=2234 (accessed 5 July 2011) (hereafter, National Bureau of Statistics, *2004 Population Census*).

13. National Bureau of Statistics, *2004 Population Census*.

Figure 5.

Outward migration in 2008, by age group, in %
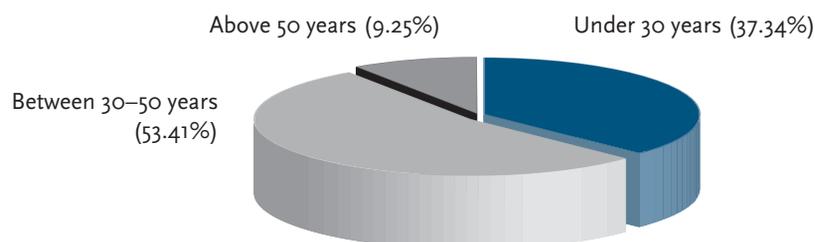
Source: IOM, *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova.*

1.1.2   Platforms

According to the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (*Agentia Nationala Reglementare in Comunicatii Electronice si Tehnologia Informatiei*, ANRCETI), terrestrial reception and analog cable remain the dominant forms of television reception. The majority of cable television subscribers live in Chisinau (60.6 percent) and Balti, the second biggest town (10.6 percent); and most of the remaining 28.7 percent are also urban dwellers. Notably, the cable television penetration rate almost doubled between 2006 and 2009 (see Table 3).

The main provider of cable television services is the company Sun Communications, with a market share of 49.1 percent. The other two market leaders have significantly smaller market shares: AMT has 8.6 percent and the Technical Commercial Center ALFA has 2.9 percent. The remaining 39 percent are distributed between small companies. The ANRCETI predicts a decrease in the number of providers of audiovisual services as they will be unable to keep up with the market leaders in implementing new technologies, especially digital ones.[14] The growing turnover of Sun Communications illustrates the trend. In 2007, its turnover represented 50 percent of the entire cable television market; in 2009, it rose to 56 percent.[15]

The introduction of digital broadcasting is at an early stage: it was initiated in the second half of 2007 by the providers Sun Communications and Arax–Impex that started using the standard DVB-C (Digital Video Broadcasting-Cable) in cable television networks. By late 2008, the number of digital television users was 5.2 percent of the total number of cable television users (11,952 subscribers). In 2009, the number increased by approximately 30 percent year-on-year, reaching 17,257 users. The concept of introducing digital terrestrial television in Moldova was drafted in 2007 (see section 7). One of the first steps for its

---

14.   ANRCETI, *Report On Activity of the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology and Evolution of Electronic Communications Market in 2008*, p. 67, available at http://en.anrceti.md/files/filefield/RAPORT_anual_2008_engl_fin_publ.pdf (accessed 13 April 2011) (hereafter, ANRCETI, *2008 Report).*

15.   ANRCETI, *Report On Activity of the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology and Evolution of Electronic Communications Markets in 2009*, p. 44, available at http://en.anrceti.md/files/filefield/2009_RAPORT_%28ENG%29.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011) (hereafter, ANRCETI, *2009 Report).*

practical implementation was taken in October 2010, when a transmitter allowing the transition to digital broadcasting was commissioned.[16] The Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications (*Ministerul Tehnologiei Informatiei si Comunicatiilor*) announced its intention to begin the process of switch-over in 2011. According to the Government, digital licenses in the multiplex will be given to both public and private institutions. The full digital switch-over is expected by 2015.

As for internet protocol television (IPTV), the state-owned Moldtelecom launched it in February 2010. The service was free of charge until 1 April 2010. The basic package (*Premium*) for IPTV offers 50 channels for MDL 75 (Moldovan Leu) (US$5.50) per month, plus a MDL 50 (US$4) fee for the activation of a media box. The second package (*Univers*) was launched in November 2010, and it is slightly more complex, including 75 channels for a monthly fee of MDL 100 (US$8). These packages are available with an internet connection via fiber and Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL). StarNet is another company that has recently launched a similar service, based on optic fiber technology. In February 2011, StarNet started providing IPTV services in high definition mode.

Table 3.

Platforms for the main TV reception and digital take-up

	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	No of HH[38] ('000)	% of TVHH[39]	No of HH ('000)	% of TVHH	No of HH ('000)	% of TVHH	No of HH ('000)	% of TVHH	No of HH ('000)	% of TVHH	No of HH ('000)	% of TVHH
Terrestrial reception	0.64	65.85	0.64	65.85	0.60	57.85	0.59	54.61	0.54	50.23	0.515	46.11
– of which digital	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cable reception	n/a	n/a	0.133	9.87	0.166	13.6	0.229	18.9	0.221	17.66	n/a	n/a
– of which digital	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.012	0.988	0.017	1.38	n/a	n/a
Satellite reception	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
– of which digital	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.002	0.16	0.0025	0.20	n/a	n/a
IPTV	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	0.108	8.02	0.133	9.97	0.175	14.37	0.237	19.57	0.226	18.08	n/a	n/a
– of which digital	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.013	1.14	0.02	1.58	n/a	n/a

Notes: n/a: not available; HH: households (in millions): TVHH: television households; in multi-television households, the figures refer to the main television set.

Sources: ITU, ANRCETI.

---

16. Radiocom.md, "Punerea în exploatare al emițătorului DVB-T la SRTV Ungheni" (DVB-T Transmitter Put Into Operation in Ungheni), available in Romanian at http://www.radiocom.md/rom/Punerea+in+exploatare+al+emitatorului+DVB-T+la+SRTV+Ungheni (accessed 20 October 2010).

According to the ITU, in 2009, the rate of internet usage per 100 inhabitants was 30 percent.[17] The speed and quality of internet connection has also improved in recent years. In 2006, the internet connection was predominantly dial-up (73 percent), but by 2009 the number had dropped to a mere 8.1 percent. Today, 91.8 percent of all connections are broadband. ADSL continues to be the most widespread broadband access technology: 76 percent of the broadband connections in 2009 were made through ADSL.

Most households currently do not have the necessary equipment to make the transition from analog to digital television. However, the latest developments, particularly concerning investments (both private and public) into data transfer services, suggest that the state of things is about to change. At the moment, access to the internet, cable, and digital television is largely limited to urban locations: more than half of the total number of all broadband internet subscribers live in the capital Chisinau (106,300 subscribers or 56.7 percent) and the number of subscribers per 100 households in the capital city is, on average, five times higher than elsewhere. However, the urban-rural divide has recently started to diminish. Between 2008 and 2010, the internet penetration rate in rural areas more than doubled. According to ANRCETI, in 2008 the internet penetration rate in rural areas was about two percent, but in 2010 it rose to about seven percent. In 2008 and 2009, the national telecommunications company Moldtelecom was an internet service provider that invested most in the development of internet connections in rural areas. For example, in 2009, approximately 30 percent of Moldtelecom's US$25 million turnover for internet access services and data transmission was invested to develop these services in rural areas.[18]

Mobile connections are widespread: in the second quarter of 2010, the mobile penetration rate was 80 percent.[19] Currently, there are three mobile service operators in Moldova: Orange, Moldcell, and Unite.[20] Third-generation (3G) services arrived via Moldcell on 1 October 2008. Today, all three mobile operators in the country offer 3G services.

The number of 3G services users has increased approximately six times within the last two years. In the first trimester of 2009, there were 15,600 users of this service, and in the second trimester of 2010 the number reached 107,400.

---

17. International Telecommunication Union, *Measuring the Information Society 2010,* p. 106, available at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/idi/2010/Material/MIS_2010_without_annex_4-e.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

18. ANRCETI, *2009 Report*, p. 41.

19. ANRCETI, *Market Evolution: mobile telephony sector*, available at http://en.anrceti.md/files/u1/telmob2010tr4_en.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

20. Until 2010, there was another mobile operator, Eventis Mobile. However, in February 2010, ANRCETI decided to suspend for a two-month period the company's license as a provider of mobile telephony in GSM standard. Subsequently, the suspension has been extended for another two-month period, then indefinitely. See http://www.anrceti.md/news16062010 (accessed 5 July 2011).

Table 4.

Internet subscriptions and mobile phone subscriptions as % of the total population in Moldova

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (Q2)
Internet	1.9	2.4	3.0	4.3	5.6	6.4
of which broadband	0.3	0.6	1.3	3.2	5.2	6.1
Mobile telephony	32.3	39.6	55.0	67.8	78.1	80.1
of which 3G	n/a	n/a	n/a	7.7	2.8	3.7

Note: n/a = not available.
Source: Editor's calculation based on data from the ITU and KSH.

There are around 38 registered internet service providers (ISPs) in the country, but most of them are regional, with only a few offering their services throughout the country. Moldtelecom and StarNet are the leading providers in the country, with a combined market share of 88.5 percent. The remaining 11.5 percent are divided between other ISPs such as Orange, Sun Communications, Arax-Impex, IDC, and others. Almost all large ISPs have their headquarters located in Chisinau. Moldtelecom is the only ISP that offers its services throughout the country on a wide scale.

At the end of 2009, there were around 1.29 million internet users in Moldova or almost 30 percent of the population. In the second quarter of 2010, there were 231,000 broadband users, most of them in Chisinau.

Table 5.

Internet users in Moldova, 2005–2010

Year	Number of users	Total population	Percentage of population (%)
2005	550,000	4,197,929	13.1
2006	727,000	3,815,677	19.0
2007	750,000	3,815,677	19.6
2008	850,000	3,815,677	22.2
2009	1,295,000	3,815,677	29.9
2010	n/a	3,563,700	n/a

Notes: n/a: not available.
Source: ITU (2005–2008), ANRCETI (2009–2010).

In March 2004, there were 183 registered internet cafes in Chisinau. Over the next five years, their number dropped significantly and, in 2010, there were only about a dozen. This change originated in the continually reducing prices for computers and internet services. Data from early 2009 indicated that 59 percent of users accessed the internet from home, 34.3 percent from work, and the rest used internet cafes, mobile phones and other means.

Even though there are many ISPs that offer ADSL connection, ADSL services are not available in rural areas. Dial-up prices are typically higher than the cheapest ADSL packages: for example, Moldtelecom's dial-up package, ISDN 128 Econom, offers 128 Kbps (download and upload) speed for US$20, but the same ISP has an ADSL package, MaxDSL Eco, which offers 20 Mbps for download service and 1 Mbps for upload service for the same amount of money. Most ISPs work locally, although some such as StarNet and Sun Communications offer their services outside Chisinau. Until 2007, all ISPs offered slow connection for a relatively high price.

1.2   Media Preferences

1.2.1   Main Shifts in News Consumption

Television remains the primary source of information for an overwhelming majority of media consumers and it is still predominantly analog terrestrial. Not only is it the main source of information for most, it is increasingly so: between 2005 and 2010, television gained nine percent in its population reach.[21] Viewers are mostly residents of rural areas (58 percent) and have a high school education (54 percent) but only 19 percent have a university degree.

In print media, as the media experts Ludmila Andronic and Alexandru Burdeinîi point out, the true size of the audience is hard to determine due to the discrepancies between the real print circulation and the official print circulation.[22] Usually, the real print run is much smaller than the official one: editors tend to claim larger print runs to have higher credibility in the eyes of the readers, competitors and advertisers.[23]

During 2005–2010, newspapers lost their prominent place among the main sources of information.[24] This was mainly due to the economic crisis and the ascent of the internet. Print media also lost the trust of their readers. In 2004, newspapers were trusted as sources of news by only 6 percent of the population, whilst by 2010 this figure dropped to a mere 2.1 percent. By comparison, television is trusted by 67 percent, the internet by around 11 percent, and radio by six percent.[25]

Similarly to print media, radio continues to decline as a source of news. Radio also has an ageing audience: the most dedicated consumers of radio are people aged over 60.[26]

---

21.   Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010.

22.   Interview with Alexandru Burdeinii, editor-in-chief of InfoMarket News Agency, Chisinau, 11 February 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Alexandru Burdeinii), and with Ludmila Andronic, PR and media expert, Chisinau, 11 February 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Ludmila Andronic).

23.   See V. Gotisan, "The Circulation of Moldovan Print Media: Regulations and Monitoring", in *Mass Media in Moldova*, December 2008, p. 4, available at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/eng/bmm/december2008eng.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

24.   Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010.

25.   Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010.

26.   Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010.

The greatest development in terms of changing preferences is the increase in consumption of information on the internet. The trend is more evident in urban areas, where internet services are easily accessible. Just a few years ago, in 2005, the internet did not feature at all in the list of favorite sources of information; in 2010, about 20 percent of respondents named the internet as their primary source of information.[27] The main age category to use the internet for information purposes is that from 18 to 29 with a share of 45.5 percent. The second is the age group between 30 and 44 (19.6 percent) and the third, 45- to 59-year-olds (8.8 percent). The degree of trust in the internet as a source of information has also gone up. In 2007, the figure was 3.3 percent, growing to 10.2 percent in 2010.[28]

The growing popularity of television and the internet prompted broadcasters and online outlets to diversify their services and offer viewers new products and better quality content. New television channels started broadcasting, such as generalist television channel Publika TV and initially generalist Jurnal TV, which later became more entertainment-oriented. The channel was initially available over the internet and, in 2010, via cable and satellite.

Figure 6.
Main news sources in Moldova, every day, in %, 2005–2010
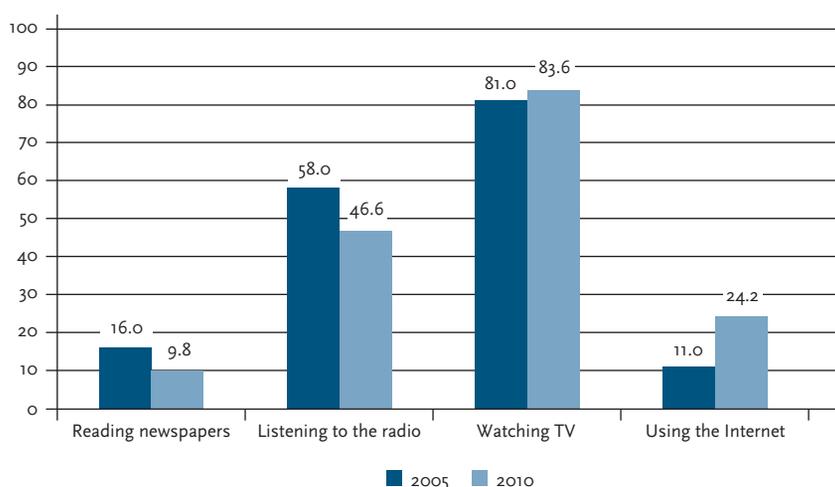
Source: IPP, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, December 2005 and May 2010.

1.2.2   Availability of a Diverse Range of News Sources

Television has remained a dominant actor in the area of news production. The quality of news and current affairs programs is steadily improving, a trend most likely assisted by the emergence of tangible competition. Starting in 2009, the media market in general, and the audiovisual media market in particular, saw a

---

27.   Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010.

28.   Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010.

great flow of foreign investment that has led to an increasingly stronger competition and higher quality of audiovisual products. Between 2009 and 2010, the influential Romanian media group Realitatea–Catavencu entered the market, opening a new television channel, Publika TV and a new radio station Publika FM. And the investment by the German company Rheinstein Media Management into Jurnal Trust Media led to the launch of a new television station, Jurnal TV, and a radio station, Jurnal FM (see section *6.1.2*). Most television channels began to diversify their products, particularly through their online platforms. Almost every channel has a website where they post news, programs, live video-streaming, interview transcripts of interviews, and extensive tables and graphs.

Radio has a hard time in terms of consumer preferences because of the impressive development of internet sites and television channels. At the moment, the most popular radio format is contemporary hit radio, which mostly relies on broadcasting music and a couple of news bulletins. Many radio stations in Moldova are franchises of Romanian radio stations (e.g. Kiss FM or Radio 21) or Russian ones (e.g. Hit FM, Europa Plus, or Russkoye Radio). A somewhat newer trend in the market is launching radio stations that mostly rebroadcast the content of television channels (e.g. Publika FM, Jurnal FM, or Prime FM). A large number of radio stations have created their own internet websites, using them to upload interviews, news, and programs in the text format, as well as for blogging and audio streaming.

There is no reliable data on the circulation of newspapers in Moldova and, similarly, there is no data on the migration of readers from print to online versions of newspapers. Thus, it is hard to compare their audience. Currently, no newspaper has opted to exist only online and to close down the hard copy. Most newspapers have their own websites where they usually upload the information from the hard copy. However, some have also added reader forums and discussion panels, daily news, and interviews that differ from the hard copy content. They include *Ziarul de Garda*, *Timpul*, *Jurnal de Chişinău*, and *Adevărul*. Also, many of them feature blogs, video streaming, options for sharing information via social networks, Facebook or Odnoklassniki, and RSS feeds.

There are several pure play (online only) media platforms, e.g. Unimedia.md, Stireazilei.md, Politik.md, Investigatii.md, and Vesti.md. The content usually includes news, investigations, photo galleries, and video news. The internet is a platform that has undergone the most dynamic evolution in the last years. The content of websites has been diversifying more and more, particularly recently: now, nearly all main news sites offer news (whether text or video), live streaming from various public events, broadcasting of the Government and Parliament sessions, video reporting and investigations, blogs, user comments, photos and videos, RSS feeds, and other sharing tools.

The common rule for websites is to use a Web 2.0 platform and content that can be presented in two languages, Romanian and Russian. English is seldom used. Most websites publish aggregated content and, even those that produce original content, run it alongside the aggregated items selected from reporting, interviews or press releases by news agencies, print media, television channels, and radio stations. In recent years, the most popular aggregator has been Moldova.org, but it was recently overtaken by Newsyam.md.

1.3. News Providers

1.3.1 Leading Sources of News

1.3.1.1 Print Media

Establishing the real print run of newspapers in Moldova remains a challenge. As mentioned above, newspaper owners and editors tend to inflate the figures in order to create a better image in the eyes of their readers and advertisers. In July 2009, upon the initiative of the Independent Journalism Center (*Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent*, CJI), the foundation was laid for the establishment of the Audit Bureau of Circulations and Internet (*Biroul de Audit al Tirajelor si Internetului*, BATI).[29] The institution was registered in November 2009 and its purpose is to verify the real circulation of print media and introduce greater transparency. Upon joining the BATI, print media are obliged to declare their true circulation. For now, only 10 print publications (from around 300 publications registered at the Ministry of Justice of Moldova) have joined the BATI.

Currently, the newspaper with the largest circulation is *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove*, a Russian-language tabloid and a franchise of the tabloid *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published in the Russian Federation. The main body of content is identical to the mother publication, featuring only a few pages of Moldova-related content. The second in terms of circulation is *Antenna*, a Russian-language newspaper that serves mainly as a television guide with a few additional sections on women and family, health, and social life. Next come the daily *Timpul de Dimineață* (in Romanian) and the bi-weekly newspaper *Jurnal de Chișinău* (in Romanian).

The above-mentioned four publications have held the leading positions for several years, but—in line with the diminishing popularity of newspapers as the primary source of news—they have lost a significant portion of their audience. In 2007, the weekly circulation of *Antenna* was 55,000, more than twice the current number, and *Timpul* has also shrunk by nearly half (46,750 in 2007), while *Jurnal de Chișinău* is down by about 5,000. The only exception is *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove*, which stood at 60,000 in 2007 and has added more than 10,000 since then.[30]

---

29. BATI is a non-profit organization which aims to provide accurate information about the circulation of newspapers, magazines, and other print media. See http://bati.md/

30. Independent Journalism Center, *Mass Media Guide 2007*, available at http://www.ijc.md/eng/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=176&Itemid=34 (accessed 14 November 2011).

Figure 7.

The largest newspapers in Moldova, by weekly circulation, May 2011

| Komsomolskaya Pravda	Antenna	Timpul	Jurnal de Chisinäu
72,099	25,900	25,669	18,515
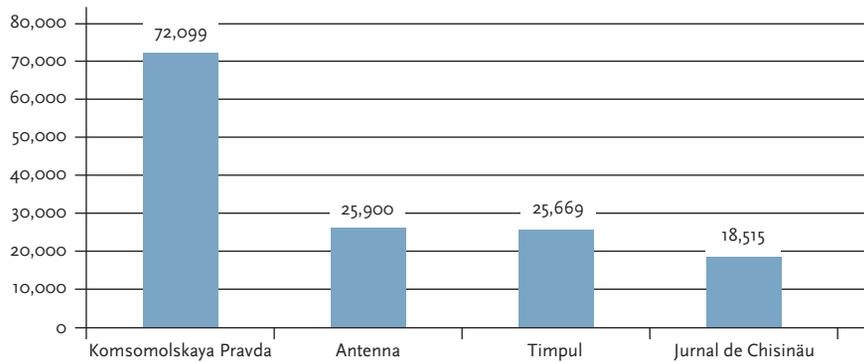
Source: BATI.

1.3.1.2 Television

The television channel with the highest nationwide audience is Prime TV, and it has been the leader since 2008, the year when television audience surveys started in Moldova. It is followed by the much less popular public television Moldova 1. The leading positions of these two channels can be explained by the fact that they both have nationwide coverage.[31] Recently, the audience of Moldova 1 started growing—a trend most likely related to recent changes in its editorial policy (see section *2*).

Figure 8.

Dynamics of most popular TV channels, nationwide, age 4+, 2008–2011, in %
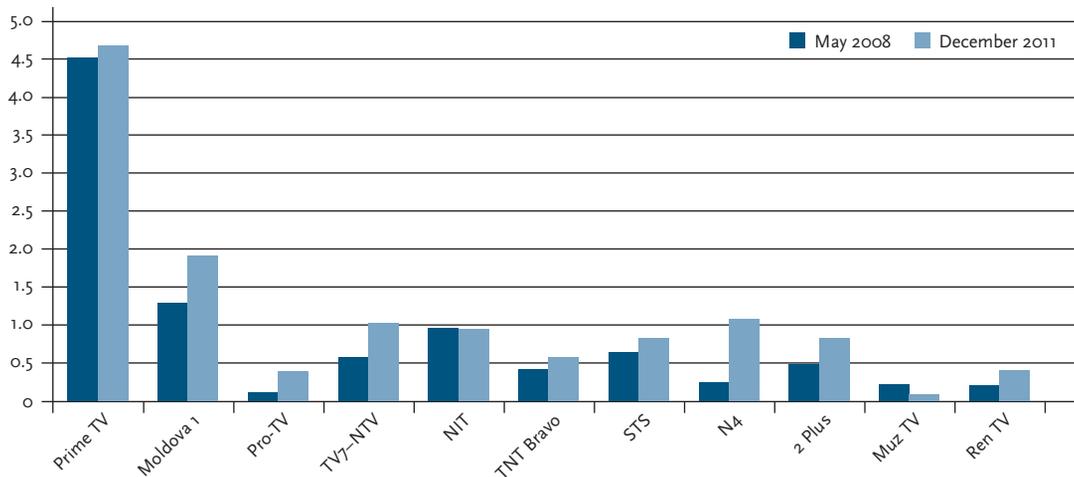

Source: Television MR MLD Company, AGB Moldova.

31. There are four television channels with nationwide coverage: Moldova 1 (97–99% of the population), Prime TV (92–95%), 2Plus (87–92%), and NIT (around 60%). See Ivan Omelianiuk, *The Status of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) in the Former USSR Republics*, p. 11, available at http://www.digitag.org/MembersOnly/Reports/Post-Soviet%20Report%20Version1.2.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

Of the top five television channels, only Moldova 1 produces and broadcasts mostly its own content. The broadcast schedules of the other four television stations largely consist of purchased programs or re-broadcasts from foreign television stations, especially from the Russian Federation (ORT, TV Tsentr, NTV, and others) and Romania (TVR 1, Antena 1, and Antena 3). Besides export products, each channel features newscasts, and some of them have their original entertainment programs, debates, and talk shows. The broadcasting language is mainly Romanian with some programs in Russian on Moldova 1 and 2Plus, and vice versa, Russian with some programs in Romanian on Prime TV, NIT, and N4.

Figure 9.
Top five television channels in Moldova by audience share, nationwide, age 4*, in %, 2010
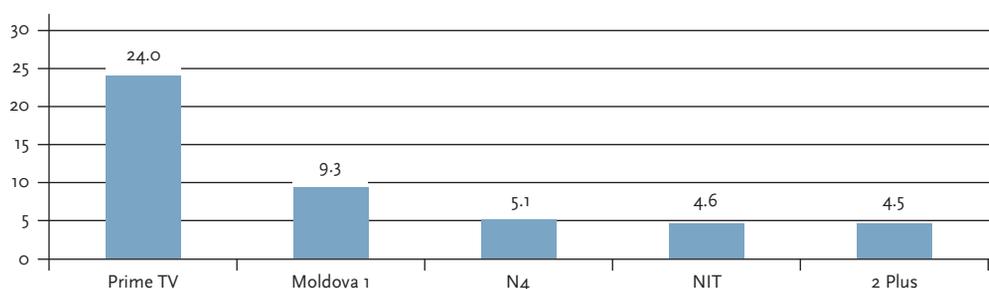
*Note:*   The reported monitoring time is 1 January 2010–31 October 2010.
Source: Television MR MLD Company, AGB Moldova.

1.3.1.3 Radio

Politics and social issues dominate in radio news bulletins, followed by news and programs on economic issues, sports, and entertainment. Consumer preferences for a certain radio station depend on the living environment of the audience. Urban audiences prefer the format of contemporary hit radio: Hit FM, Russkoye Radio, Retro FM, or Kiss FM, which run most of their content in Russian (except for Kiss FM). Rural audiences have a distinct preference for talk radio: Radio Moldova, Radio Noroc, and Radio Sănătatea, which broadcast mainly in Romanian. The frequency of newscasts is usually limited to several broadcasts per day. Few radio stations, such as Radio Moldova and Radio Vocea Basarabiei, offer programs dedicated to specific issues, debates, or radio talk shows. Audience measurement for radio started in 2010, even later than those for television. So, while we know that radio as a news platform has been losing audience in recent years, the ratings for each station remains unknown.

There is also a new trend on the radio market in Moldova, when radio stations work as "subsidiaries" of television channels or niche media institutions (e.g. Publika FM, Aquarelle FM and Jurnal FM). For example, Publika FM is the radio version of the television channel under the same name and its broadcast schedule generally focuses on re-broadcasting the programs of Publika TV. Another example is Aquarelle FM, which is a radio version of the women's magazine Aquarelle. This radio station covers in its programs and radio talk shows mostly the same topics that are featured in the print version. Jurnal FM newscasts contain the same topics as the television newscasts on Jurnal TV.

Figure 10.

Top five sources of news among radio atations in Moldova, in %, May 2010
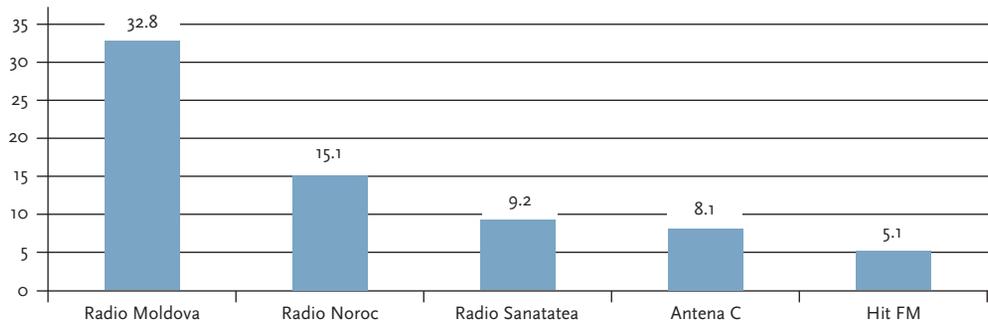
1.3.1.4 Online

The popularity of a website can be calculated by its number of unique visitors, registered by internal statistics or by external meters, such as Top20.md, Topsite.com, Metrica.md, and Alexa.com. However, there is an inconsistency in these statistics, because not all websites are registered with the same meter.

Table 6.

Top internet news websites in Moldova, by unique visitors, October 2

Name	Unique visitors	Time per visit
Protv.md	458 707	7' 38''
Moldova.org	241 334	0' 56''
Unimedia.md	201 099	9' 40''
Allmoldova.com	169 817	3' 43''
Jurnal.md	150 441	5' 39''
Timpul.md	89 412	5' 13''
StireaZilei.md	40 512	4' 58''

Internet portals such as YouTube, Google, and Yahoo! with large audiences internationally are also popular in Moldova. The main services requested include search engine use, watching movies and videos, reading news, and downloading music and movies.[32] According to Google Ad Planner and Metrica.md, the most popular website in Moldova is Emusic.md, which is primarily a file-sharing website. Around 55 percent of its visitors access the site from Russia.

---

32.   Alexa.com, *Top Sites in Moldova*, available at http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/MD (accessed on 29 April 2011).

The experts interviewed for this study note that internet-based services are developing slowly because Moldova is too small to accommodate all the opportunities that the web can offer. E-commerce services are almost non-existent, due to the lack of an efficient and automated method of distributing products ordered online. This may be due to the monopoly on postal services enjoyed by Posta Moldovei, which does not offer such services.

1.3.2 Television News Programs

According to AGB Moldova, the most popular television newscast is *Vremya* on Prime TV. This bulletin is rebroadcast from the Russian government-controlled channel ORT and reflects exclusively the news and events that take place daily in the Russian Federation. It has been the unrivalled leader since 2008, although today's ratings are slightly lower than in 2009, when they stood at 13.14 percent. The second placed program (again, unchanged since 2008) is the *Mesager* newscast by the public television station Moldova 1 (at 7.00 p.m. in Russian and at 9.00 p.m. in Romanian). The leaders are followed by the news program of NIT *Curier* (in Romanian), TV7's *Segodnya v Moldove* (in Russian) and *Cotidian* (in Romanian), *Ştirile ProTV Chisinau* (in Romanian) of ProTV Chisinau, and *Obiectiv* (a bulletin in both Russian and Romanian) of N4. *Curier* has been among the top five since 2008, as have both *Segodnya v Moldove* and *Ştirile ProTV Chisinau* since 2009, without significant gains or losses. The top channels for news are Prime TV, Moldova 1, and NIT, reflecting their nationwide coverage and free-to-air services. Between 2000 and 2010, the top news bulletins have kept their positions almost unchanged.

Table 7.

Top television news bulletins in Moldova, July–August 2010

| News bulletin	Language	Channel	Date	Rating, %
Vremya	Russian	Prime TV	23 August 2010	10.14
Mesager	Romanian	Moldova 1	31 August 2010	8.27
Curier	Russian	NIT	7 July 2010	3.76
Segodnya v Moldove	Russian	TV7 NTV	8 July 2010	2.64
Stirile ProTV Chisinau	Romanian	ProTV	9 July 2010	2.62
Cotidian	Romanian	TV7 NTV	16 July 2010	2.29

Source: Television MR MLD Company, AGB Moldova.

However, new research that shows different results from those of AGB Moldova, both concerning the general rating of television channels, and the top list of news bulletins. The IMAS survey company carried out an opinion poll upon request of ProTV Chisinau, in which they researched the television audience. It suggests that, even though the highest-rated television station is Prime TV (21.7 percent), it is followed by ProTV

Chisinau (9.6 percent) and Moldova 1 (8.4 percent).[33] According to IMAS, the most popular newscast nationwide is *Primele știri* at 9.00 p.m. (Prime TV), closely followed by *Știrile ProTV Chisinau* at 8.00 p.m. (ProTV Chisinau), and the Romanian-language edition of *Mesager* at 9.00 p.m. (Moldova 1).

The preference for newscasts differs according to the location and living conditions of the audience. Rural audiences generally prefer the news bulletins of the channels with nationwide coverage, such as Moldova 1, Prime TV, and NIT, while the urban population prefers local or regional television stations (usually received by cable), such as ProTV Chisinau, TV7, or N4. The main reason for this is the fact that cable television is largely limited to urban areas.

Figure 11.

Top television channels as primary sources of news in Moldova, as % of TV audience, May 2010
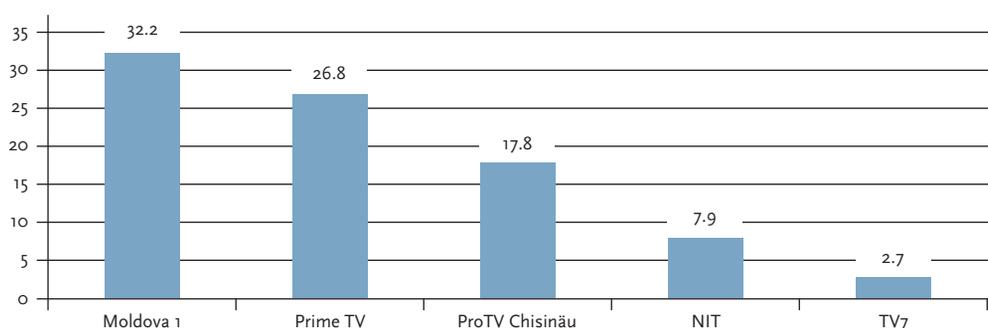
Source: Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, May 2010.

The format and topics of newscasts differ from one television station to another. The prevalent news topics are politics, corruption, unemployment, quality of life, and the economy. Similarly to print media, people most frequently featured on television are state officials and parliamentary politicians.[34] Among the television stations that cover mostly political issues are NIT, N4, and Prime TV. Moldova 1 and TV7 opt for a high proportion of news on social issues. ProTV Chisinau usually focuses on sensationalist issues (corruption, crimes, or accidents), social life, and sports.

Most television channels broadcast news in Romanian as well as in Russian, except for ProTV Chisinau, which carries only Romanian-language bulletins.[35]

---

33. The IMAS survey was carried out during September 2010. It has a representative sample of 1,142 people and an error margin of 2.9 percent. The survey was made according to the day-after recall method: participants were asked to name the programs they watched the previous day.

34. Independent Journalism Center, *Raport de Reflectarea de către mass-media a subiectelor de interes public* (Monitoring Report: Coverage by the media of issues of public interest), June 2010, available in Romanian and Russian at http://www.ijc.md/index.php?option=com_content&task =view&id=566&Itemid=127 (accessed 21 April 2011).

35. Until 2005, the latter also featured Russian-language newscasts, but, according to Artur Corghencea, director of ProTV Chisinau's news department, they "gave up on [them] because the audience of Russian and Romanian news bulletins was the same and we replaced it with a talk-show for women also broadcast in Russian." Interview by e-mail with Artur Corghencea, 10 December 2010.

The viewers' native language, as well as the television format, determines their choice of channel. Most native Romanian-speakers prefer ProTV Chisinau and Moldova 1, while those whose native language is Russian, Ukrainian, or Gagauz favor Prime TV, NIT, or TV7. This pattern has not changed much since 2005.

Figure 12.

Television channel audiences in Moldova by ethnic origin, as % of TV audience, May 2010
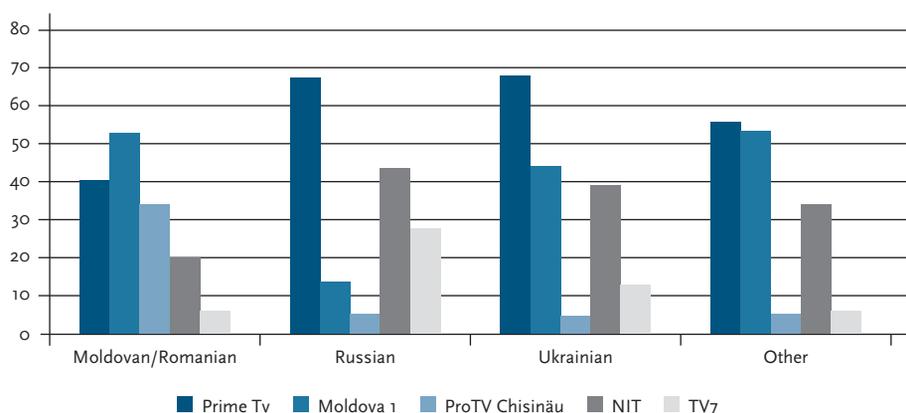
Source: Institute for Public Policy, Barometer of Public Opinion, May 2010.

1.3.3   Impact of Digital Media on Good-quality News

In the last five years, the greatest change in terms of news quality has happened to internet platforms. News websites have developed content, starting from the basics (i.e. text news) and progressing to complex multimedia features, such as live video-streaming, live reporting, and others. The process of 'iReporting' became popular, as media consumers were offered a chance to record audio or video and post it on the internet, delivering potentially top news to television channels, radio stations, or print media in Moldova. At the same time, audiovisual content on the internet enhanced the appeal of blogging as a source of news.

The internet also offered opportunities for newspapers and magazines to diversify content and extend their activity via the web. They not only publish the content of the print version on the internet (in some cases, the entire content), but also offer various ways to access video and audio, presentations, and multimedia, as well as commenting options on various subjects, which, in turn, helps journalists ensure a follow-up on their stories.

The internet has also enabled radio stations to introduce a greater variety to their products, such as providing transcripts of audio materials. The best examples in this respect are the websites of the Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty in Moldova (RFE/RL), Europalibera.org, and Radio Vocea Basarabiei (Voceabasarabiei.md). Along with making audio interviews and reports accessible in the text format, they host blogs by political and economic analysts and opinion leaders in Moldova.

Digital media have contributed in the most consistent way to establishing a new standard of speed for news production. The feature of breaking news became extremely popular for television channels and news websites, allowing the audience to follow the latest local and international events more closely.

Television channels have also used the opportunities provided by digital media to supplement their content. The example of Protv.md is relevant in this case: it offers not only video news but also full-length unedited recordings of events, without any commentary. Thus, the audience is offered an opportunity to build a broader picture. Secondly, the websites of television channels exceed the traditional television services in that the viewers can follow either a whole newscast or program, or just highlights.

1.4   Assessments

Newspapers and radio have declined as the primary sources of information in the Moldovan audience's preference, and have also lost some their audience's trust. Experts interviewed for this study believe that a significant number of readers have migrated from newspapers to other sources, especially the internet. One of the possible reasons for this is the relatively low cost of, and increasingly easier access to, the internet.[36] The increasing number of computer owners, which had a direct impact on the internet penetration rate and the growing number of internet users, is the most important aspect of digital media development in Moldova in the last five years.

Television kept growing in popularity as a primary source of information in recent years, gaining also in terms of viewers' trust. A major event in the audiovisual landscape was the emergence of several new, and mutually integrated, radio and television stations.

The internet has also provided media institutions with ways of diversifying their information platforms. Most newspapers, television, and radio stations also have websites where they can post content that is different from their traditional offer: news or live-streaming services in the case of television, live broadcasts in the case of radio, and multimedia content in the case of newspapers.

Digitization has, to some extent, influenced news and current affairs content, but the change has not been particularly significant, due to the relatively slow pace of digital transition in Moldova.

News websites have attained increasingly high popularity and grown in number. Until recently, their content mainly consisted of information reproduced from other outlets, but now more and more websites produce their own content, which creates competition between individual websites, as well as among the media in general.

---

36.   Interview by e-mail with Corina Cepoi, Media Expert and Director of Chisinau School of Advanced Journalism, 10 December 2010 (hereafter, Interview with Corina Cepoi).

However, new opportunities were accompanied by new challenges, such as the disparity between the rural and urban populations in terms of access to new technologies and news platforms. Access to cable television and the limited access to the internet among the rural population remain limited. Another considerable hurdle to the development of digital media is the dominance of a few powerful players, such as Moldtelecom, in the internet market. As a result, competition is somewhat diminished to the detriment of the quality of audiovisual services.

2. Digital Media and Public or State-Administered Broadcasters

2.1 Public Service and State Institutions

2.1.1 Overview of Public Service Media—News and Current Affairs Output

Public media services in Moldova are divided in two categories: the old-style, state-owned media (i.e. the state-owned press agency Moldpres), and the reformed public media (i.e. the national public broadcasting company TeleRadio-Moldova (TRM), the public broadcasting company Teleradio Gagauzia, and several print media partly funded from public money). The two public broadcasting companies, TRM and Teleradio Gagauzia, conduct their activity according to the Broadcasting Code and their own statutes.[37] The state-owned press agency, Moldpres Agency, has its own statute, according to which Moldpres employs a self-financing scheme (however, in practice, self-financing does not exist as the Government still provides the agency with offices and subsidizes distribution costs).

Currently, Moldpres Agency is a media institution with three main activities: publishing *Monitorul Oficial*, producing news, and photo chronicles. The Moldpres statute stipulates that the agency focuses on reflecting the activities of the Government, Parliament, and the Presidency, as well as on offering editing, printing, and advertising services, along with photo and video-production and marketing.[38]

Under the Communist government, Moldpres Agency was not trusted by the general public and was frequently criticized in media and by civil society for political bias. Director of the weekly *Ziarul de Garda* Alina Radu says that "the content delivered by the agency to the public was such that one could easily see Moldpres's deep political engagement. Now, as the government has changed, we can say that the institution is only 'half engaged'."[39]

---

37. Chapter 7 of the Broadcasting Code is entirely dedicated to the functioning of the Public Broadcasting Company TeleRadioMoldova. Available at http://www.apel.md/public//upload/en_audiovisual_code.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011); the statutes of the public broadcasters are available at http://trm.md/index/php?add+9=3 (accessed 5 July 2011).

38. Decision of the Government of Republic of Moldova on Approving the Statute of the State Information Agency Moldpres no. 532 of 06 May 2003, *Monitorul Oficial* No. 84-86/565, 16 May 2003.

39. Interview with Alina Radu, director of *Ziarul de Garda*, Chisinau, 16 November 2010 (hereafter, Interview with Alina Radu).

Valeriu Renita, a former director of the agency (2004–2009), was an adviser to President Vladimir Voronin before his appointment. The tradition of appointing politically affiliated directors persists, and translates into continuing biased coverage in support of the party in power.[40] Current director Vlad Darie is a member of the Liberal Democratic Party (Partidul Liberal Democrat din Moldova, PLDM), one of the ruling coalition parties.

Until 2005, the State also owned several print outlets (in particular, the newspapers *Moldova Suverana* and *Nezavisimaia Moldova*). On 18 May 2005 and 1 June 2005, respectively, *Nezavisimaia Moldova* and *Moldova Suverana* were de-nationalized and the Government ceased to be their publisher. Shortly afterward, the two outlets were privatized. The de-nationalization process began upon a request of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which requested Moldova to de-nationalize not only its state-owned print media, but also the print and broadcast media with local authorities as founders. However, after the privatization, the editorial policy of these newspapers remained the same and state subsidies continued (see section *7.3*).

There are around 40 outlets that are funded, in part or fully, from public money; these are mainly municipal or local newspapers. The de-nationalization process of these publications began only in mid-2010, with the drafting of the law on de-nationalization of newspapers financed from public money.[41] On 17 September 2010, the Parliament adopted the law, which is yet to come into force upon its publication in the *Monitorul Oficial*.[42]

The National Public Broadcasting Institution TRM is the former state-owned national radio and television broadcaster founded in 1958, which has been turned into a public company. It has nationwide coverage and is financed mainly from public funds, which are allocated by the Parliament (see section *6.2.1*). It owns the television channels Moldova 1 and Moldova International and the radio channels Radio Moldova and Radio Moldova International. The Broadcasting Code adopted on 27 July 2006[43] by the Parliament provides that the National Public Institution is a public broadcasting service that enjoys editorial independence and institutional autonomy, is established using public funds, and is meant to offer services to the entire society and cover the whole territory of the country. The two national public stations must produce and broadcast news and programs on social, political, economic, and international realities, as well as cover the fields of culture, entertainment, education, and sports. The Broadcasting Code specifies that an impartial and objective coverage of all news and events is binding on the public stations. The broadcasters must promote

---

40. Point 15 of the statute of the agency states that "the institution is managed by the general director, appointed and dismissed by the Founder". In this case, the founder is the Government.

41. The Law on De-nationalization of Media Outlets, draft available at http://api.md/files/15-proiect_lege_deetatizare.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

42. Interview by e-mail with media expert Eugen Urusciuc, editor-in-chief of news agency Monitor Media, 11 November 2010 (hereafter, Interview with Eugen Urusciuc).

43. Broadcasting Code of the Republic of Moldova, no. 260-XVI of 27 July 2006, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 131-133/679, 18 August 2006, available in Romanian at http://ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/legislatie/codul_audiovizialului.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011) (hereafter, Broadcasting Code).

the values of democracy, tolerance, modernity, and freedom and satisfy the needs of all ethnic and socio–economic groups in Moldova.

Moldova 1 has seven daily newscasts: one in Russian and six in Romanian. *Mesager* (Messenger) is the main news bulletin of the channel; it lasts 40 minutes and covers domestic and international news. The overall duration of news bulletins on Moldova 1 is 200 minutes, or about 13 percent of the total broadcast schedule time. The public radio station Radio Moldova has 10-minute newscasts every hour. News and programs broadcast by the public radio station constitute about 25 percent of its broadcast schedule.

The company Teleradio Gagauzia is a local broadcaster that covers the territory of the Gagauzia autonomous region.[44] This company includes one television channel and a radio station (TV Gagauzia and Radio Gagauzia). The activity of this company is regulated by the local authorities. However, the Broadcasting Code has a provision that applies to this broadcaster too: in the regions populated predominantly by ethnic minorities (and Gagauzia is one of them), a minimum 20 percent of the services have to be broadcast in the state language (Romanian).[45] The media content produced by TV Gagauzia and Radio Gagauzia is 50 percent in the Gagauz language, 30 percent in Russian, and 20 percent in the Romanian language. Radio Gagauzia broadcasts news bulletins every hour and they last from seven to 10 minutes, and TV Gagauzia has six newscasts a day.

Both the national public television and radio have 99 percent national coverage. These can be received anywhere in Moldova by means of a simple aerial. In terms of nationwide audience share, the reports by the company AGB Moldova place the public broadcaster Moldova 1 in second place, behind the private station Prime TV. (See sections *1.3.1* and *1.3.2*.)

There are no specific surveys or qualitative analyses to reflect the changes in the newscasts of the public broadcaster. However, according to the CJI monitoring reports of the media during the 28 November 2010 election campaign, "the public stations Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova had a different behavior compared to the 2009 election campaigns. Both … have renounced their habit of beginning news bulletins by reporting on the Government and ruling parties. The stations ensured diversity of opinions in news and other kinds of materials relevant to the present monitoring, providing, in addition, a number of educational election-related materials. In most cases, subjects were presented in a neutral context …"[46]

---

44. U.T.A Găgăuzia, or Gagauz-Yeri, is an autonomous region in the southwest of Moldova, inhabited predominantly by the Gagauz people, which are a group of Turkic peoples that practice the Christian-Orthodox religion. In December 1994, the Parliament acknowledged their territorial autonomy, and in 1995 the borders of the region were established following a local referendum. The surface of the region is 1,830 km²; the population is 155,587 inhabitants.

45. Broadcasting Code, art. 11.9.

46. Independent Journalism Center, *"Media Monitoring During the Election Campaign for the Parliamentary Elections on 28 November 2010"*, available in Romanian at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/monitorizare/Raport_final_maleg_ro.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

Corina Cepoi, director of the Chisinau School of Advanced Journalism, believes the change in the quality of the media content produced by the national public media was possible due to the election of a new management of TRM that occurred in January 2010. Ms Cepoi stresses that "the editorial policy of the public stations changed for the better and this can be easily seen in the diversity of opinions featured in the newscasts of Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova stations, which have become much more objective."[47]

2.1.2   Digitization and Services

The digitization of TRM is proceeding slowly. The website Trm.md is outdated and the quality is well below the average of private media websites. According to Viorel Roman, an IT and web-programming expert,[48] "although Trm.md generally relies on modern technologies, these are not applied where they should be. […] Information […] lacks diversity and is posted in a chaotic manner. That makes search and reading […] very difficult."

Progress is not only slow, it is also limited to urban localities. While the wired urban population has access to a variety of platforms, including digital, there is little diversity of public service content distribution and dissemination in rural areas.

Neither Moldova 1 nor Radio Moldova has its own website, and the content of both broadcasters is placed on the company's corporate website. The company website features news, video and audio reporting, legal acts concerning the broadcasters' activities, the statute, and a short description of programs. It also offers audio and video streaming, as well as recorded newscasts and programs. There are no interactive elements on the website and no space for audience feedback. One of the main impediments in creating a contemporary and interactive website for each institution is the lack of funds for digital services (see section *2.1.3*).

According to Metrica.md, Trm.md was 26th on the list of most popular Moldovan websites in February 2011. It ranks higher (10th) on the list of news and media websites, with 62,000 unique users per month.

In recent years, the situation of public mass media has not changed significantly due to digitization. The only major event was the launching of the Moldova 1 International television station in January 2007. However, three years later (in January 2010) the local media announced the services of the Moldova 1 International station were suspended due to lack of a contract with a signal distribution company.

---

47.   Interview by e-mail with Corina Cepoi.

48.   Interview with Viorel Roman, IT and Web-programming expert, Chisinau, 9 March 2011.

2.1.3 Government Support

So far, the Government has not made a great financial contribution to the digitization of public media and increasing the range of digital services they offer, but it has shown political support for digital projects.

Eugen Urusciuc, editor-in-chief of news agency Monitor Media, notes that "the technical equipment in use at the two public national stations is clearly outdated and represents another serious impediment to switching to digital broadcast."[49] Re-equipment of these media institutions began quite recently when some government funds and assistance from some foreign governments was earmarked for this purpose. The Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a memorandum with TRM providing €100,000 of financial assistance.[50] The amount was allotted for modern equipment in order to increase the quality and competitiveness of the public broadcaster's shows.

However, these funding efforts have been sporadic and insufficient. Dumitru Lungu, executive director of Web Consulting, a company in charge of programming and administration of Trm.md, says that there is a strategy[51] to launch separate platforms for Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova, but it has stalled. According to Mr Lungu, one of the toughest issues it faces is "the insufficiency of funds for this service." Currently, there are no plans to allocate funds for further investments into TRM's online services.[52] For a website to become competitive and gain popularity, Mr Lungu says it takes "equipment for a high-quality live television and radio streaming, which probably will cost around €20,000; reliable online services, podcasts for people from abroad, and many other things. All of this is absent in TeleRadioMoldova's case."

As for the digital switch-over, the total expenses in Moldova are relatively small-scale compared to those of other CIS states. The country is small and the costs needed to cover the entire territory with technical equipment are comparatively low. According to some experts, the total budget for completing the digital switch-over is around €3 million.[53]

In the analog era, the most significant support received by the public service media from the Government has been politically motivated, which frequently led to biased coverage. The public service media have traditionally had privileged access to political news, conferences, and events. Media experts trace these privileges back to the Soviet era, when the media acted as the Government's official mouthpieces. Even now politicians tend to favor public over private outlets when offering interviews, since the former have national coverage and can provide greater visibility. Also, journalists from the public media are sometimes invited to join the official delegations on their travels abroad, and their travel expenses are usually covered from the public budget.

---

49. Interview with Eugen Urusciuc.

50. Report of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs on the Completion by the Ministry and Diplomatic Missions of the Strategy for Attracting Investments and Promoting Exports in 2006–2015.

51. The new concept of the strategy is available in Romanian at http://trm.md/concept/1_Cerintele%20generale.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

52. Interview by email with Dumitru Lungu, executive director of Web Consulting, 18 March 2011.

53. Ivan Omelianiuk, *The Status of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) in the Former USSR Republics*, p. 11, available at http://www.digitag.org/MembersOnly/Reports/Post-Soviet%20Report%20Version1.2.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

2.1.4 Public Service Media and Digital Switch-over

The transition to digital terrestrial transmission has been on the Government's to-do list for the last five years. In 2007, the Government approved the Concept of Digital Terrestrial Television Introduction,[54] but it has not been implemented yet and there are scarcely any other digitalization-related documents. In June 2010, the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications finalized the drafting of the Strategy Regarding Transition from Terrestrial Analog to Terrestrial Digital Television,[55] but it still has not been approved. Thus, the legal framework for digital switch-over is largely missing (see section *7.1.1*), the progress toward digitization is slow and evaluation of the impact of digitalized terrestrial platforms on the influence of public service broadcasters in these conditions is premature.

What can be said at this point is that the national, state-owned transmission network operator Radiocomunicatii has been selected to operate the DTT platform. The first DTT trial, offering services from one transmitter, began in September 2003 in Chisinau. The second transmitter was installed in October 2003. Currently, one multiplex is available offering access to four television program services. Another DTT trial operates in the town of Slobozia.

The launch of a nationwide or regional DTT platform was expected to begin by the end of 2009, but the first concrete steps were only taken in October 2010, when Radiocomunicatii began installing new equipment that would ensure the reception of digital terrestrial signal. It is expected that after completion of the process of digitizing terrestrial platforms, there will be about eight television stations in the first multiplex using MPEG-4 AVC compression technology. The second multiplex has to be launched by 2012, allowing viewers to access 16 television stations.

2.2 Public Service Provision

2.2.1 Perception of the Public Service Media

On 8 August 2004, TeleRadio Moldova made the transition from a state-owned institution to a public institution. However, until 2010, the agenda of newscasts and information programs indicated that Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova continued to cover current affairs from the viewpoint of the party in power, and to the detriment of the public interest. For instance, the results of the 5 April 2009 elections showed that the PCRM won most of the seats in the Parliament, but the reports of local and international organizations noted a great number of violations, which led to mass protests in the days following the elections, 6 and 7 April 2009 (see section *3.2.1*). Romanian channels TVR 1 and Realitatea TV covered the events extensively and broadcast

---

54. Technical regulation "Radiocomunicatii si radiodifuziune. Utilizarea efectivă a spectrului de frecvente si evitarea perturbatiilor nocive" adoptata de Guvern prin "Ordinul cu privire la aprobarea a două reglementări tehnice nr. 52 din 28.04.2007" (Radiocommunications and Broadcasting: an Effective Use of the Spectrum and Avoiding Harmful Perturbations), adopted by the Government order No. 52 of 28 April 2007, available in Romanian at http://www.mtic.gov.md/img/gis/hg/52_rou.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

55. The elaborated draft Strategy and the related draft laws are available in Romanian at http://www.mtic.gov.md/pl_remis/162111/ (accessed 4 January 2011).

live from Chisinau while the national broadcasters Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova broadcast plays, movies, and ballet performances, completely ignoring the protests in the streets of Chisinau. The coverage only started in the evening of 7 April 2009, when the protests were almost over. Moreover, upon the Communist Party command, the public broadcasters began a massive disinformation campaign over the issue, promoting allegations that the protests were set up by the opposition parties and supported by Romania.[56]

According to media and international organizations' reports, the editorial policy of TRM changed significantly after the July 2009 elections when the Communists lost power. News and reportages now tend to comply with the standards of journalism, something that had been missing until early 2010.[57] Once TRM's new management was elected in 2010, they established a strategy for transforming the public broadcasters, introducing clear internal rules concerning reporting and news production. Changes in the editorial policy of the public broadcasters have also shifted the popular perception of their role.

TV Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova have been regarded, until recently, as media tools that should serve the interests of the Government and the politicians in power and polish their public image. The perception manifested itself in the budget allocations. When analyzing the broadcasters' budget over the space several years, it is easy to spot that the budget allocation in election years was considerably higher than in other years (see section *6.2.1*), which suggests that the funding was seen as an indirect means of influencing editorial decisions. At the same time, the Communist Government always tolerated violations and irregularities committed by these institutions, such as repeated refusals to disclose financial information.[58]

Experts note that, in the last year, politicians' attitude toward the public service broadcasters started changing and moving toward respect and collaboration rather than imposing obedience. "Of course, that does not mean that politicians do not regret losing influence over the Public Company, but this is just a first step to having a public broadcaster serving, indeed, its audience," says Vasile Botnaru, director of the Chisinau office of RFE/RL.[59] The growing respect of politicians for TRM is related to these changes in editorial policy, as well as to the presence of new managers who are respected journalists with vast experience.

---

56. Nicolae Negru, "The Chronicle of Events of Twitter Revolution. Episode One: the Republic of Moldova," volume edited by Andrei Cibotaru, Publishing House ARC, Chisinau, 2010; and Independent Journalism Center, *Report on the Situation of the Press in Moldova in 2009*, available at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/raport_FOP_2009_en.pdf (accessed 10 January 2012) (hereafter, Independent Journalism Center, *Report on the Situation of the Press in Moldova in 2009*).

57. The Electronic Press Association from Moldova (APEL) carried out several case studies and monitoring in this respect. Its results are available at http://www.apel.md/news.php?l=en&idc=145&c=144, http://www.apel.md/lib.php?l=en&idc=159&c=144, and http://www.apel.md/news.php?l=en&idc=147&c=144 (all accessed 5 July 2011).

58. For instance, no one has ever had access to the financial reports of TRM. In addition, the chair of the company most of the times refused to attend the Parliament sessions when annual reports had to be presented. See, for example, http://www.azi.md/en/print-story/5460 (accessed 5 July 2011).

59. Interview by e-mail with media expert Vasile Botnaru, director of the Chisinau office of the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 13 November 2010. (RFE/RL is the U.S. international broadcaster, funded by Congress.)

A more respectful attitude of politicians towards the Public Broadcasting Company … originated in the fact that the new government stated their intentions from the very beginning and clearly established the relationship between TeleRadioMoldova and the political class. It was manifestly assumed that the relation should be one of co-operation and not obedience, while the management of TeleRadioMoldova would decide its editorial policy independently and would not accept interferences from the outside.[60]

However, "even now politicians are tempted to believe that the Public Company belongs to them, thinking that 'it is us who allot funds and they should at least cover us massively in news', which reveals in fact the mentality and immaturity of the political class. In this case, the independence … will depend on the endurance of both the management of the Company and the working journalists in opposing politicians' intentions to subordinate these public media", says Ion Bunduchi, executive director of the Electronic Press Association from Moldova (APEL).[61]

In the media, too, both TV Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova have, in the past, been perceived as an institution serving authorities. Media expert Eugen Urusciuc believes that the trend persists even now, although to a smaller extent, driven by resentment rather than the lack of understanding of the role of the public service media.

Some journalists were resentful that Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova fellow journalists were favored and were freer to access certain institutions, press events, reports, diverse information, as well as had easier access to government officials as sources for some media content. On the other hand, there was also a feeling of pity for Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova journalists, because the Company has always struggled with technical issues on a large scale compared to private media outlets: old cameras, insufficient and old-generation computers, outdated microphones and recorders, etc.[62]

However, the presence of a competent, politically unaffiliated management and the palpable changes in news coverage have started changing the attitude of the journalistic community. According to Mr Bunduchi, "both journalists and the civil society are rediscovering the newscasts of public media and began following their activity and content, a fact mostly owing to the Company's new management."[63]

No opinion polls are available that would indicate the dynamics of public perception of the public service media. Generally, the level of media literacy in the country is low and Mr Bunduchi believes the audience "is not yet capable of making a comparison between what existed until 2009 and what is now" and has little

60. Interview with Eugen Urusciuc.

61. Interview by e-mail with media expert Ion Bunduchi, executive director of the Electronic Press Association from Moldova (APEL), 7 November 2010 (hereafter, Interview with Ion Bunduchi).

62. Interview with Eugen Urusciuc.

63. Interview with Ion Bunduchi.

awareness of differences between state-owned media and public media, or what it means to be impartial in news reporting.[64]

2.2.2 Public Service Provision in Commercial Media

The only law binding on all broadcasters is the Broadcasting Code and the commitments undertaken in the contract granting the technical and broadcasting license. The broadcasters must ensure political and social pluralism; cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity; and information, education, and entertainment of the public respecting the legal guarantee of fundamental freedoms and human rights.[65] They must preserve neutrality and shall not broadcast programs inciting hatred on the grounds of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual preference.[66]

There are, however, some conditions in the Broadcasting Code that apply to all broadcasters and concern broadcasting public information in emergency situations. Article 17 of the Broadcasting Code stipulates that: "1) In the case of a threat to public security or the constitutional order, broadcasters are required to promptly transmit the official announcements of the Parliament, President, and Government in all their program services at their own expense. 2) Broadcasters shall, without delay and free of charge, transmit in all their program services information which is necessary for the protection of life, health, and security of persons or for the prevention of environmental or property damage."[67]

In all other cases, broadcasters have the right to freely design their editorial policy and broadcast schedule, as long as they respect the legal norms.

2.3   Assessments

The primary issue for public service broadcasting in recent years has been the change in administrative and editorial policies of TRM. The new management stated from the beginning that it is editorially independent from politicians and political entities, and has radically modified priorities in news coverage. At the same time, the digitization process of the public broadcasters is slow, there is no legal framework to provide for the transition, and funds to make the public broadcasters technically fit for digital broadcasting and interactive web presence are scarce.

The telecoms and IPTV niche could provide a welcome boost for the digital switch-over. After the IPTV service was launched by the state-owned operator Moldtelecom, the public channel Moldova 1 was included in the list of television channels available in its offer. When Moldtelecom diversifies its service across the entire country, it would create a natural support for the digital switch-over of public broadcasters.

---

64.   Interview with Ion Bunduchi.

65.   Broadcasting Code, art. 7.1.

66.   Broadcasting Code, art. 6.1.

67.   Broadcasting Code, art. 17.

Thus far, the proportion of the population that has benefited from the first digital projects is small and predominantly urban. Moreover, both Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova lack a website of their own and use a chaotic and cluttered corporate website to disseminate news in an outdated format, without interactivity.

There is a need for new legal norms and for clearer provisions regulating the activity of the state-owned Moldpres Agency, because the definition of its status is vague. On the one hand, the statute of Moldpres Agency specifies that it is a self-financed institution. On the other hand, the Government provides its offices and covers its overheads, as well as subsidizing some of the publishing costs. At the moment, there is a debate in society over the need for de-nationalization of *Monitorul Oficial* and the greater transparency of Moldpres in general.[68]

---

68. Monitor Media, "*Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova nu cade sub incidența legii privind deetatizarea publicațiilor publice*" (Monitorul Oficial Not Subject to the Law on Privatization of Government Publications), 23 September 2010.

3. Digital Media and Society

3.1   User-Generated Content (UGC)

3.1.1   UGC Overview

There were 16,600 website domains registered with the database of the state-owned company MoldData in August 2010. Of these, 10,500 were registered by local owners and 6,100 by foreign citizens. However, to compile a list of top websites and the types of UGC in Moldova proved to be complicated, since data collection methods differ considerably.[69]

According to the experts interviewed for this study and also to Alexa.com, the most popular local website is Torrentsmd.com,[70] a file-sharing website and news aggregator that features the largest forum and discussion group in Moldova. However, the list of the most popular web resources is dominated by foreign players. Alexa.com shows that the top 10 web resources include Google.com, YouTube.com, Google.md, Odnoklassniki.ru, Mail.ru, Facebook.com, Torrentsmd.com, Yandex.ru, Yahoo.com, and the local classifieds website 999.md.[71] Foreign, particularly Russia-based, UGC social networks are popular: Odnoklassniki.ru has more than one million users and Facebook almost 200,000[72] (see section *3.1.2*).

---

69. Interview by e-mail with Mihai Moscovici, blogger and online media expert, 2 December 2010.

70. Interview by e-mail with Vitalie Esanu, IT professor at the Technical University of Moldova (UTM), 27 October 2010.

71. Alexa.com, *Top Sites in Moldova*, available at http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/MD (accessed 5 May 2011).

72. Socialbakers.com, *Moldova Facebook Statistics*, available at http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/moldova (accessed 5 May 2011).

Table 8.

Most popular local websites in Moldova, by unique visitors, November 2010

Website	Category	Unique visitors (m)	Page views (m)
Emusic.md	Entertainment	1.30	3.63
Protv.md	News, TV station	0.45	7.93
Unimedia.md*	Pure-play news site	0.30	n/a
Freetorrentsmd.com	File sharing and downloads	0.27	11.1
Moldova.org	News &multimedia	0.25	0.5
Mp3md.org	File sharing and downloads	0.20	0.89
Faces.md	Social networking	0.18	19.05
Allmoldova.com	News and multimedia	0.17	1.32
Jurnal.md	News and multimedia	0.15	1.95
Jurnaltv.md	News, TV station	0.13	2.05
Terra.md	News, catalogue of web-sites	0.12	0.66

Note: * Not registered with Metrica.md.

Source: Metrica.md (based on Google Analytics).

The most visited news websites are Protv.md, the website of ProTV television, with some 450,000 unique visitors per month, and Unimedia.md, with some 300,000 visitors.[73] Among the newspapers with internet platforms, the most popular include *Timpul* (Timpul.md) and *Jurnal* (Jurnal.md) with approximately 100,000 unique visitors per month, the magazine *VIP Magazin* (Vipmagazin.md) with 45,000, and the newspaper *Flux* (Flux.md) with 40,000.[74] For the most part, these sites have a limited UGC component mostly limited to comments posted by users. None of these platforms offers the option for users to upload pictures, audio, or video files: as a rule, these are only accepted if sent via email to the editorial team.

Comments on news, articles, and editorials may be numerous, but the overall quality of online discussion is low and comments are mostly anonymous. Personal insults and profanities are commonly used. Lately, given the offensive language used in many comments, several websites (such as ZdG.md, Europalibera.org, and Unimedia.md) have started moderating the online debates.

---

73. The number of users of Protv.md can be viewed at http://metrica.md/ro/58/www.protv.md, while the number of users of Unimedia.md can be viewed at http://stat.trafic.ro/stat/unimd (both accessed 5 July 2011).

74. Statistics for unique visitors are available at http://metrica.md/ro/493/timpul.md (for Timpul.md); http://metrica.md/ro/63/www.jurnal.md (for Jurnal.md); http://metrica.md/ro/62/www.vipmagazin.md (for Vipmagazin.md); and http://metrica.md/ro/294/flux.md (for Flux.md).

3.1.2 Social Networks

Social networks are popular in Moldova. According to the survey carried out by the IMAS–INC Marketing and Surveys Institute (*Institutul de Marketing și Sondaje IMAS–INC Chisinău*), the Russian-language Odnoklassniki.ru is the most widely used social network: two out of every three internet users in Moldova have an account on this website. The leader is followed by Facebook, Faces Moldova, and VKontakte.[75]

Odnoklassniki has 17.3 million unique monthly users in Russia[76] and a large number of users in other parts of the former Soviet Union, as well as in the EU countries with large immigrant communities from the former Soviet Union, such as Romania, Italy, and Germany. According to data provided by the Odnoklassniki office in Moldova, at the end of 2010 there were more than 960,000 users of this social network in Moldova.

Some social media experts believe that the relatively small size of the Facebook user base in Moldova (compared to the market leader) is at least partly attributable to the higher education and computer literacy level it requires.

Figure 13.

Most popular social networks in Moldova, as % of total social network users, end-2010
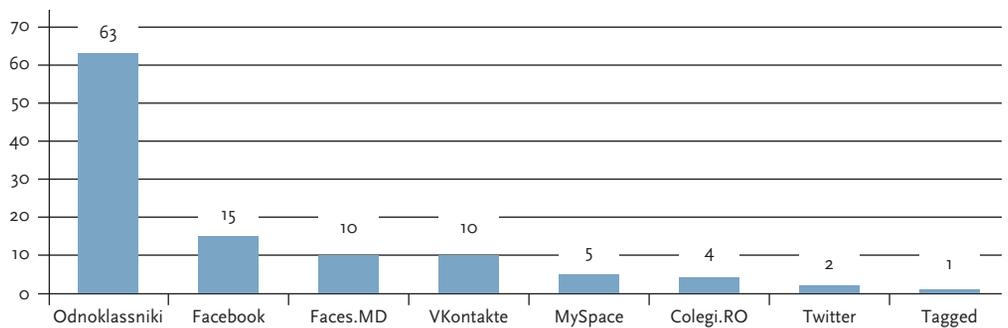
Source: IMAS–INC Marketing and Surveys Institute.

It is worth noting that Facebook recently started experiencing a rapid ascent and is catching up with the leader. In January 2010, the number of Facebook users in Moldova was just around 62,000 people, but, by the end of March 2011, the number had almost tripled (180,120).[77]

---

75. IMAS–INC Marketing and Surveys Institute, *Utilizatorii de site-uri de socializare – Republica Moldova 2010* (Social Network Users, the Republic of Moldova 2010), available at http://ro-ro.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=104072202976460 (accessed 3 May 2011). The IMAS survey was carried out between 15 April 2010 and 3 May 2010 on 1,106 individuals (±3.0 percent error margin) aged 15 and above. The individuals were selected from 75 locations all over the country. The survey is part of an omnibus study with the module of questions elaborated by IMAS re-searchers. Only 387 respondents that stated they were using the internet (35 percent of the overall number) constituted the basis for the analysis.

76. TNS Web Index, December 2010.

77. Socialbakers.com, *Moldova Facebook Statistics,* available at http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/moldova (accessed 5 May 2011).

Paul Hodorogea noted that "Facebook is more a site for youth"[78] and opinion poll figures show that is indeed the case: according to an IMAS survey, 83 percent of Facebook users are aged between 15 and 29, while the same age category make up 67 percent on Odnoklassniki. Facebook users have higher income and predominantly live in the capital Chisinau (58 percent), whereas Odnoklassniki users are mostly people with average income and 60 percent of them live in other locations than Chisinau.[79] Almost half (46 percent) of all internet users in Moldova spend three or more hours daily on social networks.

Social networks in Moldova are primarily used for chatting with friends or relatives, as a source or information, and to keep in touch with school friends and make new friendships, as well as to find out others' opinions. According to the IMAS–INC Marketing and Surveys Institute, the highest number of Moldovans (79 percent of respondents) have created a social network account as a way "to communicate with family and friends." However, "search for information" is the second most given answer in the same survey.

3.1.3   News in Social Media

As mentioned above, search for information is one of the topmost reasons for the Moldovan internet users to access social networks. Blogs, too, are becoming increasingly relevant as a source of news and a trigger for topics later developed into news stories by traditional media or used as a source of quotes and comments.

Most media outlets in Moldova have Facebook accounts, where they post and share their news content. Thus, "Facebook acts as a news aggregator for the users of this social network," says Vasile Galusca, managing director at Interact Media, a blogger and internet marketing expert. According to him, if average users think they possess information that can later be turned into a news story for all media, they find it easier to post it on Facebook or on blogs. "Social networks 'guarantee' that they will be the first to disseminate the given piece of news, not to mention that, through these networks, a particular piece of news can be more accessible to the audience."[80]

Nevertheless, they are used as information-sharing platforms, too. "As a rule, Facebook users are active online news consumers and usually intend to share information with others," says Mr Hodorogea.[81]

Mr Galusca points out the absence of any data about the use of Twitter in Moldova. He says that anecdotal evidence indicates that "it is used for a number of purposes: sharing news, stories, information or links, microblogging, and posting personal information."[82] A study carried out in 2009 showed that almost 45

---

78. Interview by email with Paul Hodorogea, Moldovan blogger and reporter for the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1 December 2010 (hereafter, Interview with Paul Hodorogea).

79. Institutul de Marketing si Sondaje IMAS-INC Chisinau, *Utilizatorii de site-uri de socializare – Rep. Moldova 2010* (Social Network Users, the Republic of Moldova 2010), available at http://ro-ro.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=104072202976460 (accessed 3 May 2011) .

80. Interview by e-mail with Vasile Galusca, blogger, co-founder of Unimedia, and managing director of Interact Media, 8 March 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Vasile Galusca).

81. Interview with Paul Hodorogea.

82. Interview with Vasile Galusca.

percent of the Moldovan bloggers use Twitter as a micro-blogging platform.[83] The protests in April 2009—dubbed the "Twitter Revolution"—suggests that Twitter may be especially heavily used for disseminating news and mobilizing people. But Petru Negura, a co-author of the book *The Twitter Revolution*, is skeptical as to whether the demonstrations were mobilized predominantly through Twitter:

> They could have been easily named the 'Facebook Revolution', 'Online Revolution' or other similar way. One thing, however, is clear: and that is precisely that the internet and online platforms were the tools that mobilized people in the April 2009 protests.[84]

Statistics show a growing popularity of blogs in Moldova, a relatively recent trend. According to Alexa.com, the most-used blog platforms are Blogger.com, LiveJournal.com, and WordPress.com. The data provided by the blog host Blogosfera.md shows that the number of active Moldovan bloggers by May 2011 stands at 1,627.[85]

According to the *Moldova Blogger Survey 2009,* the most popular are personal blogs (74 percent), media blogs (27 percent), and information technology blogs (23 percent). The same survey shows that half of the respondents believe blogs to be as reliable as the press (50 percent) or even more reliable than the press (38 percent).[86] The Romanian language is predominant in writing and administrating blogs (about 70 percent), followed by English (15 percent), and then Russian (10 percent). As for the main sources of information for writing blogs, most of the authors rely on their own knowledge (83 percent), other websites (56 percent), research and surveys (45 percent), and the media (39 percent).[87]

Increasingly, blogs are becoming additional services of traditional media outlets. The most notable blog-hosting media outlets are the RFE/RL (Europaliberă.org) and Unimedia.md. Most of the bloggers writing for these platforms are prominent journalists. Topics range from comments on politics, to social issues, to book reviews. The range of bloggers on Unimedia is wider featuring not just journalists but also prominent NGO activists and politicians. Their blog posts concern politics, social issues and, more recently, tax avoidance.

There are cases of UGC content triggering news in traditional media. For example, Boris Bîrcă, a judge at the Economic Court of Appeal, was caught on a hidden camera in early January 2011 while taking a bribe. The video file by an unknown author was later submitted to Unimedia.md, which published it. The recording was also then used by television stations.[88] Two days later, on 6 January 2011, the Prosecutor General's Office announced that it had analyzed the recording and is investigating the case of suspected corruption.

---

83. Mihai Moscovici, *Moldova Blogger Survey 2009*, available at http://sondaj.blogosfera.md/2009/ (accessed 3 May 2011) (hereafter, Mihai Moscovici, *Moldova Blogger Survey 2009*).

84. Interview by email with Petru Negura, sociologist and visiting professor at the State Pedagogical University Ion Creanga and at the Moldova State University, 15 April 2011.

85. Blogosfera blog-hosting platform, available at http://blogosfera.md/ (accessed 8 March, 2011).

86. Mihai Moscovici, *Moldova Blogger Survey 2009*.

87. Mihai Moscovici, *Moldova Blogger Survey 2009*.

88. Unimedia, "Mită pentru un judecător al Curtii de Apel Economice" (Hidden Camera: Economic Court of Appeal Judge Taking a Bribe), 4 January 2011, available at http://unimedia.md/?mod=news&id=28158 (accessed on 3 May 2011).

3.2 Digital Activism

3.2.1 Digital Platforms and Civil Society Activism

In recent years, digital activism has gained momentum in Moldova with significant digital mobilizations springing up around three consecutive parliamentary elections. The most prominent case initiated through social networks was the so-called Twitter Revolution.

Twitter Revolution

It took place in the aftermath of the parliamentary elections on 5 April 2009 that were criticized by international observers for rule violations and fraud. The Communist Party declared victory, but the League for Defense of Human Rights in Moldova, the East Europe Foundation (former Eurasia Foundation),[89] the OSCE, and other local and international organizations monitoring the elections questioned the results and found numerous problems. Among others was the so-called "dead people voting".[90] On 6 April 2009, several activists used the internet—particularly Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks—as well as text messages on mobile telephones to encourage citizens to participate in a peaceful protest named Mourning Day for Moldova. The protest in the main city square of Chisinau attracted more than 20,000 people. The number of people in the streets and the response among young people took both the Government and the opposition by surprise.

On 7 April 2009, the peaceful protest turned into a massive uprising followed by violent incidents: by the end of the day, dozens of people (mainly police officers, but also some protesters) had been hospitalized with various injuries; the President's Office was ransacked and the Parliament building was set on fire. The opposition refused to vote on the new president and the early parliamentary elections were held on 29 July 2009. This time, the elections were held under close scrutiny by the EU and were won by the democratic opposition parties that subsequently formed a coalition, the Alliance for European Integration.

Another successful campaign of civil society activism launched on a digital platform was the "Yes la vot pe 28" (Yes I will vote on the 28th) campaign.[91] It was initiated ahead of the 28 November 2010 elections by young media activists and bloggers Artur Binzaru, Tudor Darie, and Pavel Novac. The elections were held because the previous vote (in July 2009) resulted in a political deadlock as the Parliament failed to elect a

---

89. East Europe Foundation (EEF) is a successor organization in Moldova of Eurasia Foundation. The EEF was registered on 3 November 2009 and officially started its activities on 1 June 2010.

90. "La 5 aprilie au votat si mortii" (On 5th April Dead People Also Voted), *Timpul*, 11 April 2009, available at http://www.timpul.md/articol/la-5-aprilie-au-votat-si-mortii-1544.html (accessed 3 May 2011).

91. The name is a pun on the English word "yes". Although spelled differently, it sounds similar to the Romanian word "ies", which means "I am going to". The site is available to Facebook users at http://www.facebook.com/#!/event.php?eid=169280396422044 (accessed 3 May 2011) and to Odnoklassniki users at http://www.odnoklassniki.ru/#st.cmd=altGroupMain&st.groupId=ojiflgfewibfqqldi0rboatewzbnjkwoccdqg (accessed 30 November 2010).

president.[92] The campaign was aimed at mobilizing people to vote and it gathered around 30,000 signatures of support on Facebook and Odnoklassniki. The election results showed a record turnout of young people and Moldovans living abroad. What is certain is that the steady increase in voter turn-out among young people in particular has coincided with their growing use of social networks. According to Iurie Ciocan, chair of the Central Electoral Commission (*Comisia Electorală Centrală,* CEC), the turnout has been constantly increasing in the last three elections. It exceeded 63 percent in November 2010, which was six percentage points more than in July 2009.[93]

Civil society activists are increasingly relying on online tools for interacting with communities and carrying out community-oriented projects. An example of such an initiative is a fundraising campaign for flood victims: in the summer of 2010, a small group of friends used Facebook and Twitter to collect donations for the flooded villages of Nemteni, Obileni, and Cotul Morii. The action consisted of dispatching small groups of young people to the largest grocery stores in Chisinau to gather anything the shoppers were willing to donate: food, hygiene products, clothes, toys, and other items.[94]

Facebook was also the key tool in the campaign "Cerem eliberarea jurnalistului Ernest Vardanean" (For the Release of the Journalist Ernest Vardanean). The journalist was arrested by the militia of the separatist Transnistrian Region on 7 April 2010 under accusations of "espionage for Moldova." Vardanean worked as a freelance reporter for the Russian news agency Novyi Region. The campaign helped to bring the case to public attention not only in Moldova, but internationally. Several international institutions such as the OSCE, the European Parliament, and Amnesty International, among others, criticized his detention and demanded his immediate release. On 16 December 2010, Vardanean was found guilty of "high treason of the State" and was sentenced to 15 years in prison. However, on 5 May 2011, the leader of the separatist region, Igor Smirnov, pardoned Vardanean.[95]

Some of the online initiatives have already become a tradition, for example, the "Suflet 2 Suflet" (Soul 2 Soul) Christmas campaign carried out by Torrentsmd.com. It is popular with the users of the website, who donate money, food, clothing, and toys both to children suffering from cancer and to children in orphanages.

3.2.2   The Importance of Digital Mobilizations

Presently, only 30 percent of the total population of Moldova is using the internet, and only a small percentage of those are involved in digital activism. So, even if some digital mobilizations produce tangible results, they still reach only a limited number of people. The notable exception is the Twitter Revolution: the mass mobilization on 7 April 2009 was initiated on Facebook and Twitter, but gained popularity and nationwide recognition, also among unconnected citizens, through the extensive coverage in traditional media.

---

92.   According to Article 85 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova: "In the course of one year, the Parliament can be dissolved only once." That is why the new parliamentary elections could only be held in 2010, because the Parliament was dissolved on 15 June 2009.

93.   Interview by telephone with Iurie Ciocan, Chair of the Central Electoral Commission (*Comisia Electorală Centrală*, CEC), 21 March 2011.

94.   Interview by e-mail with Petru Culeac, researcher at the Vienna School of Governance, Austria, 29 November 2010.

95.   Unimedia.md, "Ernest Vardanean a fost gratiat de Igor Smirnov" (Ernest Vardanean Pardoned by Igor Smirnov), available in Romanian at http://unimedia.md/?mod=news&id=33444 (accessed 5 July 2011).

Another success story of digital activism in Moldova is reaching voters, including the traditionally passive ones, via an online campaign. The mobilization through digital platforms contributed to the record voter turnout in the November 2010 parliamentary elections of 63.37 percent. This figure was three times higher than the participation rate in the constitutional referendum, which happened two months earlier[96] and was poorly promoted by the media, either traditional or digital.

3.3   Assessments

In Moldova, a country whose media before 2010 had experienced years of heavy Government interference, digital media have provided an opportunity to defy Government control. The phenomenon was illustrated most vividly by the Twitter Revolution. Digital platforms have also played a role in news diversification, and some events and initiatives have entered public discussion and gained popularity via blogs, Facebook, or Twitter. Moldovan journalists even joke that one no longer needs to access news agency feeds to be up-to-date with the latest news and events to come, because "this is what Facebook and Twitter are for."[97] However, traditional media tend to use and develop the content featured on blogs and social networks only if it is considered a major story: usually, it is corruption, violence, or crime.

Lately, more and more journalists and opinion leaders have started their own blogs and begun using social networks, offering a wider variety of and easier access to articles, analysis, and opinions.

Generally, consumers of news by means of digital media are those who have access to the internet. For the rest of the population, this content remains unavailable (except for the cases when traditional media develop a story originated on digital platforms). The lack of computers, limited computer literacy, and low penetration of internet services in rural areas all contribute to the trend. In other words, the contribution of digital media to the news offer exists, but its impact remains limited.

The lack of trust in a better future, but also the mistrust in politicians and politics in general, when combined with low internet penetration and the lack of computers, as well as the high level of emigration, means that few people are able to use the opportunities offered by digital activism or respond to online initiatives.

Even though the internet and online platforms are ever more popular, traditional media are still preferred by politicians, mainstream society, and, to a certain extent, civil society actors. This is largely due to the relatively low internet penetration rate and the lack of interest among the political elite in the younger generation of voters. Users with access to highly diverse platforms frequently do not know how to employ them, preferring

---

96.   On 5 September 2010, a constitutional referendum was held in Moldova on the procedure of electing the country's president. The referendum results were declared invalid because of the low participation rate: only 30.29 percent of voters came to the polls.

97.   Interview by e-mail with Dumitru Ciorici, co-founder *Unimedia* and media online expert, 16 November 2010.

to communicate face-to-face or by telephone or email.[98] Generally, internet access is limited to urban areas and the majority of internet users are young people. However, we can expect this situation to change and the balance to shift toward new media and digital platforms, as young internet users/citizens show increasing political influence, emboldened by the Twitter Revolution.

98. Interview by e-mail with Oleg Brega, journalist at Jurnal TV and a social and political activist at NGO Hyde Park, 24 November 2010.

4. Digital Media and Journalism

4.1 Impact on Journalists and Newsrooms

4.1.1 Journalists

The initial attitude of the journalistic community to the internet was dismissive. As the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Press (*Asociatia Presei Independente,* API) Petru Macovei, puts it:

> Traditional media were quite reluctant to embrace new media at the time when online media were becoming more and more popular among the consumers of media and advertising. Famous columnists were saying that online journalism does not stand a chance of becoming 'serious' journalism."[99]

Moreover, Moldovan journalists and media managers lacked the computer skills and the knowledge of computer-assisted reporting. To remedy that, the CJI, in cooperation with media institutions from the EU and the United States, organized a series of training seminars for media employees. The training that has been going on for nearly a decade and is focused, among other topics, on HTML language, the use of Adobe Photoshop and Dreamweaver programs, the use of the internet as a source for research and document storage, the specifics of writing online news, and the design of a news portal. [100]

The ascent of online journalism (discussed in detail in section *1.2*) created new jobs in the relatively small media market of Moldova. Reporters with diverse abilities such as online writing, photo and video editing came into demand. "The work of journalists has changed, because, in online journalism, they have to use convergent journalistic methods and genres," says Corina Cepoi, director of the Chisinau School of Advanced Journalism.[101]

---

99. Interview with Petru Macovei, executive director of the Association of Independent Press, Chisinau, 4 January 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Petru Macovei).

100. Independent Journalism Center, *Annual Reports 2003, 2004,* and *2005*, available at http://www.ijc.md/eng/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=28 (accessed 24 May 2011).

101. Interview with Corina Cepoi.

E-mail, Skype, and social networks are becoming the main tools for research and interviews and so there is less legwork involved in gathering information. Moreover, the emergence of new television channels that broadcast events live (i.e. Publika TV, Jurnal TV), as well as live streaming online (i.e Privesc.eu), has led reporters to increasingly rely on proxy access to events rather than reporting from them first-hand. News is written while watching television or online streaming. Thus, it is often lacking in details, eyewitness comments, and a sense of milieu. The experts interviewed for the study note that more superficial, second-hand journalism is becoming common practice. As the director of the weekly *Ziarul de Garda*, Alina Radu, put it:

> Journalism is now faster and more accessible, but also more superficial. Nowadays a journalist will not insist on the diversity of sources, because [getting] it takes time and when the article is ready nobody would read it, because the media market would by then be saturated with information broadcast live. Journalism done through telephone and internet is surrogate, second-hand journalism. We have to discourage second-hand journalism, but we cannot ignore media consumers' thirst for quick information.[102]

The increased pressure to deliver news fast has led to the reorganization of newsroom schedules. "The emergence of our website prompted a number of changes in the structure and activity of the newsroom," notes Artur Corghencea of ProTV Chisinau. Its newsroom has two working schedules: the online schedule, which works on the principle of 'instant broadcasting', and the regular schedule, which has the main evening newscast as a deadline. "In television, we have time to verify information and approach it in a creative way, whereas on the website everything is done as quickly as possible, because the purpose of our site is to be dynamic, diverse, and prompt," says Corghencea.[103]

4.1.2 Ethics

The current Code of Ethical Principles in Journalism (*Codul Principiilor de Etică Profesională*, henceforth, the Code), adopted by the Journalists' Union (*Uniunea Jurnalistilor din Moldova*) in May 1999, suffers from a lack of enforcement mechanisms. It remains a theoretical document debated in academic circles, rather than a practical tool for journalists. Moreover, it does not apply to online media.

The ethical behavior of mass media in Moldova is monitored mainly during the election campaigns or within the framework of projects supported by foreign donors looking into the coverage of sensitive issues (such as human rights, children's rights, or human trafficking). The National Commission of Journalistic Ethics (*Comisia Nationala de Etica Profesionala a Jurnalistilor*), created by the Journalists' Union following adoption of the Code, has failed to become an efficient regulatory institution. The Press Council (*Consiliul de Presa*), an independent body founded in October 2009 by six media NGOs to improve accountability in the media,

---

102. Interview with Alina Radu.

103. Interview with Artur Corghencea, General Producer, ProTV Chisinau, 6 January 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Artur Corghencea).

is yet to establish itself as an institution capable of resolving ethical dilemmas.[104] As no institution is obliged to react to the violations of the Code, online journalism becomes a fertile ground for experiments with ethics.

The experts note that, in the environment where every click and second counts, accuracy is frequently compromised. "The desire to have more visitors makes online journalists focus on shocking and sensationalist aspects. Journalists produce stories to impress the readers," says Petru Macovei, the director of the Association for Independent Press.[105]

The diversity of opinions and the presumption of innocence suffer, too. "Trying to deliver information fast, journalists violate the presumption of innocence or do not present the opinions of those involved. It is a rare occasion when a reply from an interested party is published, and it only happens on the websites run by the journalists who are familiar with ethical norms."[106] According to data from the judiciary, in 2005–2009 there were 165 lawsuits over alleged defamation, violation of dignity, and professional reputation of institutions, and in 17 cases media outlets were found guilty of defamation.[107] The report does not specify how many cases concern online outlets; however, most of the articles that generated lawsuits were also published on the websites of traditional media.

The struggle for speed also contributes to copyright violations. Mr Corghencea believes copyright infringement is even more of an issue in Moldovan online media than violations of ethical standards. Among others, ProTV Chisinau has been a victim of copyright breach: "A number of media exploited our promptness and were taking our news without citing the source or citing it in a roundabout way."[108] Direct negotiations with the sites in question helped to improve the situation. "We discussed [it] with the owners of those websites and now the accuracy has improved."[109]

Valeriu Vasilica, director of the news agency Info-Prim Neo, believes the current legal framework actually encourages "news theft." He points out that the legal provisions are confusing. For example, the Law on Copyright and Associated Rights,[110] adopted in 1994, states that "the Law governs the creation and use of literary, artistic and scientific works (copyrights) and the production and use of audio works, audiovisual works, broadcasting and the use of radio broadcasts and television broadcasts (associated rights)." However, Article 7 of this Law places "'the news of the day and facts of an informative nature' outside the creations that

---

104. Press Council's official website is available at http://consiliuldepresa.md (accessed 10 February 2011).

105. Interview with Petru Macovei.

106. Interview with Petru Macovei.

107. D. Costin, "Justice versus mass-media. Monitoring of cases regarding the protection of dignity and professional reputation initiated against mass media in 2005–2009," *Mass Media in the Republic of Moldova,* December 2009, p. 6.

108. Interview with Artur Corghencea.

109. Interview with Artur Corghencea.

110. Law on Copyright and Associated Rights No. 293-XII of 24 November 1994, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No 13/124, on 2 March 1995, available in Romanian at http://ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/legislatie/legea_autor_conexe.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

are subject to the copyright law."[111] Because the Law does not specifically prohibit stealing news, copyright breach is commonplace and is especially felt by the news agencies. This phenomenon predates digitization, but the experts agree that digital tools have exacerbated it.

In November 2010, the Press Council, supported by the Council of Europe and the EU, started consultations about amending the Code. International experts invited to the consultations stressed that the Code does not correspond to the current realities of mass media. "The new code will have to specify clearly who can and cannot be sued. The new code should refer to those who subscribe to it, not to those who practice journalism, as now. In addition, a clarification is necessary of who can be considered a journalist, because the definition is a trap," says Romanian media expert Ioana Avadani.[112] Digitization has given rise to a variety of content producers operating outside the traditional system of checks and balances in journalism. Moreover, even established outlets are not sure whether all content of their websites should be treated as journalistic. Against this background, the term "journalist" has become harder to define. "If we do not clarify among ourselves who our colleagues are, it will be very difficult to use the code of ethics," says Ms Avadani.

4.2   Investigative Journalism

4.2.1   Opportunities

Before 2004, there was little if any investigative journalism in Moldova, but the launch of the investigative weekly *Ziarul de Garda* and the Centre for Journalistic Investigations (*Centrul de Investigatii Jurnalistice*, CIN) formed a solid foundation for it. Thanks to the efforts of both, over the last six years, investigations on corruption, organized crime, smuggling, and human trafficking have appeared in a variety of outlets (the CIN investigations are published in 16 regional newspapers). Investigative reporting remains a comparatively small sub-sector, but it is very dynamic and has benefited directly from digitization.

Alina Radu, a well-known investigative reporter and director of *Ziarul de Garda*, points out that reporters today cannot imagine working without the internet: "If the internet is inaccessible for some technical reasons, journalists cannot work. Every minute they feel the need to verify something through the internet, to revise, to check the data."[113]

However, it does not mean that investigative reporting in the digital era is synonymous with simple browsing. On the contrary, investigative reporters now have to deliver information that is thoroughly researched and goes far beyond what an average internet user can find. Therefore, reporters' own observations, photos, audio and video materials acquire a particular significance. Here, too, digitization has been instrumental in making

111. V. Vasilică, "Plagiarism in mass media: a theft protected by law and tradition," *Mass Media in the Republic of Moldova*, CJI, June 2008, p. 2.

112. As quoted in Info-Prim Neo, "Codul deontologic al jurnaliştilor va fi modificat" (The Code of Journalism Ethics to Be Modified), 3 January 2011, available at http://api.md/news/11700/index.html (accessed 24 May 2011).

113. Interview with Alina Radu.

investigative journalism more productive. It has also played a key role in dissemination: all evidence found by investigative reporters is available on the *Ziarul de Garda* website, making it a rich and dynamic resource. In addition, there are four more media outlets that do serious investigative reporting and all have websites: *Adevarul, Timpul de Dimineata, Jurnal de Chişinău,* and *Cuvantul.*[114]

According to Cornelia Cozonac, director of the CIN, "the quality of investigative reporting in Moldova has improved since the emergence of the internet."[115] The CIN was established in 2003 by a group of investigative reporters and media NGOs, and focuses in particular on diversity of sources, promptness, and dissemination.

According to the experts interviewed for this study, the main benefits of the internet are: easier ways to identify topics of investigation, to find and verify sources, and to check and compare data coming from different sources. Digitization has also made data collection faster: for example, until May 2009, requests for information from the Register of Companies (*Registrul Companiilor, Camera Înregistrării de Stat*) or the Register of State Auctions (*Registrul de Stat al Acţionarilor*) had to be submitted in writing and the answer came in a letter within 15 working days. Now the request can be sent by e-mail and the required data is also sent by e-mail. In 2010, the Government in cooperation with the World Bank launched the e-government project. Stela Mocan, Executive Director of the Center for Electronic Governance, says the online system will feature draft and final documents, as well information of public interest enabling journalists "to investigate without being constrained by civil servants."[116]

4.2.2 Threats

The vastness of the information available to investigative reporters due to digitization has its drawbacks: the experts interviewed for this study note that journalists are frequently lacking skills and endurance to sieve through the data, to compare and analyze different statistics, and to identify dubious practices concealed therein. Moreover, in this vastness, there is a significant amount of incomplete or deceptive information.

> The internet contains a lot of informational 'ballast'—misleading or misinterpreted data— that could misinform a reporter if [s/he is] not sufficiently vigilant. Even the websites of official institutions may feature insignificant or incomplete data, just for the sake of being considered transparent institutions. In these cases, investigative reporters become more insistent on obtaining the complete data.[117]

The authorities in Moldova have also attempted to control the flow of digital information by providing partial or misleading data and by attempting to block access to Government databases. For example, after the

---

114. The websites are Zdg.md, Timpul.md, Adevarul.md, Ziar.jurnal.md, and Cuvintul.md.

115. Interview with Cornelia Cozonac, director of the Center for Journalistic Investigations, Chisinau, 6 January 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Cornelia Cozonac).

116. Interview with Stela Mocanu, executive director of the Center for Electronic Government, Chisinau, 9 January 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Stela Mocanu).

117. Interview with Stela Mocanu.

first two weeks of open access to the Register of Companies, the institution managing the database banned journalists' access to the data for one month. The reason was an investigative article published in June 2009, using the data from the Register, which revealed that the minister of regional development and construction was also the main shareholder in the two companies that won the public tender for the reconstruction of the Moldovan Parliament building and the President's Office (damaged during the events of 7 April 2009).[118] The Moldovan authorities have also been active in censoring investigative output, a point which will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.3   New Platforms

The most important online platforms that regularly disseminate investigative reporting are the sites of the aforementioned investigative entities, the Center for Journalistic Investigations (Investigatii.md), and *Ziarul de Garda* (Zdg.md). There are also several recently launched online platforms that publish investigative materials occasionally. However, some of them have a political bias and tend to be active only during election campaigns.[119] For example, the editor-in-chief of Omg.md is a member of the Communist Party and also a member of the Parliament.

Ms Cozonac, director of the Center for Journalistic Investigations, thinks that the credibility of these sites is compromised because of the unverified data that they publish, defamatory texts, and the promotion of individuals suspected of economic crimes. "Apart from violations of ethical principles, [their] online investigations have journalistic errors. Often, information is posted quickly with a promise that it will be updated. As a rule, this does not happen and the quality of such online investigative reporting is questionable."[120]

4.2.4   Dissemination and Impact

Digitization has boosted dissemination of investigative articles: the investigations carried out by the Centre for Journalistic Investigation are now published both in the national and local newspapers, the members of the Association of Independent Press, and on the websites of these media outlets. Doubling the dissemination increases the number of readers and enables the authors to reach young media consumers, the most active internet users in Moldova (see the statistics on internet usage in section *1.2.1*). The internet also allows disseminating investigations outside Moldova, making them accessible to approximately half a million Moldovan citizens working in other countries, mainly in the EU and Russia (see the statistics on migration in section *1.1.1*).

Thus far, Twitter has not been used for dissemination of investigative articles, because few journalists in Moldova have a Twitter account. Facebook is far more popular among the journalistic community and, after publishing or broadcasting their materials, journalists paste a link on Facebook to their articles generating readers' discussions.

---

118. Ioana Avadani, "Mass-Media Landscape: Stop and start from the beginning," *Mass Media in the Republic of Moldova,* December 2009, p. 20.

119. Omg.md is affiliated with the Communist Party; Arena.md and Evenimentul.md are affiliated with the Democratic Party.

120. Interview with Cornelia Cozonac.

It should be stressed that although digitization has improved dissemination of investigative reporting, censorship by authorities remains a significant barrier both off and online. This is particularly evident in moments of instability or unrest such as in April 2009. During the protests, authorities blocked access for three days to several news sites including Unimedia.md, Azi.md, Zdg.md, and Jurnal.md (see section *7.3.3*).

The *Know Your Candidate!* Affair

The authorities in Moldova have also tried to stop the circulation of information they considered erroneous. The latest example is from the election campaign for the November 2010 parliamentary elections, when a court ruled in favor of prohibiting the distribution of the brochure Know Your Candidate!, produced by the Civic Initiative for a Clean Parliament that included seven NGOs. The brochure contained the results of a journalistic investigation that examined the candidates' record following several criteria: the use of administrative resources for personal and party purposes; the use of the official position for personal and family interests; exerting influence; administrative malpractice; unpaid fees and taxes; and others. The conclusion was that there are candidates that do not meet the criteria of moral integrity of a public official.

Among those who filed the complaint against the initiative were two political parties, the Communist Party and the Democratic Party, and a candidate from the list of the Alliance Moldova Noastra. The already published brochures were seized and the scanned copy of the court's decision replaced the electronic version of the brochure on the site of the Civic Initiative for a Clean Parliament.[121] More than 150 internet users of the website posted comments, most of them stressing that citizens have been deprived of their right to be informed about those who aspire to be public officials. "I think it is an attack on freedom of expression, proving once more that, in Moldova, justice is not politically independent,"[122] one user wrote. Although the documents were removed from the website, excerpts from the brochure continued circulating as electronic messages or as posts on personal blogs.

The aforementioned case of the *Know Your Candidate!* brochure is nevertheless a good example of the use of the internet for dissemination of investigative reporting: the work done by a team of investigative journalists, and banned from distribution by means of hard copy, continued spreading through the internet. Without the internet, the efforts of journalists to inform the voters about the corruption of their candidates would have remained unknown.

---

121. See http://www.moldovacurata.md/index.php?mod=page&id=1&page=16#comments, (accessed 11 January 2011).

122. See http://www.moldovacurata.md/index.php?mod=page&id=1&page=16#comments (accessed 10 January 2012).

4.3   Social and Cultural Diversity

4.3.1   Sensitive Issues

There are quite a few sensitive issues in Moldovan society, mostly surrounding particular communities: sexual minorities, homeless people, HIV-positive people, former prisoners, and the Roma community. In addition, several issues regarding ethnic and national identity that emerged after Moldova gained independence remain sensitive to this day, in particular, the name of the official language (Moldovan or Romanian), the distinction between ethnic Moldovan and ethnic Romanians living in Moldova, and the status of the Russian language, which is spoken by a large minority (see Figure 1). The ongoing conflict in Transnistria also remains among the sensitive topics.

4.3.2   Coverage of Sensitive Issues

The coverage of minorities is regulated by two laws. The Press Law provides the general framework for the functioning of mass media, guarantees freedom of expression and access to information, and prohibits censorship.[123] The Broadcasting Code of the Republic of Moldova[124] contains more detailed obligations regarding the coverage of minorities. It forbids, for instance, broadcasting of programs that instigate hatred on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual orientation.

Some minorities are regularly portrayed in a negative way. The selection of images and music in video material, or the exaggerated titles in print media, or the way an interview question is posed are just a few of the most commonly used exclusion strategies. The most frequent victims of those are sexual minorities. For example, during the debates on the draft of the Antidiscrimination Law in March 2011, several media, both traditional and online, approached the topic in a one-sided way, giving prominence to those who condemned the legal protection of sexual minorities as an attack on "moral values" and failing to provide a balanced picture. As a result, the Government withdrew the draft law, postponing the approval for an indefinite time.

In the last census (2004), 75.8 percent of the population declared themselves as "Moldovans", 8.4 percent as "Ukrainians", 5.9 percent as "Russians", 2.2 percent as "Romanians", 1.9 percent as "Bulgarians", and less than 1 percent as "Roma".[125] However, this diversity is not reflected in the media coverage: ethnic minorities or non-Moldovans are routinely referred to as "the Russian-speaking population" and one distinct minority, Roma, is rarely mentioned in the media at all.[126] Not just ethnic minorities are 'invisible' when it comes to media coverage; the same applies to HIV-positive people and sexual minorities.

---

123. Press Law No 243-XIII of 26 October 1994, published in *Monitorul Oficial* on 26 October 1994.

124. Broadcasting Code.

125. The Results of the Census 2004, the National Bureau of Statistics, available at http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=2358 (accessed 27 May 2011).

126. Institute for Public Policies/Gunivas, *Ethnobarometer in the Republic of Moldova*, Chisinau, 2006, pp. 81–112.

Coverage of sensitive issues depends, among other things, on the language of a particular outlet. The mainstream media, both traditional and online, are divided between Romanian-language and Russian-language outlets. The language largely determines the approach to ethnic diversity. While most Romanian-language sites subscribe to the view that ethnic minorities have to integrate into a common political, social, and cultural framework, the Russian-language websites gravitate toward the cultural space of Russia. While these divisions do not dominate the online space, they resurface periodically, usually prompted by a controversial official document on ethnic issues or the commemoration of a historic event, which is perceived differently by different groups. For example, 28 June 1940 is considered by part of the population (mainly ethnic Romanians) as the anniversary of the Red Army's occupation of Moldova, while for another group (mainly ethnic Russians) it marks the liberation from the 'Romanian bourgeois regime'.

The Romanian–Russian divide is also apparent in the coverage of the Transnistrian conflict. The proclamation of the independence of the Republic of Moldova on 27 August 1991 generated separatist movements in the east and south of the country: the conflict in the south was resolved legally through giving territorial autonomy to the Gagauz ethnic group (the Territorial Administrative Unit Gagauz Yeri), but, in the east, the self-proclaimed Moldovan Transnistrian Republic, which is not recognized internationally, remains a 'frozen conflict'. In both regions, the dominant language is Russian, and social and cultural issues are seen through the prism of Russia. All online publications in those territories are in the Russian language using the .ru domain, rather than .md.[127]

Research in the Transnistrian region and Gagauz Yeri by the CJI shows that journalists avoid covering ethnic issues, for example the identity of the Gagauz ethnic group and the language spoken by this group, but focus instead on inter-regional problems (the relationship between Gagauz Yeri, Transnistria, and the Republic of Moldova).[128]

In the last few years, the polls have registered fading interest in reintegrating the separatist territories. According to the Barometer of Public Opinion of November 2010, only one in 10 residents of Moldova considers the "Transnistrian problem" to be important. The pressing issues are poverty, unemployment, and corruption.[129] This fading of interest was reflected in the media. However, the arrival of a new political actor, Evgheni Sevciuk, has brought Transnistria back into focus. In December 2011, Sevciuk was elected president of the breakaway region. Sevciuk is widely regarded as more open to dialogue than his predecessor Igor Smirnov.

---

127. For example, in Transnistria, Tiras.ru and Bes-arab.ru; and, in Gagauz Yeri, Aiin-aciic.ucoz.ru, Info.gagauzia.ru, and Gagauzsaytlar.ucoz.ru.

128. Independent Journalism Center, *Monitoring the Diversity in Mass Media*, available at http://www.ijc.md/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=45 (accessed 23 December 2010).

129. Institute for Public Policies, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, Chisinau, November 2010, p. 18.

4.3.3 Space for Public Expression

Unlike traditional media outlets that are selective in covering sensitive topics, online journalism in Moldova features more topics and points of view. In addition to the news websites, there are hundreds of blogs[130] that help create a rich space for public expression, which is available, among others, to the previously 'silent' minorities. For example, the gay and lesbian organization GenderDoc-M was among the first NGOs to open a website, in 2001.[131] In 2010, a homosexual from Moldova opened his personal blog[132] where he writes about various topics. He was the first openly homosexual blogger in Moldova.

In Moldova, the Orthodox Church dominates the religious scene. Initially, the Orthodox Church was reluctant to accept the challenges of new media and new technologies. However, recently the headquarters of the Orthodox Church from Moldova opened the website Mitropolia.md. Shortly afterward, hard-line orthodox groups launched their web pages as well. [133]

The internet has also opened new opportunities for expression of radical views. For example, The Iron Guard, an extreme Romanian right-wing movement from the interwar period, has resurfaced thanks to the web, and likewise some Bolshevik and racist groups.[134]

4.4 Political Diversity

4.4.1 Elections and Political Coverage

The last three parliamentary elections in Moldova, held in 2009 and 2010 (see Context for details), coincided with the rapid ascent of new media platforms. Nonetheless, according to the CJI, the arrival of popular online resources thus far has not improved the overall quality of election coverage. The last report on the campaign in October–November 2010 monitored, for the first time, two online publications (Unimedia.md and Omg.md),[135] and it found that "with a few exceptions, mass media presented the election campaign from the viewpoint of the election candidate favored by a [particular] media outlet and, contrary to the norms of ethics, the media failed to ensure a pluralism of opinions and the right to reply."[136] In particular, Omg.md favored the Communist Party, while Unimedia.md favored all non-Communist candidates and did not cover the Communist Party in a neutral way.

---

130. According to Blogosfera.md, as of 20 January 2011, 1,413 blogs were registered in Moldova.

131. The three-lingual website run by GenderDoc-M is available at http://www.lgbt.md.

132. See Suntgayinmoldova.blogspot.com.

133. See Moldovacrestina.info, Salvareafamiliilor.com, Ortodoxia.md, and Tinertulortodox.md.

134. See Nouadreapta.md, Grenada.md, and Puls.md.

135. See Unimedia.md and Omg.md.

136. Independent Journalism Center, *Report on Monitoring the Mass Media in the Election Campaign for the Parliamentary Election on 28 November 2010*, p. 6.

Shortly before the July 2009 elections, the Parliament modified the Election Code.[137] The provisions of the new Election Code aim to ensure more balanced reporting during election campaigns. The Code makes a distinction between election advertising and election coverage by media, specifies the principles of media behavior during election campaigns, stipulates equal access to media for all MP candidates and spells out the criteria for evaluating editorial independence. The new Election Code does not refer specifically to election coverage on the internet, subsuming it under the general norms of media behavior.

Besides the Election Code, provisions on media behavior during election campaigns are included in the Constitution, the Broadcasting Code, the Press Law, and the Law on Gender Equality, among others.[138] In order to harmonize these provisions, the Election Code commissioned the Central Electoral Commission to draft and approve a specific Regulation concerning election coverage by the media, for each election separately.[139] The purpose of the regulation is to ensure impartial media coverage of election campaigns and promotion of political pluralism, as well as to establish clear norms both for media and for election candidates. For example, the Regulation should spell out the ways of presenting the results of exit polls: until the polling stations are closed it is forbidden to publish interviews with voters, articles about the chances of election candidates, as well as the results of exit polls in all media, including the internet.

4.4.2 Digital Political Communications

The internet has opened up new opportunities for political communication in Moldova and both the intensity and the diversity of this communication grew considerably in the politically unstable period of 2009–2010.

According to Blogosfera.md, a catalogue of Moldovan websites, 10 percent of the approximately 1,500 Moldovan blogs concern politics. Some of them were abandoned soon after launching, and others are updated irregularly. Nevertheless, there are political figures who owe a large part of their fame to their online presence. An example is Vitalia Pavlicenco, chair of the National Liberal Party (in the last two elections, the party received less than one percent of votes). Although she is not on the frontline of Moldovan politics, the former member of the Parliament is active as a political commentator. She comments on current affairs and her blog is updated daily.[140]

Other politicians from the non-parliamentary parties follow Pavlicenco's example: Veceaslav Untila, president of the European Action Movement; Sergiu Mocanu, president of the Party for the Country and People; and Vlad Cubreacov, vice-president of the Popular Christian Democratic Party. Young and aspiring politicians also tend to be active bloggers.

---

137. Election Code, No. 1381-XIII of 21 November 1997, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 81/667 on 8 December 1997.

138. Law on Gender Equality No. 5-XVI of 9 February 2006, published *Monitorul Oficial* No. 047 on 24 March 2006.

139. Election Code, Art. 64 (1).

140. Vitalia Pavlicenko's blog is available at http://www.pavlicenco.md.

By contrast, some of the bloggers who have become part of the political establishment frequently abandon the websites that helped them enter active politics. "I am sorry for the lack of posts. The work schedule does not leave time for writing here,"[141] Vlad Lupan, the foreign policy adviser to the President and formerly an active blogger wrote on 16 September 2010, one month after taking the office. This remains the last post on his blog.

In the election campaigns of 2009 and 2010, political parties used a variety of online tools to attract voters: videos, photo-galleries, forums, and even games. The most popular online tool was the internet game *Serafică fără frică* (Serafică Without Fear), developed by the Alliance Moldova Noastră. The main character of the game is the leader of the party, Serafim Urechean, who has to fight with opponents representing real politicians from other parties, mainly the Communist Party. The game was used for the first time in the election campaigns of 2009 and updated for the election campaign of 2010.

Several high-ranking officials have launched their own web pages; however, the maintenance of these is the responsibility of communications officers and not the officials themselves. Partly as a consequence, these sites rarely feature original content: for example, the information on Prime Minister Vlad Filat's blog is identical to that on the official site of the Government.[142] The official blog of Speaker of the Parliament, Marian Lupu, who is also the acting president of the Republic of Moldova, is run by the press office of the Democratic Party. Until May 2010, Lupu was writing a blog about Moldovan politics from his personal point of view, using the first person singular.[143]

Those in the opposition tend to update their blogs without the help of press officers. For example, Member of the Parliament from the Communist Party Igor Dodon is one of the most active bloggers in the country. He updates his bilingual blog several times a week and receives many readers' comments.[144]

The online presence of politicians and political commentators has sparked a heated debate in Moldova. In early 2011, Constatin Tănase, director of the daily *Timpul*, wrote an editorial against "the perseverance and aggressive insistence" of political bloggers. He criticized some bloggers, especially Igor Dodon. "Everything is a logorrhea full of stupidity and platitudes. The main feature of these bloggers is that all of them demonstrate 'scribblemania' [which is] rejected by the 'normal' press."[145] The article provoked intense reactions among bloggers, including journalist bloggers. One blogger said that Tănase's attitude represents the classic conflict between generations. "If you add up the daily unique visitors of 10–15 bloggers from Moldova, the number will be higher than the number of *Timpul*'s readers."[146] In reply, the columnist promised to start a personal

---

141. The abandoned blog of Vlad Lupan is available at http://vlad-lupan.blogspot.com/2010/09/audio-vlad-lupan-ei-sa-puna-virgula-iar.html (accessed 29 May 2011).

142. The prime minister's official blog is available at http://gov.md/lib.php?l=ro&idc=436 (accessed 30 May 2011).

143. The acting president's official blog is available at http://marianlupumd.livejournal.com/ (accessed 30 May 2011).

144. Igor Dodon's personal blog is available at http://dodon.md/ (accessed 30 May 2011).

145. C. Tănase, "Valorile și principiile bloggerului Igor Dodon" (Values and Principles of the Blogger Igor Dodon)*, Timpul,* 3 January 2011.

146. See http://cojocari.ro/2011/01/constantin-tanase-este-ion-muruianu-pentru-foarte-multi-bloggeri/ (accessed 30 May 2011).

blog, while he insisted that "the virtual information space falls prey to political pirates, while blogs (some of them!) become instruments of party propaganda."[147] (So far, Tănase has not started blogging.)

Radio Free Europe journalist Radu Benea says political leaders' and party websites make it easier to work during election campaigns.[148] Igor Volnițchi, formerly a well-known political journalist and now the prime minister's spokesman, agrees. "Two or three years ago, journalists had to decode 'sterile' press communiqués by political parties, which generated more suspicion that clarity. Now journalists just have to select relevant information from the plentiful direct sources available online."[149] The politicians have benefited from digital communication too, Mr Volnițchi believes.

> Today, not only journalists look for politicians, but politicians are also interested in journalism. Politicians in power and those in the opposition have understood that they depend on media. Until recently, members of the opposition parties would appear in the media [only] several times a year, whereas now they are mentioned several times a day in new media that feel the need to update their content and offer a variety of opinions.[150]

4.5   Assessments

Digitization has added a diversity of media outlets to the Moldovan media landscape, as well as plurality of viewpoints, and a greater transparency of official institutions. All of these aspects affect the quality and accuracy of reporting. Thanks to digitization, it is easier to identify topics for coverage, to be prompt, and to draw on a plurality of sources. There are also multiple possibilities to disseminate media content and new ways of receiving audience feedback. At the same time, observers note that increased speed has increased superficiality in news offerings. In particular, new media engender fierce competition for speed, which generates errors and violations of ethical norms.

Digitization has, to some extent, changed the specifics of everyday work for journalists whose presence at the events they cover tends to be increasingly virtual and they prefer to obtain information by digital means. This has led to the ascendancy of "second-hand journalism" and "Google journalism".

Compared to the previous election campaigns, the media coverage of the last parliamentary elections on 28 November 2010 was better in terms of both quantity and quality, mainly thanks to the websites of politicians and political parties, which created an "avalanche" of diverse information.

---

147. C. Tănase, "Eu, Muruianu, blogosfera şi arhaismele" (Myself, Muruianu, the Blogosphere and Archaisms), *Timpul*, 7 January 2011.

148. Interview with Radu Benea, journalist, Radio Free Europe, Chisinau, 9 January 2011.

149. Interview with Igor Volnițchi, spokesperson of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, Chisinau, 5 January 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Igor Volnițchi).

150. Interview with Igor Volnițchi.

Online journalism features more topics and points of view than traditional media, given the plurality of communication platforms. Marginalized groups and even groups traditionally considered as non-existent in Moldovan society have become more visible thanks to online platforms. On the other hand, online journalism repeats the key division of traditional media in Moldova: the Romanian-language outlets versus the Russian-languages outlets. The language determines the approach to the issues of ethnic diversity and other cultural and social problems. Although the internet is beneficial for public debates, these debates do not necessarily lead to consensus and social cohesion and the Moldovan public space remains fragmented.

Digitization has improved the quality of investigative reporting in Moldova. The internet offers investigative reporters more ways to identify topics of coverage, to find and check sources, and to compare data from different sources. Nevertheless, the information available online could mislead reporters through ambiguous, misinterpreted, or irrelevant data.

5. Digital Media and Technology

5.1   Spectrum

5.1.1   Spectrum Allocation Policy

According to the National Table of Frequency Allocations (*Tabelul National de Atribuire a Benzilor de Frecvente*, TNABF), 4 percent of the spectrum is allotted for government use (national security and defense, civil protection, police), 40 percent for non-governmental use, and the remaining 56 percent for joint use by both sectors. The radio frequencies for non-governmental use, including those for the electronic communication networks and services, are allocated by the ANRCETI and administered by the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications. The Law on Electronic Communications[151] defines the broadcasting spectrum as electromagnetic waves within the frequency band 9 kHz to 3,000 GHz. The allocation of broadcasting spectrum is an exclusive right of the Government.

The system of identifying, calculating, and granting spectrum frequencies in Moldova is complex and involves several institutions. The State Radio Frequency Commission (*Comisia de Stat pentru Frecvente Radio*, CSFR) approves the TNABF. The first edition of the TNABF was adopted in 1997, but it has been subsequently amended. The TNABF and its amendments were drafted by the experts of the National Radio Frequency Center (*Centrul Național de Frecvențe Radio*, CNFR), a subdivision of the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications[152] responsible for selecting, calculating, approving, and keeping track of frequencies, as well as managing the State Register of Radio Frequencies and Radio Stations. The latest amendments were made in May 2010 in compliance with the series of documents adopted at the World Radiocommunication Conference 2007.[153] The broadcasting frequencies calculated and coordinated by the CNFR are then transmitted to the CCA, which announces public tenders for broadcasting licenses. Afterwards, the ANRCETI grants technical licenses to the successful contestants; the licenses require the broadcasters' equipment to correspond to the technical standards and provisions for broadcasting on the respective frequencies.

---

151. The Law on Electronic Communications No. 51-54/155 of 14 March 2008, published in *Monitorul Oficial* on 14 March 2008.

152. The National Radio Frequency Center, official website available at http://www.cnfr.md/index.php?pag=sec&id=142&l=en.

153. National Table of Frequency Allocations, available at http://en.anrceti.md/files/filefield/TNABF_en.pdf (accessed 29 May 2011).

The CNFR is also responsible for elaborating the national radio frequency allocation regulation. The basic acts that regulate the spectrum allocation procedure are the following:

- the Law on Electronic Communications;
- the Broadcasting Code;
- the decisions of the CSFR;
- the TNABF.[154]

However, the existing laws do not specify the exact percentage to be used for digital broadcasting.

Currently, analog television broadcasting dominates in Moldova. For digital switch-over to be implemented, the conversion of radio-frequency spectrum needs to be carried out. This process is stipulated in the Concept of Digital Terrestrial Television Implementation in the Republic of Moldova, which in 2011 was still at the draft stage. According to the Recommendations of the Regional Radiocommunication Conference from Geneva (RRC-2006),[155] Moldova will have to stop broadcasting in the analog mode and switch to digital broadcasting in June 2015. However, according to Victor Pulbere, head of the Evaluation and Licensing Division of the CCA, the country is far from being ready for it.

> Despite the recommendations of RRC/Geneva 2006, the digital broadcasting market in the Republic of Moldova is still in an embryonic state. The fact that, so far, only two to three television stations—and none of the radio stations—are broadcasting in the digital format shows that things in this area are moving quite slowly, both in terms of drafting documents and policies and in terms of the development of technical standards.[156]

As Moldova is still lacking a legal framework for transition to digital broadcasting it is too early to evaluate the allocation of the digital dividend and white spaces (unused broadcasting frequencies).

5.1.2 Transparency

Even though the spectrum allocation mechanism as stipulated by law is quite clear, the experts interviewed for this study pointed out that the implementation practices lack transparency. Former ANRCETI official Ion Coşuleanu notes that "from an economic and technical standpoint, it is not in the CNFR's interest to keep silent on the frequencies coordinated or to withhold them from issuing, because a frequency only yields profit if used (both for the company operating the license and for the State), since it generates taxes from

---

154. The acts are available in Romanian at http://www.mtic.gov.md/legislation_en/ (accessed 5 July 2011).

155. International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *Final Acts of the Regional Radiocommunication Conference for planning of the digital terrestrial broadcasting service in parts of Regions 1 and 3, in the frequency bands 174-230 MHz and 470-862 MHz (RRC-06)*, **available at** http://www.itu.int/publ/R-ACT-RRC.14-2006/en, and in Romanian at http://www.mtic.gov.md/img/gis/rpc06_27_03_2007_md.pdf and http://www.mtic.gov.md/img/gis/st61_revision%20_md.pdf (all accessed 30 May 2011).

156. Interview with Victor Pulbere, Head of Evaluation and Licensing Division of the CCA, Chisinau, 24 November 2010 (hereafter, Interview with Victor Pulbere).

the economic activity."[157] Nevertheless, there are "a number of unknown elements" in the process of issuing licenses that create gaps in transparency. The high number of institutions involved in the process exacerbates the situation and, according to Mr Cosuleanu, increases the risk of corruption.[158]

Even though the process of licensing involves several institutions, the main power lies with the CCA, which is responsible for granting licenses. The CJI believes that the CCA has used this power to favor some broadcasters and to place others at a disadvantage.[159] For instance, at the end of 2007, the television station N4 owned only three broadcasting frequencies but as of December 2010 it broadcasts on nine. At the same time, other television stations were constantly denied any additional frequencies (for example, ProTV submitted a request for eight frequencies in 2008, but it was turned down). By far the most notable examples of this practice are those of NIT and EuroTV channels. NIT was granted 12 frequencies in the space of only two years (2007–2009), while EuroTV evolved from broadcasting on a single allocation in 2007 to nine in 2009, covering mostly the area of Chisinau. According to the CJI monitoring reports, these television stations openly supported the parties in power: N4 and NIT TV supported the Communist Party and EuroTV was part at that time of the media trust Flux, which reportedly belongs to Iurie Rosca, former leader of the Popular Christian Democratic Party (*Partidul Popular Creștin Democrat*, PPCD). The party was an informal coalition partner of the Communists (political affiliations of media owners are examined in detail in sections *6.1.2* and *6.1.3*).[160]

The lack of transparency in CCA decision-making was noted in the last Report on the State of Mass Media in Moldova 2010, published by the CJI:

> In the year of 2010 the CCA failed to prove its independence, especially during the tender for radio frequencies that took place in October 2010. On 19 October 2010, ten out of eleven frequencies issued for the tender were won by the same radio broadcaster VDT (almost unknown in the Moldovan audiovisual market) leaving two important stations, Jurnal TV and Publika TV, behind. After a while, VDT renounced and did not broadcast on eight frequencies. At the same session, the CCA granted four frequencies out of seven to a single radio station, Maestro FM.[161] The fact that all television frequencies were obtained by a single broadcaster raises doubts about the impartiality of the CCA decision and the independence of the institution in the face of political and economic influence.[162]

---

157. Interview with Ion Cosuleanu, former deputy director at ANRCETI, Chisinau, 16 March 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Ion Cosuleanu).

158. Interview with Ion Cosuleanu.

159. Independent Journalism Center, *Raport asupra situaţiei presei în Republica Moldova în anul 2009* (Report On the State of Mass Media in Moldova, 2009), available in Romanian and Russian at http://ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/raport_FOP_2009.pdf and http://ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/raport_FOP_2009_rus.pdf (both accessed 1 June 2011).

160. The Association of Independent Press (API), *Memoriu privind libertatea presei în Republica Moldova* (Memorandum on Press Freedom in Moldova), available in Romanian at http://www.api.md/events/4847/index.html (accessed 1 June 2011).

161. According to Moldovan media reports, the owner of Maestro FM is Vladimir Plahotniuc, vice-speaker of the Parliament and a member of the Democratic Party. He also owns several other media outlets (see section *6*).

162. Independent Journalism Center, *Raport asupra situaţiei presei în Republica Moldova în anul 2010* (Report on the State of Mass Media in Moldova, 2010), available in Romanian at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/Raport_FOP_ro.pdf (accessed 3 June 2011).

5.1.3 Competition for Spectrum

At this moment, terrestrial and cable analog television dominates in Moldova. Over 60 percent of 150 cable operators provide services mostly in Chisinau area and a few other cities such as Balti and Cahul. According to Ala Baidauz, chief of the Technical Regulation and Standardization Department at the ANRCETI, "the peripheral market is almost untapped."[163]

The process of allotting spectrum frequencies for digital terrestrial television is at an early stage, and there are no provisions for preventing operators from attempts to reduce broadcasting spectrum available to others. To date, there have been no attempts to introduce such provisions.

5.2 Digital Gatekeeping

5.2.1 Technical Standards

Whilst there is plenty of public debate and lobbying by groups such as the CJI around the issue of transparency and the reform of the CCA, these discussions focus more on policy and draft regulation than on technical standards, which are the responsibility of such institutions as the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies, as well as the ANRCETI.[164] The technical standards for digital television are currently not covered in the existing Broadcasting Code. The new Code, currently at the drafting stage, will specify them, but no draft provisions have been made public yet. Civil society in general and professional associations in particular have not been involved in the debate surrounding the standards, and have shown limited interest in playing an active part in the process.

5.2.2 Gatekeepers

As the digital switch-over process *de jure* and *de facto* has only just begun, it is as yet premature to analyze problems related to gatekeepers. The aforementioned amendments to the Broadcasting Code will provide a legal basis for the digital switch-over: as soon as they are approved, the CCA will then develop recommendations for broadcasters on the transition mechanism from analog to digital system.

According to the Concept of Digital Terrestrial Broadcasting Implementation, multiplexes have to be built by the end of 2012.

5.2.3 Transmission Networks

The only transmission network operator in Moldova is the state-owned enterprise Radiocomunicatii, founded by the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications. Radiocomunicatii offers television and radio broadcasting services, and manages three public television networks and two radio networks with

---

163. Interview with Ala Baidauz, Head of the Technical Regulation Department at the ANRCETI, 11 December 2010.

164. Institute for Development and Social Initiatives Viitorul, "Discussion club: Reform of radio and TV broadcasting: challenges, constraints and solutions", 2 July 2010, available at http://www.viitorul.org/newsview.php?id=2896&l=en&idc=132 (accessed 3 June 2011).

national coverage. Presently, the enterprise is technically equipped with high-power, average capacity, and low-power television transmitters (all in all, about 96 units).

The broadcasting of radio programs is carried out through 35 radio transmitters in the range of 66–73 MHz, 87.5–108 MHz, and on the medium frequency bands. The activity of Radiocomunicatii includes broadcasting television and radio programs, television and radio program transmission by means of relay lines, providing the services of cable radio broadcasting in Chisinau (a legacy of the Soviet era when a cable radio set, performing both broadcasting and civil defense function, was installed virtually in every household), and in the whole country and rebroadcasting foreign media. Besides traditional services, Radiocomunicatii also provides data transmission services.[165]

No official reports or claims have been made that some network administrators, operators, or companies are privileged over others. However, a CCA official, Victor Pulbere, argues that now, "given the absence of competition in this domain, a certain lobby for the state-owned operator Radiocomunicatii can be detected, for the latter is entrusted with the construction of two national-level multiplexes."[166] According to the Concept of Digital Terrestrial Broadcasting Implementation, a total of six national multiplexes will be built by Radiocomunicatii, providing access to 48 television stations.

5.3   Telecommunications

5.3.1   Telecoms and News

In late 2009, there were about 400 network access and electronic communication service providers operating in Moldova. However, about 90 percent of market revenues are shared among the four biggest suppliers: the state-owned Moldtelecom Corporation, Orange Moldova Corporation, Moldcell Corporation, and StarNET, a relatively new market player. The remaining providers are small and work locally or, in some cases, offer very limited services. The market structure is in a continuous state of flux.

Recent years have seen unstable sales in certain sectors, such as fixed telephony, which decreased by about 10 percent during 2007–2009. Currently, mobile telephony accounts for 55 percent of sales in the telecoms market, followed by fixed telephony (31 percent), internet access and data transmission (8 percent), and audiovisual services (6 percent).[167] The share of internet access, data transmission, and broadcasting is expected to grow, assisted by the shrinking share of fixed telephony.

---

165. See Radiocomunicatii's official website, available at http://www.radiocom.md/eng/main.

166. Interview with Victor Pulbere.

167. Business Intelligence Services Group (BSI), *Aspecte ale evoluției pieței comunicațiilor electronice în Republica Moldova în 2008,* (Market Analysis of the Evolutions of Electronic Communications in the Republic of Moldova in 2008), available in Romanian at http://www.bis.md/pdf/ Analiza_pietei_comunicatiilor_electronice_2008.pdf (accessed 6 June 2011).

A decrease of the major indices (sales, subscribers, and penetration rate) in the broadcasting and rebroadcasting services market was caused by the 2008 economic crisis. ANRCETI predicted recovery in 2010–2011, driven mainly by the promotion of multichannel broadcasting services such as cable television, IPTV, and DTH. And, indeed, the emergence of IPTV-based services, the development and extension of the cable and digital MMDS television services have boosted the subscribers to multichannel television. Over 2009, subscribers increased by 1.6 percent to reach 230,000. In 2010, the growth became more prominent. The number of subscribers who using digital multichannel TV services (IPTV, DHT, and cable television) increased over 2009 by 181 percent and reached 55,600. Most subscribers use cable digital TV and IPTV services. Thus, the share of subscribers to digital services in the structure of multichannel television market has almost tripled: from 8.8 percent in 2009 to 24.2 percent in 2010.

IPTV was officially launched in late 2009. Currently, this technology is used by two operators, Moldtelecom and StarNET. Moldtelecom's IPTV service offers 30 digital television channels and a series of supplementary options (Video-on-Demand, Timeshift) and is free to subscribers who sign a contract for at least two years.[168] On 7 December 2010, Moldtelecom launched its digital television in High Definition, with an initial offer of five channels.[169]

In 2009, the absolute majority of multichannel television service subscribers (97.6 percent) were cable television users, while 2.4 percent were encoded television users. More than half of the multichannel television service packages include more than 50 television channels. Most of them are foreign channels (predominantly Russian and, to a lesser extent, Romanian); the existing legislation does not contain any must-carry requirements for cable operators. The news offer, however, is limited to about seven main generalist television channels (Moldova 1, NIT TV, Pro TV, TV7, Prime TV, N4, and EuroTV), and, lately, two new stations, Publika TV and Jurnal TV. This makes cable operators key news providers in Moldova, albeit only in urban areas. For rural areas, analog terrestrial broadcasting of the public television station Moldova 1 (with a 99 percent nationwide coverage), the private television stations Prime TV (95 percent coverage) and NIT TV (about 60 percent coverage) are the main news providers.

5.3.2   Pressure of Telecoms on News Providers

So far, no cases have been reported of cable operators or telecoms exerting pressure on news providers in Moldova. There are also no cases of cable operators exercising their influence in order to prevent newcomers from entering the television market via their cable packages.

---

168. C. Dziadul, "Moldova launches IPTV platform," Broadband TV News Agency, 23 February 2010, available at http://www.broadbandtvnews.com/2010/02/23/moldova-launches-iptv-platform/ (accessed 7 June 2011).

169. "*Moldtelecom brings HD TV to Moldova*," Moldova Azi News Agency, 8 December 2010, available at http://www.azi.md/en/story/15236 (accessed 6 June 2011).

5.4   Assessments

The law guarantees the independence of both key licensing institutions, the CCA and the ANRCETI. Moreover, the law on the formation of the ANCRETI expressly states that its mission is to serve the public interest. The bylaw on the CCA and the Broadcasting Code make the same provision for the CCA. However, there are a number of examples that the process of granting broadcasting licenses by the CCA and technical licenses by the ANRCETI is politically motivated. In both cases, the decision-making process lacks transparency.

Frequency spectrum and the frequency allocation policy have never been, and still are not, subject to public debates. This fact can be attributable to the lack of transparency in the frequency allocation process. The CCA allocates frequencies and issues broadcasting licenses via public tenders and studies by respected media NGOs note that, frequently, the decisions of the CCA seem to be based in political considerations rather than the public interest.

The ANRCETI also tends to bypass the public interest. It has focused most of the spectrum in the capital city and marginalized local providers/operators.

The allocation and regulation of white spaces and the digital dividend have not taken place, since Moldova is yet to embark on digital switch-over.[170] The Concept of Implementing Digital Television has not yet been debated by Parliament. The Draft Concept stipulates that, upon the switch-over, public tenders will be held to give an opportunity to all interested companies to take part. According to the Draft Concept, the tenders will be followed by public information campaigns. Thus far, information campaigns concerning digitization have been limited to the experts, without involving civil society.

---

170. Interview with Victor Pulbere.

6. Digital Business

6.1   Ownership

6.1.1   Legal Developments in Media Ownership

The main law concerning the regulation of media ownership, media proprietors, and media funding is the Broadcasting Code.[171] It has been consistently criticized by the CJI media experts for the lack of clarity. Two provisions in particular raise concerns: article 28 and article 66. The former requires revealing some ownership information: "In order to obtain a re-broadcasting authorization, the solicitor shall submit a request to the CCA. The request shall indicate the name, surname, citizenship (in case of legal persons, the company name) and the address of the solicitor, as well as information related to its participation in other media institutions as founder."[172] The latter imposes restrictions on who can own a media outlet: "the public authorities of any level, the state-funded agencies, political parties and entities, as well as institutions and companies specialized in telecommunications cannot be founders of private broadcasting institutions."[173]

Doina Costin, coordinator of the Policy and Media Legislation Department at the CJI, calls these legal provisions "confusing". "Articles 28 and 66 of the Code use the term 'founder' and not 'owner'. The term 'founder' […] is vague—because usually it is legal entities and LLCs that are listed as founders of media institutions, and not natural persons. In such a case, it is hard to guess who stands behind a certain media institution."[174] Dumitru Tira, executive director at PublikaTV, agrees that the terminology is confusing: "The law does not make a distinction between the founder and the owner, which in fact are [two] different [things]."[175]

---

171. Broadcasting Code.

172. Broadcasting Code .

173. Broadcasting Code .

174. Interview with Doina Costin, coordinator of the Policy and Media Legislation Department at the Independent Journalism Center, Chisinau, 15 January 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Doina Costin).

175. Interview with Dumitru Tira, executive director at PublikaTV, Chisinau, 23 January 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Dumitru Tira).

Media experts hope that the new legislative proposals, currently being developed by the Electronic Press Association (APEL), will remedy the situation. According to Ms Costin, "the draft of the new Broadcasting Code will cover all these gaps and, in addition to imposing stricter rules on ownership transparency, it will also institute a mechanism to monitor the situation on the media market so as to avoid formation of monopolies."[176] Among the authors of the new legislation there are the renowned Moldovan media experts Eugen Rîbca, Ion Bunduchi, and Vasile State. The project commenced in 2010, the draft is still in progress, and its final version is yet to be released.

Some provisions of the Broadcasting Code were amended before the start of the APEL project. In July 2010, Article 66, paragraph 3 was amended. Previously, the article included restrictions on ownership concentration and stated that one legal or natural person cannot own more than two broadcasting licenses in any given region. Now the provision reads as following: "A legal or natural person can own at most five broadcasting licenses in a single administrative unit or region, without the right to be the only broadcaster there."[177] The changes received criticism from civil society organizations. The CJI saw it as "a way of favoring the emergence of a monopoly in the audiovisual market that would jeopardize the diversity of media content, discourage competition and lead to the media becoming 'berlusconized', i.e. uniform."[178]

The possible detrimental effect of these changes is exacerbated by the lack of transparency in media ownership. Media expert Eugeniu Rîbca said it was a "premature adjustment" and points out that the lack of ownership transparency makes it hard to evaluate its impact.[179] Other media experts too criticized the increased number of permitted licenses and pointed out that media ownership remains non-transparent.

In addition to the Broadcasting Code, some legal provisions relating indirectly to media owners can be found in the Election Code. According to recent amendments, if broadcasters want to cover an election campaign and broadcast political advertising, Article 64, paragraph 2 of the Election Code obliges them to declare their owners. This provision was added to the Code by the Law No 119 of 18 June 2010 and entered into force on 29 June 2010.[180] The legal provision specifies that "in the first week of the election campaign, every broadcaster shall submit a declaration to the CCA stating its editorial policy for the election campaign, including the name of the owners of the institution. The declarations shall be published on the website of the CCA. According to the provisions of the Broadcasting Code, the CCA shall ensure *ex officio* supervision of the institution's compliance with the said obligation."[181]

---

176. Interview with Doina Costin.

177. Broadcasting Code.

178. Independent Journalism Center, *"Opinie privind inițiativa legislativă de modificare a art. 66 alin. 3 din Codul audiovizualului al R. Moldova"* (Opinion on the Proposed Amendment of Art 66, para 3 of the Broadcasting Code), available in Romanian at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/Declaratii/2010/Declaratie_ONGmedia.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

179. Interview with Eugeniu Rîbca, media law expert and member of the group of experts working on the draft of a new Broadcasting Code, 12 April 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Eugeniu Rîbca).

180. Law No. 119 of 18 June 2010, entered into force on 29 June 2010, amending and supplementing the Electon Code, available in Romanian at http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=335036 (accessed 5 July 2011).

181. Election Code, Law no. 1381-XIII of 21 November 1997, available in Romanian at http://www.e-democracy.md/files/elections/electoral-code-%28referendum-excerpts%29-18-06-2010-ro.pdf (accessed 5 July).

However, this provision remains largely unimplemented. "As a rule the declarations submitted to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) still refer to founders instead of owners, despite the legal requirement," CJI legal adviser Doina Costin says.[182]

Foreign ownership of media outlets remains restricted in Moldova. The rules differ depending on the type of media. When it comes to broadcasters, the same rules apply to both local and foreign investors: a single legal entity cannot own a controlling stake in more than two broadcasters of a different type.[183] In the case of print media, Article 5, paragraph 3 of the Press Law states that "foreign natural or legal persons have the right to participate in founding of periodicals and press agencies only as co-founders and to own at most 49 percent of the share capital." In other words, a foreign national cannot be the sole founder of a media outlet in Moldova.

6.1.2   New Entrants in the News Market

In 2007, the PCRM and PPCD-controlled Municipal Council (*Consiliul municipal*), the governing body of five Moldovan municipalities decided to privatize two municipal broadcasters, the radio station Antena C and the television channel EuroTV. As a result, Antena C was purchased on 27 January 2007 by a natural person, Dumitru Liutcov, for MDL 1.5 million (US$120,000), while EuroTV was purchased for MDL 2 million (about US$150,000) by another individual, Igor Boldureanu, a former classmate of Iurie Rosca, who at that time was the PPSC leader and the vice-speaker of the Parliament. In 2008, Mr Boldureanu was dismissed from the position of manager at EuroTV station and Iacob Rosca, a cousin of Iurie Rosca, took his place. The monitoring reports carried out by the CJI and the APEL signaled that Antena C openly supported the Communist Party in their newscasts and programs, while EuroTV—renamed EuTV by the new owners—showed clear loyalty to the PPCD. Media reports suggested that behind the individuals involved in the deals was Flux Media Group, reportedly owned by Mr Rosca. The same media group controlled the newspaper *Flux*.[184]

In 2009, EuTV found itself in a poor financial state and struggled to pay its employees. As a result, several news bulletins and shows were closed and the station focused on broadcasting movies dubbed into Russian and subtitled in Romanian. According to media reports, in early 2011, the station was sold to a Moldovan oil businessman whose identity remains unknown.[185] EuTV was re-launched on 8 March 2011.

On 1 March 2006, a Moldovan company, Analytic Media Group (AMG), launched the television station TV7. It mostly rebroadcasts the shows of the Russian channels NTV and NTV MIR, but also produces its own news and analytical programs. The station can be accessed via any cable network in the capital city.

---

182. Interview with Doina Costin,.

183. Broadcasting Code.

184. T. Caraus, *Media Ownership and its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism in Moldova*, The South East European Network for Professionalization of Media (SEENPM), Peace Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2004, p. 335.

185. Unimedia, "Euro TV s-a relansat pe 8 martie" (Euro TV Re-launched on 8 March), available in Romanian at http://unimedia.md/index.php?mod=news&id=31205 (accessed 5 July 2011).

One of the most prominent actors in the market to emerge after the change of power in 2009 is the local investment company Prime TV, which owns Prime TV and Prime FM radio. Prime FM was launched on 10 September 2010 on the basis of the former municipal radio station Antena C. Prime TV was launched in 2007 and mainly rebroadcasts the programs of Russia's state-controlled Channel One. As of September 2010, Prime TV started producing its own newscasts, as well as several talk-shows and entertainment programs. According to the documents submitted to the CCA, the director of the company is Petru Jelihovschi, but the media attribute the ownership of the company to Vladimir Plahotniuc, vice-speaker of the Parliament and a member of the Democratic Party. Plahotniuc is also the reputed owner of the foreign investment enterprise Telefe M International, the company which owns 2 Plus television station and Maestro FM radio station.[186]

In March 2010, the Moldovan media market saw the emergence of a new television station, Jurnal TV. It is part of Jurnal Trust Media, along with the radio station Jurnal FM (launched in 2010), the daily *Jurnal de Chişinău*, the tabloid *Apropo*, the newspaper *ECOnomist*, the entertainment website *Jurnal Live*, the news website Jurnal.md, and the advertising agency Reforma Advertising. According to the documents submitted to the CCA, the owner of Jurnal Trust Media is the company Jurnal de Chisinau Plus, whose director is Val Butnaru, a journalist. Other sources name businessman Viorel Topa as the owner of the trust.[187]

The same year, the television station Publika TV was launched. This is an investment of the influential Romanian media holding Realitatea–Catavencu owned by businessman Sorin Ovidiu Vîntu. According to some estimation, the investments in Publika TV amounted to as much as €4.8 million.[188] The same media group launched (also in 2010) the radio station Publika FM and the website Publika.md. The documents submitted to the CCA name Stiri Media Group (part of the Romanian holding Realitatea–Catavencu) as the owner of these media outlets.

The radio market has seen an abundance of new entrants in recent years: Radio Noroc, as well as Aquarelle FM and Radio Sport. The latter broadcasts in Chisinau and is the only radio station in the country fully dedicated to sports. Aquarelle FM targets a female audience and is owned by Angela Sirbu, who also owns the women's monthly *Aquarelle* and the business publication *Business Class*.

---

186. See "Plahotniuc and the Mass Media" at http://antimafie.jurnal.md/?p=344; "Plahotniuc's Prime – Re-broadcasting Illegally?" at http://www.jurnal.md/ro/news/prime-ul-lui-plahotniuc-retransmisie-ilegala-192756/ (accessed 5 July 2011) (hereafter, "Plahotniuc and the Mass Media"); Angela Aramă, "Codul Audiovizualului şi frecvenţele lui Plahotniuc" (The Broadcasting Code and Plahotniuc's Frequencies), available in Romanian at http://aarama.blogspot.com/2010/10/concursul-cca-pentru-atribuirea.html (accessed 5 July 2011) (hereafter, Angela Aramă, "The Broadcasting Code and Plahotniuc's Frequencies").

187. Wikipedia entry on Jurnal Trust Media, available at http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jurnal_Trust_Media. Also Unimedia.MD mentioned that Viorel Topa is the owner and investor of Jurnal Trust Media. See Unimedia, *Angajat Jurnal Trust Media: 1/3 din angajaţii instituţiei media sunt puşi pe liber! Gâtu: Este o chestie internă!* (Anonymous Employee of Media Trust Jurnal: 1/3 of Jurnal Trust Media Employees Will be fired! Gâtu: It's an Internal Thing!), available in Romanian at http://unimedia.md/index.php/design/calendar/banner/?mod=news&id=19113 (accessed 5 July 2011).

188. Asinfo, "Vintu vinde televiziunea unui oligarh basarabean?" (Is Vintu Selling the TV Station to a Bessarabian Oligarch?), available at http://www.asinfo.ro/index.php?module=Pagesetter&func=viewpub&tid=5&pid=5545 (accessed 5 July 2011).

2010 was also marked by the emergence of several new print titles: *Gazeta de Sud*, *Adevărul*, and *Evenimentul Zilei* (all in Romanian), and *Novosti dnya* (in Russian). The weeklies *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Novosti dnya* were launched simultaneously and had a joint marketing campaign, although officially the two newspapers have different owners, editorial teams, and editorial policies. The owner of *Evenimentul Zilei* is the limited liability company Evenimentul Zilei SRL, which has declared that it has no affiliations with political entities or other media trusts in the country. However, mass media in Chisinau speculated that the newspaper belonged to Vlad Plahotniuc,[189] vice-speaker of the Parliament and a member of the Democratic Party (*Partidul Democrat*, PDM). Media monitoring reports carried out by CJI during the November 2010 parliamentary election campaign pointed to the fact that "*Evenimentul Zilei*'s editorial policy generally favored the electoral contestant PDM."[190] *Novosti dnya* is owned by the company Novosti Dnya, but does not provide any information as to the founders or owners of the company.[191] Both newspapers suspended their operation in March 2011, giving no reason for this decision.[192] However, Evenimentul.md is still being updated: it is managed by a group of young journalist volunteers who post news, comments, articles, and reports on political, economic, and social affairs in Moldova.[193]

Adevărul was launched in December 2010 as part of the Romanian media trust Adevărul Holding, owned by Romanian media tycoon Dinu Patriciu. The newspaper has declared its editorial independence from the editorial policy of the Romanian daily of the same name, *Adevărul.* The editorial team of *Adevărul Moldova* consists of 14 Moldovan and Romanian journalists. In 2010, Patriciu announced his intention to launch in Moldova the tabloid newspaper *Click* (in Romania, *Click* is the best-selling newspaper with over 200,000 sold copies in the second quarter of 2010), as well as the Russian-language tabloid *Blik*.[194]

The Moldovan media market has also experienced a rapid growth of online media, in most cases owned by people unknown to the public. One of the key actors online is New Media Group. In 2005, this company launched the Romanian-language news portal Unimedia.md, which is presently one of the top websites in Moldova. In 2008, New Media Group launched the Russian-language news website Vesti.md, the online magazine for women Ladyclub.md, and the platform for press-releases Icomunicat.md. In 2009, New Media Group sold 25 percent of its shares in all these outlets to Stiri Media Group, a company which owns Publika TV television station and Publika FM radio station. Since then, the ownership of Publika has not changed.

189. Unimedia.MD, *Pauză în știrile OMEGA, dar și la ziarul Evenimentul Zilei* (Omega and Evenimentul Zilei news, paused), available in Romanian at http://unimedia.md/?mod=news&id=29041.

190. Independent Journalism Center, *Media Monitoring During the Election Campaign for the Parliamentary Elections on 28 November 2010*, available in Romanian at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/monitorizare/Raport_final_maleg_ro.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

191. Independent Journalism Center, "Memorandum on Press Freedom in Moldova Launched", available at http://www.ijc.md/eng/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=310 (accessed 5 July).

192. Azi.md, "Evenimentul zilei şi Novosti dnya şi-au sistat activitatea" (Evenimentul zilei and Novosti Dnya Have Suspended Their Activity), available at http://www.azi.md/ro/story/16326.

193. See http://www.evenimentul.md (accessed 25 March 2011).

194. Independent Journalism Center, *Raport asupra situatiei presei din Republica Moldova in 2010* (Report on the State of the Press in Moldova in 2010), available at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/Raport_FOP_ro.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

6.1.3   Ownership Consolidation

wo factors—vague legal definitions and the lack of ownership transparency—make analysis of ownership consolidation in Moldova a challenging task. Not only does the Moldovan legislation uses the terms "founder" and "co-founder" (see section *6.1.1*) instead of "owner", but it also does not make any reference to media ownership or media ownership concentration. There are no legal provisions for the media to disclose their owners or benefactors and no publicly available ownership data. "The major problem in detecting media groups emerging in the Moldovan media market is the lack of media ownership transparency,"[195] says Raisa Lozinschi, former editor at *Jurnal de Chișinău* newspaper, and presently a member of the TRM Supervisory Board.

Nevertheless, there are trends in the editorial policy of media institutions that suggest consolidation is occurring. According to Ms Lozinschi, until 2009 most media outlets were connected to the PCRM, which held power between 2001 and 2009. Vladimir Voronin, the leader of the party and former president, said at the PCRM congress on 15 March 2008 that "the Communists own four newspapers and only one television station,"[196] but media experts contested his claims. Ms Lozinschi, who has investigated media concentration in Moldova, believes the "Communist media trust was considerably larger. Political affiliation of certain outlets was plainly visible in the editorial policy and broadcast time allocated to publicizing the alleged accomplishments of the Government and to polishing its image."[197] Judging by editorial policies, among the outlets offering consistent editorial support to the PCRM were the television stations NIT and N4, the radio stations Antena C and Serebreanîi Dojdi, the newspapers *Moldova Suverană*, *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, *Comunistul*, and *Puls*, as well as the news agencies Novosti Moldova and Basa-press.[198] The monitoring reports of the 2009 parliamentary election campaigns carried out by the CJI, the APEL, and the API also note that these outlets were politically biased and openly supported the Communist Party.[199]

Another example of media ownership consolidation is the so-called Rosca trust,[200] a cluster of media outlets affiliated with the former leader of the PPCD, Iurie Rosca. According to the declaration submitted to the Central Commission for Control (*Comisia Centrală de Control,* CCC), until 2005 Rosca owned shares in the newspapers *Flux* and *Țara*, in the news agency Flux, and in the printing company Prag 3. Media reports

---

195. R. Lozinschi, "Concentrarea mass-media în R. Moldova" (Consolidation of Media Ownership in Moldova"), *Mass Media in Moldova*, June 2008, p. 9 (hereafter, R. Lozinschi, "Consolidation of Media Ownership in Moldova").

196. Monitor Media Press, *Jurnal de Chisinau scrie ca Vladimir Voronin nu e sincer cand afirma ca comunistii au doar patru ziare si o televiziune* (Jurnal de Chisinau: Vladimir Voronin is Not Sincere When He Declares that PCRM Owns Only Four Newspapers and One TV Station), available in Romanian at http://www.deca.md/?cat=art_com&id=1691(accessed 5 July 2011).

197. R. Lozinschi, "Consolidation of Media Ownership in Moldova".

198. R. Lozinschi, "Consolidation of Media Ownership in Moldova".

199. Independent Journalism Center, *Monitorizarea mass-media în campania electorală pentru alegerile parlamentare 2009* (Monitoring Mass Media During the 2009 Parliamentary Election Campaign), available in Romanian at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/monitorizare/monitorizare_raport_general.pdf; the Electronic Press Association from Moldova (APEL), *Raport final de monitorizarea prezenței actorilor politici/electorali în programele posturilor de televiziune în perioada electorală a alegerilor parlamentare 2009* (Final Monitoring Report on the Presence of Political Actors in Television Programs During the 2009 Parliamentary Election Campaign), available in Romanian at http://www.apel.md/public/upload/md_6_RAPORT_FINAL_Monitor_ELECTORAL_05_rom.pdf (both accessed 5 July 2011).

200. R. Lozinschi, "Consolidation of Media Ownership in Moldova", p. 10.

suggest he still owns *Flux* newspaper and Prag 3 and recently added the privatized television station EuroTV to his empire.

Prime TV, a company of growing dominance in the Moldovan media market, is reportedly owned by Vladimir Plahotniuc, a businessman and an MP.[201] According to media reports, he is also the owner of the 2 Plus television station, as well as the Maestro FM and Megapolis FM radio stations.[202] His broadcasting empire acquired its influence with the implicit help of the CCA: two broadcasting frequencies, previously held by AMG and Antena C, ended up in the hands of Mr Plahotniuc.[203] Sergiu Mocanu, leader of the Antimafia Movement and of the Party for the Nation and Country (*Partidul pentru Neam și Țară*, PpNT), estimates that the combined audience of Mr Plahotniuc's television channels is around 60 percent of the Romanian-speaking population.[204]

Another example of media consolidation is the investments and acquisitions made by the Romanian holding Realitatea–Catavencu in Moldova. Starting in 2009, the Romanian businessman Sorin Ovidiu Vântu purchased the music television station Muz TV, then launched Publika TV and Publika FM stations. Also starting in 2010, Stiri Media Group—part of the Realitatea–Catavencu holding—acquired a 25 percent share of the online platforms Unimedia.md, Vesti.md, Ladyclub.md, and Icomunicat.md.[205]

In most cases, the consolidation of media groups served political purposes; it is the political agenda of the owners, rather than consolidation *per se*, that led to a reduction in media pluralism and diversity. Monitoring reports of the 2009 and 2010 election campaigns (all in all, three parliamentary election campaigns and one for the constitutional referendum) carried out by the CJI, the APEL, and the API show that media outlets favored political parties or entities whose members owned media institutions. For instance, "the private television stations with national coverage—Prime TV, 2 Plus, and the radio station Prime FM—covered the election campaign mostly in their newscasts. Judging by the frequency of quotes and the context of appearance, Prime TV favored the Democratic Party. The same is true for 2 Plus and Prime FM."[206] This favoritism stemmed from the fact that the list of candidates of the Democratic Party featured Mr Plahotniuc, the reported owner of these media outlets.

---

201. See "Plahotniuc and the Mass Media" and Angela Aramă, "The Broadcasting Code and Plahotniuc's Frequencies".

202. See A. Arama, „Codul Audiovizualului și frecvențele lui Plahotniuc" (The Broadcasting Code and Plahotniuc's frequencies), available in Romanian online at http://aarama.blogspot.com/2010/10/concursul-cca-pentru-atribuirea.html; and Azi.md, "Din 10 noiembrie, postul 2 Plus transmite emisiunile TVR1" (Starting 10 November, 2 Plus is Broadcasting TVR1 Programs), available in Romanian online at http://www.azi.md/ro/print-story/14616 (both accessed 5 July 2011).

203. See Azi.md, "Licența TVR1 a fost retrasă de către Vlad Plahotniuc, ex-directorul TV 2 Plus" (Ex-director of TV 2Plus: TVR1 Licence Withdrawn by Vlad Plahotniuc), available online in Romanian at http://www.azi.md/ro/story/13260 (accessed 5 July 2011).

204. See Jurnal.md, "Plahotniuc and the Mass Media", available online in English at http://antimafie.jurnal.md/?p=344 (accessed 5 July 2011).

205. Interview by e-mail with Vasile Găluscă, one of the founders and co-owner of Interakt Media, Chisinau, 11 March 2011.

206. Independent Journalism Center, *Media Monitoring in the Election Campaign for the Early Parliamentary Elections of November 28, 2010*, available at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/monitorizare/Report_elect_final_en.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

Another example is the case of Jurnal TV television station. According to the same report by the CJI, "Jurnal TV favored the Party for the Nation and Country; its candidates were being offered a significant space in the news and programs." Again, affiliation with a particular politician is likely to have been the cause: in the 28 November 2010 parliamentary elections, Viorel Topa (according to the press, one of the owners of Jurnal TV) was a candidate on the list of the Party for the Nation and Country.[207]

6.1.4   Telecoms Business and the Media

Telecoms have been increasingly involved in the media sector via internet television services, but have not entered it as owners. The key event in this respect was the launching in February 2010 of the IPTV service by the national telecommunications company Moldtelecom. A year later, StarNet SRL followed with its own IPTV service.

6.1.5   Transparency of Media Ownership

The lack of media ownership transparency has been a major problem in the Moldovan media business for a number of years. The issue stems from the vague legal provisions regarding media ownership, from the post-Soviet privatization practices, and also from the reluctance of the authorities to introduce greater transparency.

In the early 1990s, Soviet-era media outlets were privatized in a non-transparent manner, in many cases, by shell companies. Alexandru Burdeinii, editor-in-chief of the Info-Market news agency, explained that "after Moldova declared its independence in 1991, most of the print, radio and television outlets began to pass into private ownership. Newspapers and magazines could be acquired by the employees, because the privatization method was simpler and the costs were lower, while in the broadcasting field the procedure was more complicated and costly."[208] As a result, many broadcasters ended up in the hands of 'hidden owners'. According to Ludmila Andronic, today "over 50 percent of the radio and television stations are registered on behalf of third parties."[209]

There are no legally binding obligations for media outlets to declare their real owners, but one can officially request information on the *de jure* owner of a media outlet at the State Registration Chamber (*Camera Înregistrării de Stat din Moldova*), an authority in charge of registering all legal entities of any form of proprietorship. "However, in most of the cases, *de facto* they are not the true owners of these [media] institutions," says Mr Burdeinii.[210]

---

207. PD candidate list available at http://www.e-democracy.md/elections/parliamentary/2010/opponents/pdm/list/, and PPNT candidate list available at http://www.e-democracy.md/elections/parliamentary/2010/opponents/ppnt/list/ (both accessed 5 July 2011).

208. Interview with Alexandru Burdeinii, editor-in-chief, InfoMarket News Agency, Chisinau, February 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Alexandru Burdeinii).

209. Interview with Ludmila Andronic.

210. Interview with Alexandru Burdeinii.

Media law expert Eugeniu Rîbca believes that non-transparency stems from the "lack of good will" that exists in the field. Thus, "due to 'concerted efforts' of the CCA, we understand that a founder of the institution A is the company B. Even if the Broadcasting Code used the term 'owner', the same 'concerted efforts' of the CCA would lead for it to be interpreted as the same company B. It is a question, in my opinion, of the Broadcasting Council members' lack of will to disclose this information to the public."[211]

6.2   Media Funding

6.2.1   Public and Private Funding

The only company funded from public money is the public broadcaster TeleRadioMoldova. According to Article 64 of the Broadcasting Code, TRM is to be funded from:

a)   funding allocated from the state budget;

b)   donations and sponsorships for special projects;

c)   funds obtained by renting out property, as well as by selling its original shows;

d)   revenues from organizing public events according to the remit of the Company;

e)   revenues from advertising;

f)   other legal financial resources in line with the provisions of the Broadcasting Code and current legislation.

All other television, radio, print, and online outlets are privately owned. They are funded mostly from advertising revenues or investments made by their owners.

Figure 14.
State budget allocations for the public broadcaster, in US$ million
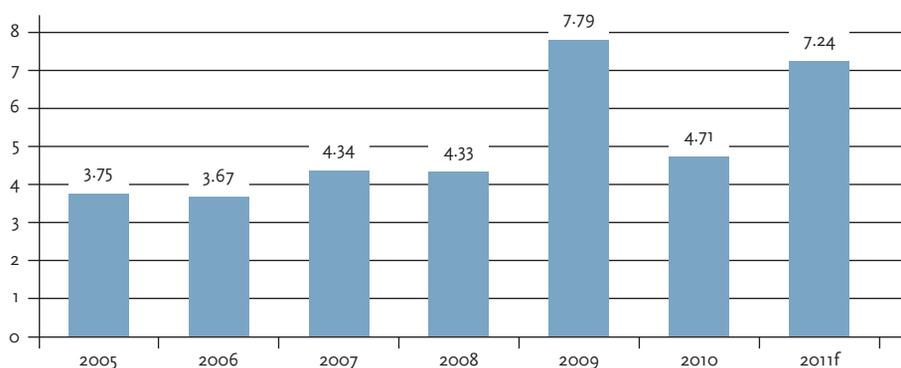
Notes: f: forecast.
Source: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova, Laws on state budgets from 2005–2010.

---

211. Interview with Eugeniu Rîbca.

The system of funding TRM directly from the state budget (the amount is determined annually by the Finance Ministry and approved by the Parliament) is criticized by most of the media experts and journalists interviewed for this study as well as by some international experts. The interviewees believe the State must not financially support a company at the expense of other media, as it is likely to cause unfair competition in the media market. "It would be a valid and sensible solution to switch the public company to self-financing, because otherwise there is a situation when the State favors certain media outlets to the detriment of others," says Ms Andronic.[212] License fees, development of its own programs and products, and selling them could be some of the funding models that "would ensure [the broadcaster's] independence from political factors," adds Ms Costin.[213]

In her comments on the Draft Audiovisual Code of Moldova, OSCE expert Dr Katrin Nyman-Metcalf also suggests introducing a license fee. "Although European countries are free to decide themselves the exact nature of financing a public service broadcaster, its independence and viability are best served by a license fee paid by users. It is unsuitable to be financed mainly by state budget allocations as this reduces the independence," she writes.[214] The amount of state subsidy TRM receives from the state budget varies from one year to another; however, the proportion of state funding in the overall annual budget of the broadcaster is consistently high, around 90 percent.[215] However, the management of TRM disagreed at the time, arguing that the fee could not be applied in Moldova, as the population was too poor.

Four more years had to pass in discussions until the views expressed by the international experts made their way into the document entitled *Strategic Directions of Development for the Public Broadcasting Company TeleRadioMoldova during 2010–2015*, drafted in partnership with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). The document specifies, inter alia, that the public broadcaster's operational and development costs would be supported by the entire society through direct funding (fees), as well as indirect (budget): "This would establish the necessary direct and interactive relationship between the user and the provider of the public service, which will have a positive impact on the public service quality."[216]

As for the private broadcasters, Article 66 of the Broadcasting Code stipulates that "private broadcasters shall get financing from the revenues obtained from commercial activities, sponsorships and rendering services."[217] The main source of funding for private media is advertising. In print media, especially regional and local

---

212. Interview with Ludmila Andronic.

213. Interview with Doina Costin.

214. K. Nyman-Metcalf, *Comments on the Draft Audiovisual Code of the Republic of Moldova*, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 7 April 2006, available at http://www.osce.org/fom/18830 (accessed 5 July 2011).

215. A subscription fee was also proposed in June 2006 by Council of Europe experts Christian Nissen and Boris Bergant at the seminar "The Public Broadcasting Service: Ensuring Editorial Policy Independence and Institutional Autonomy," in Moldova on 19–21 June 2006.

216. Info-Prim Neo, "Taxa de abonament pentru serviciile de radioteleviziune publice este văzută în mod diferit de experți europeni și conducerea TRM" (Subscription Fee for Public Broadcaster Seen Differently by European Experts and TRM Management), available in Romanian at http://www.info-prim.md/?a=10&nD=2006/06/21&ay=2403 (accessed 5 July 2011).

217. Broadcasting Code of the Republic of Moldova, No. 260 of 4 August 2006, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 131, 18 August 2006, available at http://www.apel.md/public//upload/en_audiovisual_code.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

outlets, advertising comes up to 10 to 20 percent of the total revenues. The remaining amount comes from retail sales.[218]

According to the media agency ZenithOptimedia, the Moldovan advertising market is developing rapidly. According to this source, the skyrocketing growth is related to the fact that Moldova is an essentially new advertising market, where advertising spend started growing from a low base. Major growth was also recorded during 2006–2008, when the advertising spend increased threefold to US$33.7 million. Most of it was spent on television (see Figure 15).

Beginning 2009, copy sales and subscriptions for print media started falling, triggered by changes in people's media consumption habits and exacerbated by the financial crisis. This trend can be noticed in opinion polls: according to the Barometer of Public Opinion in Moldova, in April 2008, 13.1 percent of respondents said they were reading newspapers daily, while in May 2010, the number decreased to 9.7 percent.[219]

The advertising market for virtually all media, and local outlets in particular, shrunk significantly in 2009. According to a report compiled by Ion Bunduchi and commissioned by the Open Society Foundations, "the advertising market, which has never been fairly distributed, now [January 2010] faces serious difficulties. According to advertising agencies, their budgets decreased by 65 per cent in January 2010 compared with January 2009."[220] A report by the API says that "after the first signs of the economic crisis appeared in 2008, eight out of 20 [local] newspapers lost up to 30 percent of their loyal advertising customers. Some clients did not give up on advertising services provided by newspapers entirely, but only reduced the size of their advertisements. In some cases, these were cut to half the original size."[221]

Figure 15.
Dynamics of Moldova's advertising market, in US$ million, 2006–2008
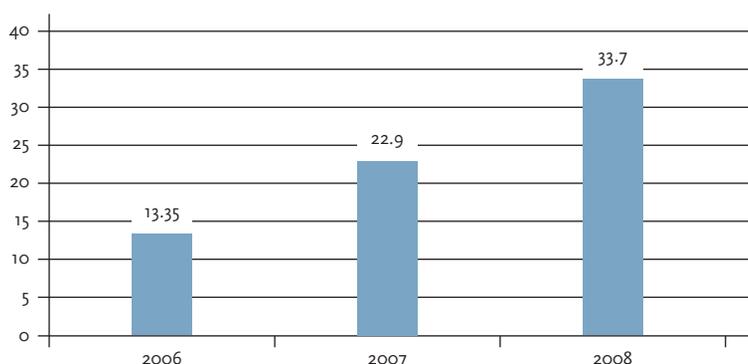
Source: Association of Advertising Agencies of Moldova (*Asociația Agenţiilor de Publicitate din Moldova*, AAPM).

---

218. I. Bunduchi, *Footprint of Financial Crisis in the Media*, Moldova country report, commissioned by the Open Society Institute, December 2009, available at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/media/articles_publications/publications/financial-crisis-media-20091201/moldova-20091201.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011) (hereafter, I. Bunduchi, *Footprint of Financial Crisis in the Media*).

219. Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, April 2008 and May 2010.

220. I. Bunduchi, *Footprint of Financial Crisis in the Media*, p. 7.

221. Association of Independent Press (API), *Evoluţia presei locale în perioada 1990–2010* (The Evolution of Local Press During 1990–2010), p. 22, available in Romanian at http://api.md/files/evolutie.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

The only positive development in terms of advertising spend in the midst of financial crisis was recorded in the online domain. According to Ms Andronic, the online advertising market was not affected by the crisis and "is growing as fast as ever", most likely driven by the rapidly increasing number of internet users.[222] In 2008, the online advertising market was worth US$700,000 and, according to some estimates, it doubled in 2009.[223]

Figure 16.
Advertising spending in the media market in 2008, in %
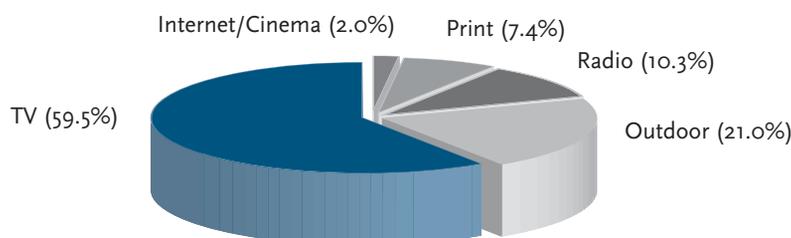
Source: AAPM.

The biggest issue in the advertising market is the monopoly of several companies over advertising in Moldova. This is most detrimental to the financial independence and sustainability of the media, because the vast majority of owners of advertising agencies are also media owners who channel advertising to their own media outlets. Ms Andronic notes that "according to the latest data provided by the National Agency for Protecting Competition, the largest incomes from advertising were registered by media institutions belonging to the group managed by Casa Media advertising agency, particularly to Prime TV and 2 Plus television channels. Casa Media has over 50 percent of the advertising market, out of which 60 to 70 percent goes to Prime TV."[224] The ownership of Casa Media is attributed to the politician Vladimir Plahotniuc, the reported owner of Prima TV and 2 Plus. Sergiu Mocanu, former adviser to President Vladimir Voronin and currently the leader of the Party for the Nation and the Country (*Partidul pentru Neam și Țară*), believes that the amount of advertising concentrated in the hands of Casa Media could even be 80 percent.[225]

The idea of monopoly of certain companies in the advertising market is also mentioned by economic experts. In the autumn of 2010, economist Veaceslav Ioniță, currently head of the Parliamentary Committee for Economy, Budget, and Finances, declared in a show on Jurnal TV that "the advertising market in Moldova is promising, but it is at an 'embryonic' stage. Its greatest problem comes from being monopolized from the very beginning by a couple of companies."

222. Interview with Ludmila Andronic.

223. See "Privire de ansamblu asupra pietii de publicitate online în Moldova" (Overview of the Online Advertising Market in Moldova), available in Romanian at http://totul.md/ro/expertitem/592.html (accessed 5 July 2011).

224. Interview with Ludmila Andronic.

225. Jurnal.md, "Plahotniuc si mass-media" (Plahotniuc and the Mass Media), available in Romanian at http://antimafie.jurnal.md/?p=344 (accessed 5 July 2011).

Another typical problem of Moldovan mass media, especially of print media, is that many institutions do not have a marketing department. Most of these admit not having enough funds to hire marketing professionals.[226]

Maxim Calmâkov, editor-in-chief of a newspaper in Balti, *Gazeta.md*, says that without a marketing strategy it is impossible to distribute newspapers professionally. "To be able to compete, you have to analyze the market. Only then can you make plans for further development of the paper," says Calmâkov.[227]

6.2.2   Other Sources of Funding

In the case of the privately owned broadcast media, there are no other sources of funding except for those provided by law (i.e. advertising, donations, and funding by founders/owners). They are not recipients of public funding.

Things are somewhat different where print media are concerned. Article 12 of the Press Law lists a series of exceptions allowing direct funding from public sources of media outlets: "Periodical publications dedicated to preschool and school-age children are funded by the state; in this case the relevant ministries (departments) act as founders (co-founders)."[228] IDIS Viitorul expert Sergiu Rusanovschi says that "apparently, the provision is well-intentioned; however in this case, these ministries and departments become founders (co-founders) of the outlets, which could lead to the promotion of certain political views. Consequently, the educational domain, which needs to be protected from political interference more than any other, ends up serving [political] interests."[229]

Similarly, "periodicals and press agencies founded by public authorities shall be financed from the respective budget."[230] Here the emphasis is made on the outlets established by the State with negative implications for the development of private media that have to survive in harsh economic conditions using their own resources.

The law also allows donations to periodicals and news agencies from local and foreign individuals and companies. Outlets receiving such donations are required to publish biannually information about the source and the amount of donations.[231] Usually, donor lists include international organizations such as

---

226. V. Gotisan, *"Tirajul presei scrise din Republica Moldova. Mecanisme de reglementare și monitorizare"* (Print Run in the Moldovan Print Media. Monitoring and Regulatory Mechanisms), *Mass Media in Moldova*, December 2008, p. 3 (hereafter, V. Gotisan, "Print Run in the Moldovan Print Media").

227. V. Gotisan, "Print Run in the Moldovan Print Media".

228. Press Law No. 243-XIII of 26 October 1994, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No 2/12, 12 January 1995, available in Romanian at http://ijc.md/ Publicatii/mlu/legislatie/legea_presei.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011) (hereafter, Press Law No. 243-XIII of 26 October 1994).

229. S. Rusanovschi, *Aspecte instituționale și de reglementare a finanțării Mass-media în Republica Moldova. Focus pe Teleradio-moldova* (Institutional and Regulatory Aspects of Media Funding. Focus on Teleradio-Moldova), Institute for Development and Social Initiative IDIS Viitorul (*Institutul pentru Dezvoltare și Inițiative Sociale* , IDIS Viitorul) 2010, p. 22., available at http://www.viitorul.org/public/3129/en/STUDIU_TRANS-PARENTA_ENG.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

230. Press Law No. 243-XIII of 26 October 1994.

231. Press Law No. 243-XIII of 26 October 1994.

the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), the Soros Foundation (part of the Open Society Foundations, OSF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Academy for Educational Development Moldova (AED). The API report notes that foreign donor help plays an important role in the media market, covering between 30 and 50 percent of the publishing costs during a year.[232]

Unlike international funding, direct funding of media outlets by foreign governments is prohibited by law, except for cases provided for by bilateral inter-governmental agreements.[233]

According to Dumitru Tîra: "Presently, there are four sources of funding for private media outlets in Moldova: financing from founders, advertising, special projects implemented in cooperation with the international community (diplomatic missions, the foreign donors that are represented in Moldova) and money coming from political advertising."[234]

6.3   Media Business Models

6.3.1   Changes in Media Business Models

Media managers tend to believe that the overall impact of digitization will have positive economic effects for media companies. According to one television executive, digitization will bring an enormous benefit to the [media] market, chiefly to television, because it will put all television stations on an equal footing, which implies a high degree of uniformity in terms of distribution. The easiest 'transition' will be, according to the same source, for companies that have recently entered the market, such as Publika TV and Jurnal TV, because their technical equipment fits all digital requirements.[235]

Mr Burdeinîi thinks that digitization is opening up opportunities for new funding models, with the internet telecom and mobile telephony platforms likely to provide a model for testing and applying a subscription fee for the online version of newspapers.[236]

---

232. Association of Independent Press (API), *Evoluția presei locale în perioada 1990–2010* (The Evolution of Local Press During 1990–2010), p. 21, available in Romanian at http://api.md/files/evolutie.pdf (accessed 5 July 2011).

233. Press Law No. 243-XIII of 26 October 1994.

234. Interview with Dumitru Tira.

235. Interview with Dumitru Tira.

236. Interview with Alexandru Burdeinii.

6.4   Assessments

Since 2005, the media market started consolidating more and more around several media groups. The market is largely divided between four groups: the media outlets controlled by the Communist Party; Jurnal Trust Media; the media outlets reportedly controlled by politician Vlad Plahotniuc; and the media outlets that are part of the Realitatea–Catavencu media trust, owned by Romanian businessman Sorin Ovidiu Vîntu. Approximately half of these media groups are affiliated with political parties and organizations, a phenomenon noted by the media non-profits CJI and APEL in their reports on media behavior during election campaigns.

The concentration of media groups is mostly beneficial to media outlets that are part of these groups, while smaller outlets are struggling to survive in the current market conditions. Some of the independent outlets rely heavily on donations from international donors (such as the Soros Foundation, IREX, and the USAID), while others have closed down. At the same time, an increasing number of outlets have emerged online, adding diversity to news offer.

Transparency of media ownership has not increased in the past five years. The laws and regulations are still confusing; they do include a legal requirement to disclose the beneficial owners and do not distinguish between an owner and a founder. The identity of real owners remains unknown to the vast majority of the audience. The new draft of the Broadcasting Code (still in progress), however, will provide detailed transparency requirements for media ownership, so as to avoid further misinterpretation.[237]

As to the monopolization of the media market, a questionable provision was adopted recently, when article 66 of the Broadcasting Code was amended. Now a broadcaster is permitted to own up to five broadcasting licenses simultaneously in a single administrative unit: the resulting risk of market monopoly has been signaled by media organizations, but their opinion was not taken into account by the CCA and the Parliament.

It is too early to evaluate the impact of digitization on media ownership in Moldova, since the process is still at an early stage. The same applies to funding and new business models. Nevertheless, some lessons from the analog era can be learned when evaluating independence and financial sustainability of the Moldovan media.

In Moldova, the most "harmless" sources of funding or, in other words, those with no political strings attached, are advertising and donations from international organizations. Only these sources can ensure editorial independence of the media. All the other sources, including direct subsidies from the budget or politically-affiliated owners, are detrimental as they limit the decision-making capacity of the editorial staff.

The existing funding models for media hardly qualify as sustainable. The advertising market is monopolized by a few companies and agencies that feed advertising to their own media institutions. Even though still dynamic and fast-growing, the advertising market has been affected by the economic crisis and is yet to recover.

---

237. Interview with Eugeniu Rîbca.

The public broadcasting institutions, Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova, also face serious sustainability issues. The largest part of their funding comes from the state budget, which makes the outlets susceptible to political pressures. New funding models proposed by international and local media experts (including the introduction of a subscription fee) could ensure editorial independence. However, for the time being, these proposals are not endorsed by the relevant political authorities.

It is likely that, in the coming years, some print outlets will close down their print editions and continue their activity exclusively online. This will mark the beginning of the emergence of new business models and new modus operandi for traditional print media.

7. Policies, Laws, and Regulators

7.1 Policies and Laws

7.1.1 Digital Switch-over of Terrestrial Transmission

7.1.1.1 Access and Affordability

In March 2008, Moldova ratified the Regional Agreement Relating to the planning of the digital terrestrial broadcasting service in Region 1.[238] The Republic of Moldova assumed the responsibility to complete the transition to digital television by the set deadline (16 June 2015). According to the plan agreed in Geneva in 2006, Moldova will have six national multiplexes (36 television channels) and two regional multiplexes (26 television channels).

In June 2010, the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications finalized the drafting of the Strategy Regarding Transition from Terrestrial Analog to Terrestrial Digital Television[239] (hereafter, the Strategy) and submitted it to broadcasters for public consultation. After debates with industry bodies, the Strategy was posted online for a wider public discussion (see section *7.1.1.4*). The finalized draft was submitted to the Government in February 2011 and by the autumn was ready to go through all the stages of the legislative process. However, at this time of writing, it remains in draft form.

The draft documents declare the intention to make the service affordable and accessible to everyone: "the DVB-T platform will offer the population the possibility to receive both the programs with unconditional access (the social objective is to ensure free-of-charge access to mass information resources), and [the ones with] conditional access, regardless of the location."[240]

---

238. Law on the ratification of the Regional Agreement relating to the planning of digital terrestrial broadcasting service in Region 1 (parts of Region 1 situated to the west of meridian 170° E and to the north of parallel 40° S, except for the territory of Mongolia) and in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the spectrum of 174–230 MHz and 470–862 MHz, No. 69-XVI as of 27.03.2008, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 74–75/247, 11 April 2008.

239. The elaborated draft Strategy and related draft laws are available in Romanian on the ministry website at http://www.mtic.gov.md/pl_re-mis/162111/ (accessed 4 January 2011).

240. Explanatory note to the draft law for approving the Strategy regarding transition from terrestrial analog television to terrestrial digital television, p. 2, available in Romanian at http://www.mtic.gov.md/img/law/2010/proiect/05-30a/nota.pdf (accessed 4 January 2011).

7.1.1.2 Subsidies for Equipment

The draft Strategy includes a commitment to provide set-top boxes to those who cannot afford them and to elaborate criteria for the provision thereof.

7.1.1.3 Legal Provisions on Public Interest

There is no legal framework ensuring that the digital switch-over will serve the public interest. However, the draft Strategy suggests some positive intentions in this respect. For instance, Chapter VII of the draft Strategy includes, among others, a reference to digital multiplex licensing conditions that shall contain obligations to give priority to the broadcasters licensed to broadcast televisions services in the public interest. It also notes that access of the end users (viewers) to public interest content will be non-conditional.[241]

7.1.1.4 Public Consultation

In 2008, following the advocacy campaigns led by the non-profit organization Access-info, the Law on Transparency in the Decision-Making Process was adopted,[242] making it compulsory for the authorities to consult all concerned parties in the process of adopting decisions. There were no complaints in this respect against the Ministry of Information Technologies, which was in charge of developing the Strategy. Experts and broadcasters agree that the requirements of the above-mentioned law were respected. In June 2010, the Ministry sent an e-mail to Moldovan broadcasters asking for their opinion about and the endorsement of the proposed digitalization-related draft laws and the Strategy.[243] As yet, no significant progress has been made in pushing the drafts through the legislative stages, and several experts interviewed for this study believe that the delays are due to the election campaigns that were held three times in the past two years.[244] The legislative work continues in pre-election periods, but due to the inherent tensions, only urgent laws are adopted, while laws that are likely to cause controversy are left until after elections.

However, the main problem does not lie with the election-related delays, but rather with the fact that the topic itself is complex and there are few people in Moldova able to grasp the full extent of the upcoming transition and to provide meaningful input. To help broadcasters acquire better understanding of the processes, some organizations and public institutions (the Soros Foundation Moldova, the CCA, and the Ministry of Information Technologies) have organized seminars and roundtables bringing together broadcasters, relevant authorities, and digitization experts. After the events, the broadcasters, including local ones, confirmed that

---

241. Draft Strategy regarding transition from terrestrial analog television to terrestrial digital television, p. 13, art.7.4, available in Romanian at http://www.mtic.gov.md/img/law/2010/proiect/05-30a/proiect_legii_strat.pdf (accessed 28 February 2011).

242. Law on Transparency in the Decision-making Process, No. 39 of 13 November 2008, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 215–217/798, 5 December 2008.

243. The letter of the Ministry of Informational Technologies of the Republic of Moldova No. 01/1268 of 16 June 2010 including the draft of the Strategy with two appendices, the explanatory note, and the proposed draft laws were sent by e-mail to television broadcasters in order to obtain their input (the email sent from the address andrei.nemtanu@mtic.gov.md, on 21 June 2010, was obtained for the purposes of this study from Andrei Bargan, director and owner of the local television station Media TV from Cimislia district).

244. Interviews with Ion Bunduchi and Andrei Nemtanu, main consultant in the General Direction for Development of Informational Society, Chisinau, 15 March 2011.

they have been brought up to speed regarding the transition-related issues and documents.[245] Civil society organizations were also included in the process, APEL among others.

7.1.2   The Internet

7.1.2.1 Regulation of News on the Internet

The internet and mobile platforms are only subject to regulation in Moldova when it comes to general provisions that apply to all types of news/content delivery. The Criminal Code, the Civil Code, the Law on Freedom of Expression, the Law on the Protection of Personal Data, and special laws referring to protection from extremism or terrorism do not differentiate between the means of distribution of information.

Article 20, paragraph 3 of the Law on Electronic Communications requires site owners to provide the IP addresses of visitors upon request of law enforcement authorities (the law does not specify a concrete institution). This provision of the Law allows the authorities to find and, consequently, arrest any person that has placed posts, which are deemed illegal according to the Moldovan legislation (e.g. hate speech, instigation to violence). (See section *7.1.2.2.*)

The Law on Freedom of Expression contains provisions which are applicable to all means of communication, be it print or electronic, analog, or digital.[246] The Law on Freedom of Expression is harmonized with EU legislation, and it aims to facilitate the application of the highest standards of freedom of expression in Moldova. In particular, it refers to defamation and protection of private life. Article 16 of the Civil Code[247] (the right to honor, dignity, and professional reputation) remains in force, but it now has a nuanced application, consistent with the norms stated by the European Court of Human Rights jurisprudence and some best practices.[248]

As for the Criminal Code,[249] the majority of criminal offences that are applicable to the media in general are also applicable to digital means of communication without mentioning the internet specifically. Examples of crimes which may be perpetrated through the internet are: Article 140 (Propagation of war), Article 177 (Breach of the right to private life), Article 185/1 (Violation of copyright and associated rights), Article 279/2 (Inciting terrorism or public justification of terrorism), Article 341 (Calls to overthrow or change the constitutional order of the Republic of Moldova through violence), and Article 346 (Intentional actions aimed at inciting ethnic, racial or religious hatred or enmity).

---

245. Interviews with Ion Bunduchi and Andrei Bargan, director of the local television station Media TV from Cimislia district, 8 December 2010.

246. Law on Freedom of Expression No. 64 of 23 April 2010, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 117–118/355 , 9 July 2010.

247. Civil Code No. 1107 of 6 June 2002, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 82–86/661, 22 June 2002.

248. O. Pitrac, "The Law on Freedom of Speech: appearance and impact", *Mass Media*, p. 7, published in June 2010 in Romanian, Russian, and English, available at http://ijc.md/bulmm/2010iunie/iunie2010eng.pdf (accessed 10 November 2011).

249. Criminal Code No. 985 of 18 April 2002, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 72–74/195, 14 April 2009 (republished).

7.1.2.2 Legal Liability for Internet Content

Since most of the rules regulating freedom of expression are general and apply to all means of communication, liability for internet content applies in a similar manner as it would do to any content in print media or on radio/television. For instance, Article 7 of the Law on Freedom of Expression (setting out the right to honor, dignity, and professional reputation) stipulates responsibility in cases of defamation, regardless of the means of communication, as follows:

> Any person is entitled to protection of his/her honor, dignity and professional reputation, which have been injured by dissemination of reports based on false facts or value judgments lacking sufficient factual grounds, or by insult. … Nobody shall be held liable for use of humor and satire unless such styles mislead the public as to the facts.[250]

Traditionally in Moldova anybody who has contributed to the dissemination of defamatory information may be held liable and it is up to the judge to differentiate the liability depending on the circumstances of each case. Thus, in the case of newspapers, both the author and the newspaper may be held responsible for defamation, while in the case of the internet it may be the author and the site. The civil laws do not use such notions as "the author/poster, site, server", but rather "the disseminator/dissemination", so it is for the plaintiff and the defendant to prove who is accountable for dissemination and who is to bear the responsibility.

As for criminal offences, a concrete natural person who has demonstrated a clear intent to violate the law is held responsible. There are no known cases of criminal suits filed against websites or servers.

Nevertheless, there are some legal provisions that apply, specifically, to the internet. The most controversial one is the provision in the Regulation Regarding the Administration of Names in the Domain of Superior Level .md:

> It is prohibited to maintain or manage the sub-domain names, including links to other sites, containing information and pictures of obscene or offensive character, those which defame the Republic of Moldova or other states, call for violence or may damage the image of the Republic of Moldova internationally, as well as being used for activities prohibited by the Moldovan legislation and international conventions.[251]

Article 3.8 of the same Regulation states that, if the provisions of Article 5.5 are violated, the sub-domain name is excluded from the database without any rights to recover it. According to the above-mentioned Regulation and to the standard contract with MoldData, a state-owned company which administrates the .md domain, the user of the sub-domain name is responsible for all the content present on the site. If the content violates the legislation of the Republic of Moldova or is obscene, MoldData may close the site. The existent provisions fail to specify explicitly whether MoldData should close or suspend the site on the basis of a court decision or may proceed at its own discretion.

---

250. Law on Freedom of Expression No. 64 of 23 April 2010, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 117–118/355, 9 July 2010.

251. Regulation Regarding the Administration of Names in the Domain of Superior Level .md of 28 August 2000, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 25–26/75, 1 March 2001.

There have been a few cases where MoldData[252] temporarily closed websites on the grounds of violation of Article 5.5 of the above-mentioned Regulation. The most well-known case relates to the popular social network Faces.md, which was blocked, the first time, because of an erotic picture found on the site (on 30 June 2009) and, the second time, because of a short erotic movie (in January 2010).[253] A similar case in 2009 was that of the news portal *Unimedia*, which risked losing its domain name because the Prosecutor General declared that the site had been publishing comments against the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova. Tudor Darie, one of the founders of *Unimedia* and an adviser to the prime minister on youth related issues in 2010 and 2011, initiated a campaign trying to mobilize internet users to demand improvement of the provisions regarding the administration of the names in the domain .md, and the generic contract signed by MoldData with sub-domain users.[254] Tudor Darie wrote in his blog:

> In my capacity as a counselor of the prime-minister, I received the prime minister [Vlad] Filat's consent and, later, [consent from] the management of the Ministry of Informational Technologies and Communications (minister Alexandru Oleinic and vice-minister Dorin Recean) to modify this MoldData Regulation. At the request of fellow internet users, we will also be able to improve the MoldData contract with the beneficiaries of sites.[255]

Mr Darie established a concrete timeframe for gathering proposed amendments to the respective regulations and internet users were invited to submit their ideas online as comments under the blog article. Interviewed for the purpose of this research, Darie said that he saw himself as a link between the internet users dissatisfied with the MoldData Regulation and the authorities that could modify it. However, no concrete proposals referring to particular legal provisions were received and, subsequently, Darie abandoned his initiative.[256]

> ICT experts believe that the new Law on Copyright and Associated Rights[257] also has a rather questionable provision on free dissemination of information through the internet: Article 66 of the Law on Copyright and Associated Rights, which essentially protects copyright, is found by experts to leave space for interpretation and allow abuses.[258]

---

252. MoldData official website is available at http://www.molddata.md (accessed 4 January 2011).

253. Unimedia.md, "Faces.md va fi deblocat la ora 14:00, declară directorul MoldData" (MoldData director: Faces.md will be launched at 14:00 o'clock), 18 January 2010, available in Romanian at http://unimedia.md/?mod=news&id=15978 (accessed 4 January 2011).

254. T. Darie, "Scrie aici propunerile de modificare a Regulamentului si contractului MoldData" (Add the proposals for modifying the Regulations and contract with MoldData), 30 September 2010, available in Romanian at http://tudordarie.md/2010/09/30/scrie-aici-propunerile-de-mod-ificare-a-regulamentului-%c8%99i-contractului-molddata/ (accessed 28 February 2011) (hereafter, T. Darie, "Add the proposals for modifying the Regulations and contract with MoldData").

255. T. Darie, "Add the proposals for modifying the Regulations and contract with MoldData".

256. Interview with Tudor Darie, adviser of the prime-minister on youth related issues, Chisinau, 7 March 2011 (hereafter, Interview with Tudor Darie).

257. The Law on Copyright and Associated Rights No. 139 of 2 July 2010, published in the *Monitorul Oficial* No. 191–193/630, 1 October 2010, entered into force on 1 January 2011.

258. T. Darie, "Momente principiale pentru o nouă redactie a art. 66 din legea cu privire la drepturile de autor si conexe" (Principal aspects for a new edition of the article 66 from the Law on copyrights and associated rights), 19 February 2011, available in Romanian at http://tudor-darie.md/2011/02/19/momente-principiale-pentru-o-noua-redac%c8%9bie-a-art-66-din-legea-cu-privire-la-drepturile-de-autor-%c8%99i-conexe// (accessed 1 March 2011).

The first paragraph of Article 66 of the Law allows for take-down of web hosting companies, including ISPs.[259]

The National Association of Private Informational Technologies and Communications Companies (ATIC) is currently working on a new edition of this article which will be discussed with the State Agency on Intellectual Property (AGEPI), to include the proposals in the list of proposed amendments to the Law on Copyright and Associated Rights.[260]

While the incidents recorded in the past have not significantly affected media environment and performance thanks to civil society actions that helped to reactivate the closed websites in a relatively short time, they have exposed the deficiencies in legislation which make the online media and other type of internet content vulnerable. The aforementioned cases showed that, in Moldova, popular sites with hundreds of thousands of users may be closed only because of a few users suspected of breaking the law. The experts interviewed for this study believe such an approach is disproportionate.[261]

7.2   Regulators

7.2.1   Changes in Content Regulation

In Moldova, only television and radio broadcasting have regulatory authorities. There is no regulatory authority for print and online content (except for the cases examined in section *7.1.2.2* and MoldData, the domain administrator which establishes some limitations for dissemination of illegal content). The development of the internet and the upcoming digital switch-over of terrestrial transmission have not, so far, prompted any significant changes in the general regulatory framework. Some opinions have been raised, but these remain only a few pioneering voices. One is that the development of new technologies must recommence discussion about the CCA and its functions.[262]

There is a clear understanding, both among the Moldovan authorities and the NGO community, that because of the transition to digital television, the Broadcasting Code needs to be either amended or replaced with a new law. However, no noteworthy work has been done in this respect so far. The Electronic Press Association has

---

259. Article 66, The Law on Copyright and Associated Rights No. 139 of 2 July 2010, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 191–193/630, 1 October 2010, entered into force on 1 January 2011.

260. Interview with Tudor Darie.

261. See the opinion of Tudor Darie in the article "Likbez: Nu sustin pirateria. TorrentsMD înseamnă mai mult decât un fisier piratat. Serverele vor fi întoarse proprietarilor"(I do not support piracy. TorrentsMD is more than pirate files. Servers shall be returned to their owners.), 15 October 2010, available at http://tudordarie.md/2010/10/15/likbez-nu-sus%c8%9bin-pirateria-torrentsmd-inseamna-mai-mult-decat-un-fi%c8%99ier-piratat-serverele-vor-fi-intoarse-proprietarilor/ (accessed 1 March 2011); the opinion of Vasile Galusca in "În toată povestea cu #tmd"(The Whole #tmd Story), 14 October 2010, available at http://galusca.com/972/in-toata-povestea-cu-tmd/ (accessed 4 January 2011); and that of Vitalie Esanu in "Juristi, e timpul să absolviti o a doua facultate, cea de IT" (It is time for lawyers to graduate a second faculty, that of IT), 15 October 2010, http://www.esanu.name/vitalie/?p=384/ (accessed 4 January 2011).

262. E. Rîbca, "The Press Council: Opportunities and Dangers", *Mass Media*, June 2010, p. 4, in the article in Romanian, Russian, and English, available at http://ijc.md/bulmm/2010iunie/iunie2010eng.pdf (accessed 4 January 2011).

begun the work on drafting a new Broadcasting Code and one of its chapters will be dedicated specifically to digitization. However, the umbrella laws regulating the technical aspects of the transition to digital terrestrial transmission will have to be developed first for the authors of the proposal to be able to use it as reference. Since such a legislative base has not yet been devised, the experts working on the new Broadcasting Code draft do not have a final concept of this chapter.[263]

The general regulatory framework in Moldova, which is a young democracy, is quite fluid and new laws are passed frequently. The media regulatory framework is no exception. There are a number of strong media NGOs that regularly campaign for legislative changes by promoting particular laws drafted by them aimed at improving the media regulatory framework.

In terms of content regulation, however, civil society groups have been less influential in promoting change: although draft laws on audiovisual regulation prepared by the Electronic Press Association were considered good by the NGO community, the Parliament did not take them into account and, in 2006, adopted the Broadcasting Code on the basis of its own draft.

In 2007, the Law on Personal Data Protection was adopted, and, in 2010, the new Law on Copyright and Associated Rights. Also, in recent years there have been a series of modifications in the existent regulatory laws. For example, libel was decriminalized by deleting Article 170 and Article 304 from the Criminal Code.

On 10 May 2007, the CCA[264] approved the Strategy on Covering the Territory of the Republic of Moldova with Audiovisual Programs from 2007 to 2010,[265] which created favorable conditions for audiovisual reform. However, to achieve those objectives, constant efforts and consistency were needed from the CCA, the civil society, and the Government.

The aforementioned laws were adopted with an aim to improve the existing regulatory framework, but not because of the emergence of a new type of media. As a rule, it is not even necessary, because the most important laws are formulated so as to comprise any type of expression, regardless of the means of communication. However, sometimes there are specific provisions, as in the case of the Election Code,[266] which was amended in the summer of 2010, and Article 64/1 now specifies, in paragraph 8, that "election advertising on the internet network and through mobile phones is treated identically to election advertising in print media." The new Law on Copyright and Associated Rights also tries to be more specific in covering the internet and has a provision making it illegal for a website to list links and addresses that lead to sites with possible copyright infringements (see section *7.1.2.2*).[267]

---

263. Interview with Ion Bunduchi.

264. Broadcasting Coordinating Council (CCA) official website available at http://www.cca.md (accessed 4 January 2011).

265. CCA Decision No. 59 of 10 May 2007 regarding the Strategy on Covering the Territory of the Republic of Moldova with Audiovisual Programs (2007–2010), published in Monitorul Oficial No. 5–7/9, 11 January 2008.

266. Election Code No. 1381 of 21 November 1997, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 81/667, 8 December 1997.

267. Article 66, para. 1 (d) of the Law on Copyright and Associated Rights No. 139 of 2 July 2010, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 191–193/630, 1 October 2010, entered into force on 1 January 2011.

7.2.2   Regulatory Independence

The nine-member Broadcasting Coordinating Council (CCA) is the public authority regulating broadcast content. Until 2006 (when the Broadcasting Code was passed, replacing the 1995 Audiovisual Law), three members were appointed by the President's Office, three by the Parliament and three by the Government. Local experts noted that the system spelled out in the 1995 Law of three branches of power appointing three members each was flawed because of "the excessive control the power exerted upon the CCA."[268] In an attempt to mitigate the risk of politically motivated voting, the Broadcasting Code adopted a different formula: the candidates for all nine seats are now proposed by civil society and the Parliament approves them. The mandate is six years, except for the candidates elected immediately after the adoption of the Code (in 2006): in order to ensure regular rotation, three members were elected for a six-year term, three for a four-year term, and three for two years.

The procedural changes notwithstanding, the CCA continues to be perceived as a politicized authority loyal to the ruling power, because the members are still being proposed by political parties and selected by the parliamentary committee; and there is no discussion in the Parliament on other candidates than those selected by the committee.[269] The Parliament continues to vote for the CCA team with no public debate, no participation of civil society and without providing arguments why certain candidates are given preference over others. An additional reason why the CCA still lacks public trust was the fact that, in 2009, the Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption accused several CCA members of extortion and bribery. Some of the accusations were later withdrawn. However, in 2010, a member was convicted for corruption by the last instance court.

According to the law, the CCA receives guaranteed Government funding, which is meant to cover "the estimated cost of all activities, so that the CCA can exercise its tasks effectively, efficiently and fully."[270] The budget of the CCA is made up from the following components: a) state subsidies; b) income from spectrum allocation fees; c) income from the annual regulation taxes paid by broadcasters, equal to one percent ratio of their annual turnover; and d) grants. Despite the diversity of sources the funding formula does not enhance the independence and autonomy of the CCA. The main funding source remains the state subsidy, which is annually allotted by the Parliament. Even though the Parliament has not exercised its power to apply pressure via budget allocations, experts believe safeguards need to be in place and the Code does not eliminate the danger of financial pressure on the CCA. This danger is amplified by the lack of a transparent mechanism for devising a budget to cover all expenses necessary to execute the tasks of the CCA efficiently. Experts believe a good option to secure institutional independence for the CCA would be a budget approved for several years ahead, or allotting funds indirectly, through an independent agency.[271]

---

268. C. Pirtac, I. Bunduchi, C. Marin, A. Dorogan, V. Vasilica, and E. Rîbca, *Comments on the Broadcasting Code of the Republic of Moldova*, Chisinau, 2008, version in Romanian, Russian and English, p. 212 (hereafter, Pirtac et al., *Comments on the Broadcasting Code of the Republic of Moldova*).

269. O. Pirtac, "Broadcast Code: Where To?", *Mass Media*, December 2006, article in Romanian, Russian, and English, p. 6, available at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/eng/bmm/december2006eng.pdf (accessed 5 January 2011).

270. Broadcasting Code, art. 47 (1).

271. Pirtac et al., *Comments on the Broadcasting Code of the Republic of Moldova*, p. 215.

The Case of ProTV Chisinau License

In December 2009, the former head of the CCA, Gheorghe Gorincioi, announced at a press conference that the CCA would not extend the broadcasting license for ProTV Chisinau,[272] one of the most objective and impartial television stations in Moldova, and was going to announce a tender for the licenses of this station. The CCA accused ProTV of various violations, including the lack of newscasts for hearing-impaired people and a "disproportionate" amount of advertising. ProTV said the arguments provided by the CCA could not constitute a legal basis for refusing to extend the license.[273] The CCA statement was seen by the CJI media experts as a follow-up to an earlier declaration by Iurie Rosca, at the time the vice-speaker of the Parliament. In his speech at the Parliament on 29 November 2008, he openly threatened to close down ProTV Chisinau.[274]

ProTV Chisinau challenged the CCA decision at the Supreme Court and the journalistic community warned the general public about the irregularities in the CCA decisions. The CJI stated that "the actions of the CCA are part of an increasingly strong tendency of the Moldovan authorities to intimidate the independent press and monopolize the main mass media sources, depriving citizens of alternative sources of information on the eve of the elections."[275] In the autumn of 2009, after the victory of the democratic opposition in the July elections, the Supreme Court found in favor of ProTV Chisinau. On 29 November 2009, the license of ProTV Chisinau station was extended for seven years through a unanimous decision by the CCA.[276]

Source: ANRCETI.

One reason that the CCA still lacks public trust was the fact that, in 2009, the Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption accused several CCA members of extortion and bribery. Some of the accusations were later withdrawn. However, in 2010, a member was convicted for corruption by the last instance court.

---

272. The private television station ProTV Chisinau was launched in 1999. Currently, the station broadcasts by air in Chisinau, Balti, Cahul, Varnita, Anenii-Noi, and their suburbs, as well as by cable network throughout the country. The owner of this station is Central European Media Enterprises, a U.S. media conglomerate co-owned by the U.S. billionaire Ronald S. Lauder and Time Warner. According to IMAS poll, in 2010, ProTV Chisinau (9.6 percent) is the second highest-rated television station, after Prime TV (21.7 percent).

273. Protv.md, "CCA nu prelungeşte Licenţa Pro TV, Comunicat", (CCA Does Not Extend License of ProTV Chisinau, Press Release), available in Romanian at http://www.protv.md/stiri/social/cca-nu-prelungeste-licenta-pro-tv-comunicat.html (accessed 5 July 2011).

274. Independent Journalism Center, "Declaraţia organizaţiilor mass-media privind refuzul Consiliului Coordonator al Audiovizualului de a prelungi de drept licenţa Pro TV Chişinău" (Statement of Media Organizations Concerning the CCA's Refusal to Extend de jure the License of Pro-TV Chisinau), available in Romanian at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/Declaratii/2008/Declaratie_ProTV_licenta_CCA.pdf (accessed 1 June 2011).

275. Independent Journalism Center, "Declaraţia organizaţiilor mass-media privind decizia Consiliului Coordonator al Audiovizualului de a scoate la concurs frecvenţele pe care emite Pro TV Chişinău" (Statement of Media Organizations Concerning the CCA's Decision to Announce Tender for the Licenses of ProTV Chisinau), available in Romanian at http://www.ijc.md/Publicatii/Declaratii/2009/PROtv_frecve_CCA.pdf (accessed 1 June 2011).

276. ProTV Chisinau, *CCA a prelungit licenta de emisie pentru Pro TV* (CCA extended the broadcasting license for ProTV), available in Romanian at http://www.protv.md/sport/social/cca-a-prelungit-licenta-de-emisie-pentru-pro-tv.html (accessed 3 June 2011).

The CCA grants licenses for television and radio, both analog and digital ("programming licenses"). At the same time, the technical license for using a particular radio frequency in particular parameters is granted by the ANRCETI,[277] which also issues all other licenses in the IT and communication domain, including telecom operators and internet providers. By law, both the CCA and the ANRCETI are independent public authorities, which are not part of the Government. The ANRCETI was established in 2008 based on the Law on Electronic Communications. It replaced the earlier regulator ANRTI, created in 2000, which was one of the first agencies regulating telecommunications in the post-Soviet countries. Unlike the CCA, whose political independence is constantly debated in mass media, there are no similar public discussions and complaints against the ANRCETI even though directors and deputy directors are named by the Government and, so far, have always had political affiliations. The lack of corruption scandals and the regulator's comparatively low-profile, technical role have kept it out of public attention. But the opportunity for dubious practices is there, because the law does not safeguard the Agency from interference.

7.2.3   Digital Licensing

The main responsibility of the CCA is licensing: offering the right to broadcast a program service and to use, for this purpose, the technical means of telecommunication and/or one or more radio frequencies. The Broadcasting Code makes a distinction between the licensing of program services to be broadcast by means of terrestrial radio waves and the licensing of program services to be broadcast by means other than terrestrial radio waves. According to Article 23 of the Broadcasting Code, radio wave licenses are issued by the CCA on a competition basis, while those of the latter category (cable television, satellite television) are issued without contest, based on decisions by the CCA. The CCA also monitors programming content and applies sanctions in cases of legal violations and violations of the obligations assumed by the broadcaster prior to issuing the license.

The Broadcasting Code establishes a seven-year validity period for radio and/or television programming licenses and a six-year validity period for cable distribution services. Two important conditions for issuing broadcasting licenses are: a proven commitment to the principle of ensuring pluralism in the field and "the financial viability of the applicant."[278]

Paragraph 3 of article 23 of the Broadcasting Code stipulates that, in the license allocation, priority shall be given to applicants offering their own, local program services and programming produced in Europe. Yet, this article does not specify exactly how the winner of the frequency contest is selected in case two or more applicants provide offers of similar quality.

Although many articles of the Code are designed as incentives for the CCA to be more transparent in respect of allocating broadcasting licenses, the lack of clear criteria for choosing the contest winner leaves room for potential political or economic interference. The system of licensing was not considered fair by a number of

277. National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (Agenţia Naţională pentru Reglementare în Comunicaţii Electronice şi Tehnologia Informaţiei, ANRCETI), available at http://www.anrceti.md (accessed 5 January 2011).

278. Broadcasting Code, art. 23 (3) (c).

broadcasters and NGOs. Among other critical voices was that of APEL whose experts criticized the CCA for the lack of clear contest criteria and poor reasoning of its decisions. The fact that its members cannot be dismissed can act as a shield against pressure only if there is a will amongst the members to stand up to any interference, which is still difficult to conceive in Moldova.

According to Article 24 of the Broadcasting Code, a broadcasting license shall be extended upon request from the broadcaster. Providing all legal requirements are met, the license is extended for another seven-year period. The new procedure is simpler than the previous one; and more encouraging for broadcasters. However, the simplified procedure is undermined by the provisions of article 24, paragraph 3, which imposes a limit of two extensions (after which a broadcaster has to compete for the same license in an open contest). "The question remains: why would a broadcaster that has worked according to the law for 21 years take part in a contest?" asks one expert in a comment on the Broadcasting Code.[279]

Moldova still largely lives in the analog era, and the licensing process has remained unchanged: the programming license is obtained from the CCA and the technical license from the ANRCETI. Operators that rebroadcast various programs through cable, satellite, IPTV, or mobile phones using analog or digital technologies acquire a rebroadcasting authorization from the CCA. Most authorizations are obtained without contest with the exception of licenses for MMDS, which are obtained through contest, as this technology involves the use of terrestrial digital frequencies.[280] At the moment, those who establish new television and radio channels, even if they broadcast only through cable or satellite and thus do not use the limited frequencies, have to meet strict requirements regarding the so-called "own" production.

Currently, none of the aforementioned rules applies to internet broadcasters: they are not obliged to obtain a license and they do not have to meet the requirements that apply to broadcasters licensed by the CCA. However, the experts working on the draft Broadcasting Code are examining the option of differentiating between requirements for those who use limited frequencies and those who do not use them, and also introducing a licensing procedure for those broadcasting through the internet using linear transmission of information. Non-linear broadcasting through the internet is likely to remain unlicensed.[281] This idea will, most probably, materialize in the text of the proposed Code, but the draft was not available for public debate when this report was finished.

7.2.4 Role of Self-regulatory Mechanisms

The only tool for self-regulation in Moldova, the Journalists' Code of Ethical Principles, appeared in 1999, five years after the adoption of the Press Law.[282] Some media outlets have internal codes: for example, TRM has the Code of Principles, Standards and Recommendations for the National Public Broadcaster Teleradio-

279. Pirtac et al., *Comments on the Broadcasting Code of the Republic of Moldova*, p. 220.

280. The list of distributors through cable, MMDS system, GSM, and satellite may be found online at http://cca.md/sites/default/files/Registru_Ca-blu_Etlon_0.pdf (accessed 5 January 2011).

281. Interview with Eugeniu Rîbca.

282. Press Law No. 243 of 26 October 1994, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 2/12, 12 January 1995.

Moldova,[283] the Professional Standards and Principles of Journalism Ethics for Programs on Teleradio-Moldova,[284] and the Regulations for the Ethics Commission of Teleradio-Moldova.[285] In early 2010, the Supervisory Council of TRM decided that individual employment contracts with each employee should include a requirement to respect the principles of the Code of Ethics.[286] Some media organizations have adopted their own style guides, which also refer to ethical principles.[287]

In late 2009, a new self-regulatory institution for print media and online publications was established: the Press Council.[288] The Council co-exists with another self-regulatory entity, the National Commission of Ethics (NCE). The NCE was created 10 years earlier to facilitate the application of the Journalists' Code of Ethical Principles, which came into force on 26 May 1999, when it was signed by the leaders of 11 media organizations.[289] However, the NCE has so far acted only in isolated cases and has not significantly changed the reality and development of Moldovan journalism.[290] This is one of the reasons why the Association of Independent Press (API), assisted by some donors, decided to rejuvenate the structure of self-regulation whose activity had not been visible in the media and the general public was largely unaware of it. The initiators of the process decided to create a new self-regulatory entity.

The emergence of the Press Council is seen by its initiators as a result not so much of new media development or digitization, as the lack of a viable self-regulation mechanism. In the first year of its existence, the Press Council held five meetings and ran a campaign to inform media consumers about its existence and the opportunity to file complaints about media outlets.[291] By December 2010, the Council had dealt with nine complaints, but none of them was related to digital media.[292]

---

283. Code of Principles, Standards and Recommendations for the National Public Broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova, approved by the Decision of the Supervisory Board N1/35 (3) of 7 November 2007, available in Romanian at http://trm.md/userfiles/File/Codul%20de%20principii,%20 standarde%20si%20recomandari%20al%20producatorilor%20IPNA.doc (accessed 5 January 2011).

284. Professional Standards and Principles of Journalistic Ethics for Programs on Teleradio-Moldova, approved by the Decision of the Supervisory Board N1/35 (2) of 7 November 2007, available in Romanian at http://trm.md/userfiles/File/Standarde%20profesionale%20principiile%20 eticii%20jurnalistice.doc (accessed 5 January 2011).

285. Regulations for the Ethics Commission of Teleradio-Moldova, approved by the Decision of the Supervisory Board N1/35 (5) of 7 November 2007, available in Romanian at http://trm.md/userfiles/File/Regulamentul%20Comisiei%20de%20Etica.doc (accessed 5 January 2011).

286. Decision No. 134 of 20 February 2010 regarding the implementation of the Code of Principles, Standards and Recommendations for the National Public Broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova, available in Romanian at http://trm.md/userfiles/File/H134.20.02.2010.doc (accessed 5 January 2011).

287. The Association of Independent Press (API) has a Style Guide with ethical norms, available in Romanian at http://api.md/files/ghid_final.pdf, and the Association of Broadcasters the Network AICI has a Style Guide, available at http://www.irex.md/index.php/en/aici-network/style-book (accessed 5 January 2011).

288. Press Council website, available in Romanian, English, and Russian at http://consiliuldepresa.md/ (accessed 5 January 2011).

289. Signatories of Journalists' Code of Ethical Principles were the Union of Journalists from Moldova, the Association of Independent Press, the Faculty of Journalism, the Independent Journalism Center, the Association of Economist Journalists, the Guild of Agrarian Journalists, the Association of Sport Journalists, the Freedom Press Committee, the Association of Independent Television Journalists, the National Independent Television Studio, the Association of Environment Journalists, and the Club of Female Journalists «10+».

290. See the analysis of the NCE activity in the report for Moldova (author Olivia Pirtac) from the book Media Self-regulations Practices and Decriminalization of Defamation in the Countries of South-East Europe, Sofia, 2006, available at http://www.seenpm.org/archive/index.php?nav=ut. php&p=9/ (accessed 5 January 2011).

291. Interview by e-mail with Petru Macovei, executive director of the Association of Independent Press (hereafter, Interview with Petru Macovei).

292. Interview with Petru Macovei. Some of the complaints may be found in Romanian on the website of the Press Council, at http://consiliuldepresa.md/cazuri/plangeri-depuse_17.html (accessed 5 January 2011).

The Activity Regulations of the Press Council define the organization in the following way:

> [The Press Council is] a structure independent from public administration, political environment, business environment, other interest groups, which contributes to the increase of media responsibility toward media consumers by settling the disputes between media outlets and readers, as well as by promoting quality journalism, encouraging respect for the principles of journalism ethics by print publications, news agencies or news websites.[293]

The self-regulation mechanism expressly states that it will deal with complaints regarding print media and online media, but not radio and television. However, in practice it deals with broadcast media too. The Press Council is a mediating institution, rather than a policing one: it issues press statements and recommendations, but has no enforcement powers. Nevertheless, it is an improvement over its predecessor: it is more successful in attracting donor funding to support its operations, which enables them to increase their profile and relevance.

Alongside the established institutions, there are ad hoc mechanisms of self-regulation in the form of monitoring carried out by NGOs and critical analyses produced by media experts, which are published in newspapers and specialized print or online publications. However, there is no specific forum, either online or off-line, to discuss the issues of ethics. In Moldova, no media outlet has an ombudsman.

7.3 Government Interference

Most of the examples of state interference listed in this sub-section are not associated with digitization, in the sense that interference existed prior to digitization, and therefore will likely continue to exist in the digital media market.

7.3.1 The Market

The Government provides subsidies to some periodicals, which means that the State has its own publications. The practice has existed since the 1990s, but the number of state-sponsored outlets has varied depending on how many the Government could support at any given time. In 2005, public dissatisfaction with these outlets expressed via private press outlets, NGOs, and opposition parties led to a process of transforming state-owned press into private institutions. All journalists were officially made redundant, while in fact the newspapers continued to be produced by new companies under the same brand names, in the same offices by the same journalists, nevertheless claiming that the outlets have become independent. Neither the general public nor NGOs came to find out how and why these newly created limited liability companies could obtain the right to publish the newspapers under the same brand names.

---

293. Regulation of Activity of the Press Council, available in Romanian at http://consiliuldepresa.md/fileadmin/fisiere/documente/REGULA-MENT_ACTIVITATE_CONSILIUL_DE_PRESA.pdf (accessed 5 January 2011).

According to the Center for Independent Journalism, "in 2007 the Government continued to provide direct and indirect financial support to *Moldova Suverană* and *Nezavisimaya Moldova*. The papers that claimed to be independent continued to cover mostly the activities of the state's leading bodies in a way that was favorable to the government."[294] On 13 June 2007, the Government allotted MDL 84,000 for subscriptions to *Moldova Suverană* and *Nezavisimaya Moldova*. The previous December, the Government had given MDL 276,800 to *Moldova Suverană* and MDL 81,300 to *Nezavisimaya Moldova* as "one-off financial support."[295] These subsidies were criticized by media NGOs for distorting competition. Moreover, they conflicted with commitments in the Moldova–EU Action Plan, which stipulates that "financial assistance for the media [is] to abide by strict and objective criteria equally applicable to all media."[296]

Legally, the process of liquidation of *Moldova Suverană* and *Nezavisimaya Moldova* was not finalized and, in 2010, the new Government decided to terminate the process, because of the abuses admitted by the former Government during the privatization.[297] The new Government promised to privatize *Moldova Suverană* and *Nezavisimaya Moldova* newspapers by means of a transparent competition.[298]

In addition to direct subsidies, the Government also used its advertising power to support these and other public outlets. The study on the relationships between the media and the State in Moldova published by the Independent Journalism Center found that, during the years of Communist rule, this practice was widespread, particularly in the regions:

> Public authorities used to give preferential treatment to these former government newspapers and other publications funded from the state budget by placing advertisements mostly in the latter, thus ignoring the objective and legal criteria for placing government advertising. Discrimination against private publications in favor of public ones is even more obvious in the regions. Furthermore, Romanian language publications received half of the advertising from public institutions compared to the Russian language ones. These practices qualify as discriminatory, non-transparent and unfair support of the media by the government. … Monitoring data shows, inter alia, that former governmental [media] are preferred by the state institutions and they benefit from bigger volume of advertising, despite the fact that [these] have a smaller circulation than some of the private periodicals included in the study.

294. Independent Journalism Center, *Annual Report 2007: Freedom of Expression and Information in the Republic of Moldova*, p. 9, available at http://ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/raport_07_en.pdf (accessed 5 January 2011).

295. Government Decision No. 1499 of 28 December 2006, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 1–2/5, 5 January 2007.

296. Moldova–EU Action Plan, signed on 22 February 2005 in Brussels, p. 8, available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/moldova_enp_ap_final_en.pdf (accessed 5 January 2011).

297. Government Decision No. 137 of 24 February 2010, published in *Monitorul Oficial* No. 32/190, 2 March 2010.

298. Monitor Media #0103(14), "Ziarele Moldova Suverana si Nezavisimaya Moldova vor fi supuse unei noi proceduri de deetatizare" (Moldova Suverana and Nezavisimaya Moldova Newspapers Will Undergo a New Procedure of de-Nationalization), 11 March 2010.

> … The circulation does not seem to be a criterion for the public authorities/institutions when they decide to publish advertising announcements in newspapers.[299]

For instance, the study showed that the daily *Timpul*, published five times a week and with a weekly circulation of 46,000 copies, enjoyed a much smaller volume of advertising and promotional materials provided by public institutions, local administrations and state and municipal enterprises than *Moldova Suverană*, published four times a week, with weekly circulation of 20,000 copies. In April 2008, for example, this difference came to about five times, and in May 2008, almost three times. On average, *Moldova Suverană* has received four times more state advertising than *Timpul*. [300]

7.3.2   The Regulator

The selection procedure of the CCA members that makes it open to political influence. And the corruption scandals surrounding the CCA have reduced its credibility and engendered the idea that it does not work for the public interest but rather plays into the hands of people who want to control the audiovisual media. Broadcasters, in particular, are concerned that the CCA is not impartial in processing requests for extending broadcasting licenses. Decisions regarding the allocation and retraction of broadcasting licenses have also been criticized by civil society and international institutions as attempts to limit pluralism of opinions and the range of critical voices.[301]

There are several notable cases when the CCA used its power to revoke broadcasting licenses without providing public interest-based arguments to support its decisions, thus raising suspicions of political motivation. On 13 February 2007, the CCA refused to extend the broadcasting license for the radio station 103.5 FM from Balti, alleging that it had not observed the program schedule. This fact was established after only 12 hours of monitoring. The station had been broadcasting for 10 years and had never been subject to any sanctions before. Their broadcasting license was then granted to another company, and 103.5 FM broadcasts were terminated on 16 February 2007. The non-transparent way in which this decision was taken by the CCA raised criticism. A number of media organizations believed that CCA members took a biased decision without taking public interest into account.[302]

299. Independent Journalism Center, *Relațiile dintre mass-media și autoritățile de stat – spre transparență și responsabilitate, noiembrie 2007–septembrie 2008* (The Relationship Between the Media and the Authorities: Toward Transparency and Responsibility, November 2007–September 2008), final report, pp. 3, 6, available in Romanian at http://ijc.md/Publicatii/presa_stat_raport_final.pdf (accessed 5 January 2011) (hereafter, Independent Journalism Center, "The Relationship Between the Media and the Authorities").

300. Independent Journalism Center, "The Relationship Between the Media and the Authorities", pp. 19–20.

301. Independent Journalism Center, *Annual Report 2007: Freedom of Expression and Information in the Republic of Moldova*, p. 3, available at http://ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/raport_07_en.pdf (accessed 5 January 2011) (hereafter, Independent Journalism Center, *Annual Report 2007*).

302. Independent Journalism Center, *Annual Report 2007*, p. 7; Moldova.org, "*FM 103.5 Radio is a victim of harassment before elections, Media NGOs say*", available at http://politicom.moldova.org/news/fm-1035-radio-is-a-victim-of-harassment-before-elections-media-ngos-say-31451-eng.html (accessed 8 July 2011).

7.3.3 Other Forms of Interference

Generally, the Moldovan authorities have exercised pressure on the media in a soft manner: applying legislation in a way that would make it difficult to prove that the Government actions were extra-legal. However, in April 2009, during the Twitter Revolution,[303] a number of Government actions had some elements of extra-legal pressure. The CJI noted in its report that, in the first half of 2009—the last months of the Communist Government—the situation deteriorated significantly and abuse of journalists became more widespread:

> More than 60 local and foreign journalists became victims of abuse by public authorities. Eight media outlets were constantly subjected to intimidation, threats and discriminatory treatment, and 33 foreign journalists were arrested, interrogated, expelled or denied access to Moldova. In the reference year [2009], journalists carried out their activities under difficult and degrading conditions and in life-threatening, dangerous conditions as targets of many attacks. … In the last months of 2009 the Moldovan media market entered a gradual process of democratization, important reforms took place, and sound competition among the media started.[304]

The quoted report is referring to a high number of press freedom violations. But it is worth noting that most of these violations occurred over the course of just one month (April 2009) when young voters started mass protests following the 5 April elections, which left the Communists in power. The following (non-exhaustive) examples of extra-legal pressure offer a general overview of the state of press freedom in Moldova in recent years.

In April 2009, many of the Government actions were aimed at the Romanian journalists and appeared to be politically motivated, as there was a long history of hostility of the Communist Party toward anything related to Romania. The Communists claimed that the organizers of the protests came from Romania, but the claim was never confirmed by official investigations of the events.

On 7 April, at least 19 Romanian journalists—employees of various international and Romanian media outlets—were denied entry into the country; no official explanation was given. On 8 April, two journalists from the Romanian television station Antena 3 were detained for one night at the Chisinau Airport and were forced to return to Romania; the same happened to Dragoş Boţa from the daily Gândul and several more. Again, no reasons were given.

At the same time, many local journalists were subjected to harassment, intimidations and brutal treatment. One of the most alarming cases was that of Oleg Brega, then a reporter for Jurnal TV. On 8 April, Brega was beaten behind the Government offices by policemen and he had two video cameras confiscated. The next day,

---

303. E. Barry, "Protests in Moldova Explode, With Help of Twitter", the *New York Times*, 7 April 2009, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/08/world/europe/08moldova.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1 (accessed 4 January 2011).

304. Independent Journalism Center, *Report on the Situation of the Press in Moldova in 2009*, p. 25, available at http://ijc.md/Publicatii/mlu/raport_FOP_2009_en.pdf (accessed 5 January 2011).

policemen broke into his apartment and searched all the rooms, seizing a number of belongings. The police officers neither identified themselves, nor did they produce a search warrant.

Another tool of extra-legal pressure applied during the Communist rule was the so-called "telephone law" when a Government official makes informal telephone calls. For just one day, 7 April 2009 (the main day of the Twitter Revolution protests), internet users in Moldova could not access several news sites and some social networks. No reason was given to the public and to this day, the official responsible has not been identified.[305] Tudor Darie, who has filed several requests to identify those responsible, believes the telephone law was exercised: an official called individual internet providers and asked them to close the specified websites.[306]

The situation with press freedom improved somewhat after the elections on 29 July 2009 which brought the end of Communist Party rule.

7.4   Assessments

Moldova has a significant number of laws regulating the media environment, including some meeting the highest standards of freedom of expression, such as the Law on Freedom of Expression, adopted in 2010 by the Moldovan Parliament.

While the transition to digital terrestrial transmission has been on the agenda of authorities since 2006, there is still practically no legal framework to accommodate this transition. A draft Concept on Digitization was prepared in 2007,[307] but still remains at a draft stage. Some experts believe the prolonged political crisis in Moldova that started in 2009 and continued in 2010 contributed to the delay. Before 2009, the process may have been drawn out deliberately: the Communist Government avoided adopting the legal framework in order to keep control over the audiovisual media and was fearful of the prospect that one national multiplex would offer national coverage to eight television channels. An additional factor was, most likely, financial: the new Government, formed by the Alliance for European Integration, may have delayed the adoption of the Strategy because of the obligations the State was supposed to undertake according to its terms and there was no budgetary capacity for the investments that needed to be made.

However, the shortcomings seem to affect only the major transition to terrestrial digital television. The internet is developing without particular interferences and recently several internet providers launched IPTV, including in high definition.[308]

---

305. T. Darie, "Nagacevschi nu ne-a explicat cine a blocat Internetul la 7 aprilie. AIE, cer să ştim adevărul" (Nagacevschi Did Not Explain Who Blocked Internet on 7 April. AEI: We Ask to Know the Truth), 7 May 2010, available in Romanian at http://tudordarie.md/category/new-media/page/2/ (accessed 4 January 2011).

306. Interview with Tudor Darie.

307. Interview with Victor Badulescu, technical director at Radio Moldova, in 2007 director of the State Company Radiocomunicatii in charge of elaborating the Concept, Chisinau, 10 December 2010.

308. Monitor Media Agency #0469(07), "Moldtelecom a lansat televiziunea digitala HD" (Moldtelecom Has Launched Digital HD Television), 7 December 2010.

The licensing for the limited terrestrial frequencies has received persistent criticism for being unfair and lacking in transparency. At the same time, the unlicensed means of distributing information (the internet and broadcasting through cable and satellite), for which licenses are offered without a contest, provide ample opportunities for launching new media businesses and disseminating news.

The Communist Government, in power for nearly a decade, routinely interfered in the activities of the media that criticized it. The main focus was on broadcast media, but print media also suffered frequent intimidations. However, when the first news outlets appeared on the internet, pluralism improved significantly. Since these news outlets appeared without requiring a license, the authorities found themselves powerless to take actions against them. New forms of interference focusing on the internet were found, most notably through the state company MoldData, which manages the .md domain and has the right to retract web address and cancel contract with web address users. However, the change of power in 2009 resulted in a significantly decreased level of state interference in media activity, including the internet.

Recent years have seen an increase in public consultation, due to the Law on Transparency in Decision-making Process, which requires the authorities to inform and consult with citizens in the process of adopting important decisions.

A legal framework relating to digitization has not yet been adopted. All the developments toward digitization which have taken place so far are the ones that do not require a special legal framework and only cover the technical aspects of the transition. However, despite the lack of a specific policy, digital development has directly contributed to pluralism and diversity in broadcasting. In 2008–2009, the first internet television emerged, Jurnal TV (exclusively on the internet at that time), and over the year 2010 internet television experienced a significant growth, involving, among others, some companies that held the licenses for terrestrial frequencies. Internet television started offering both programs on demand and live broadcasting. At the moment, the law in Moldova does not require a company to hold a special license for broadcasting via the internet.

Also, in 2010, several internet providers, including the state-owned Moldtelecom, which has infrastructure for covering the entire country, launched their IPTV projects featuring a broad range of television channels. Also, the state-owned company Radiocomunicatii provides services of digital terrestrial transmission in Chisinau, mainly used by those companies which do not have terrestrial coverage in Chisinau, in order to be received by cable distributors and included in the cable offer. Thus, digital broadcasting has developed even without specific policies, and people may benefit from it in different ways. This increased both the competition between television and internet providers, and the diversity of the media offer.

8. Conclusions

8.1   Media Today

8.1.1   Positive Developments

The rapid ascent of PC ownership and internet usage that Moldova has experienced in the last five years has pushed traditional media outlets toward new platforms, novel tools, and greater diversification of their products. The development of the internet in general and online platforms in particular has enabled audiences to use a greater variety of news sources and contributed to an increased interactivity between producers and consumers. Owing to the internet, news has become more accessible, and timely, and is no longer the exclusive prerogative of professional journalists.

The growth in mobile penetration (81 percent of the entire population of the country in 2010) has brought digital communication to previously unconnected communities. Even though the advantages provided by mobile telephony are not currently used to their full extent, it is expected to become one of the most promising fields for media development.

New media have brought about unique media platforms for public debates and participation, thus providing civil society with a louder voice and new means of mobilizing citizens around various social, political, or cultural causes (the most notable example being the Twitter Revolution).

Digitization brings a bigger diversity of media outlets, a greater plurality of points of view, and better transparency of the public institutions, makes it easier for journalists to identify topics of coverage, and improves promptness and means of presenting information.

The last five years have seen decreasing interference of the Government and lessening of the political factor in the mass media, particularly in the public broadcasters. This positive change was mainly due to the July 2009 elections where the Communist Party lost power and the Alliance for European Integration formed a pro-democracy Government. As a result, mass media became more free and independent, and harassment of journalists and media institutions eased. This assessment has been confirmed by reports of international organizations: Freedom House, IREX, and Reporters Without Borders.

8.1.2 Negative Developments

According to the recommendations of the Regional Radiocommunications Conference from Geneva (RRC-2006), Moldova will have to stop broadcasting in the analog mode and switch to digital broadcasting in June 2015. Nevertheless, the legal framework relating to digitization has not been adopted yet. There are no provisions in the national laws that would clearly specify access and affordability requirements that must be met before the analog signal will be switched off. Furthermore, no information campaigns have been carried out to explain the implications of digital switch-over to the general public. As a result, awareness of the approaching digitization among the media consumers is fairly low.

The lack of independence of the institutions in charge of digitization (among them, the CCA, the ANRCETI, and Radiocomunicatii) also provides a reason for concern. These institutions are, in most cases, still open to political and financial influence, which compromises their decision-making.

Four years before the switch-over, most households in Moldova are not properly equipped to access content provided by digital media. This is partly attributable to the generally low income of the population. Moreover, despite the recent impressive growth, internet access, too, remains a privilege enjoyed by the inhabitants of larger, urban areas. Another weakness of the internet in Moldova is the fact that it is being used mostly by people aged 14–35 and older people are left outside the digital milieu and the opportunities it provides.

Notwithstanding the benefits accrued by digitization for journalist, as outlined above, there have also been costs. Superficiality tends to be sacrificed for the sake of speed, there are fewer sources used in news stories and the lack of in-depth analysis is noticeable. Also, the internet has increased the incidents of publishing unverified information and breaching copyright.

The ownership structure of Moldovan media remains non-transparent: the lack of progress in this area is partly attributable to ambiguity in the regulations. Even though the Broadcast Code and the Press Law have been repeatedly amended, none of these amendments addresses media ownership and funding. Consequently, the real owners of some media outlets stay hidden. This phenomenon contributes to the emergence of murky media groups.

8.2 Media Tomorrow

In a domain where change occurs every day, if not every hour, it is difficult to make forecasts. However, it can be said with a degree of certainty that, in the coming years, the Moldovan media landscape is going to catch up with the digitization-related changes experienced by the media elsewhere in Europe. Both in legal and in technical terms, the Moldovan media will fully enter the digital age.

The current Government has declared European integration as its goal, which will make it compulsory for Moldova to adjust its national legislation to the Community requirements. In the coming years, an important

responsibility will fall upon the authorities to adopt a new legal framework for media. The new Broadcasting Code will bring a welcome clarity to some legal provisions, such as media ownership transparency and funding of print and broadcast media. However, that will not be enough: new provisions specifically concerning digitization will also have to be included in the new legislation to make it fit the reality of the digital age.

Digitization will continue having a significant impact on the Moldovan media, forcing them to diversify their news offer, converge different platforms, and improve interactivity. The increasing penetration of mobile telephony in the country is likely to have a direct impact on news consumption habits (e.g. audiences will increasingly access newspapers and television through mobile handsets).

Emboldened by the Twitter Revolution and other success stories of online activism, civil society is likely to embrace, to a greater extent than before, interactive tools to promote their causes and organize campaigns.

Access to the internet and the number of internet users will also continue increasing in the next five years. This growth will be driven by the commercial interests of providers, the decreasing costs of internet services, combined with the growing disposable income and the expected spread of the internet in rural areas. In the next five years, we can expect the internet to shift from the fourth position among the preferred news consumption platforms (behind television, radio, and print media) to the second position, following television. Print media will probably continue losing ground to television and the internet; a process already signaled by opinion polls. We can expect some outlets to close down their print editions and continue their activity solely online. This will mark the emergence of new business models for traditional print media.

Arguably, the most prominent digitization-related event in the coming years will be the arrival of digital broadcasting. Currently, it seems highly unlikely that in 2015, 100 percent of the population will have digital coverage. The lack of a legal framework, coherent Government strategy, and public awareness campaigns makes delays likely.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Policy

9.1.1 Media Policy

9.1.1.1 Digital Switch-over Regulation

Issue

The Government was planning to initiate the digital switch-over in 2011 and to complete the transition by June 2015. But the legal framework enabling the transition has yet to be adopted. The lack of legal provisions, competition rules and technical standards for digital broadcasting undermines the country's ability to implement switch-over by the set deadline and prevents broadcast companies from developing viable strategic plans. At the same time, this legal vacuum facilitates the monopoly of the incumbent transmission network, Radiocomunicatii, on the broadcast transmission market.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Information Technology and Communications, and Parliament, should prioritize the development of a legal framework for digital switch-over. Parliament should adopt the already-submitted Strategy Regarding Transition from Terrestrial Analog to Terrestrial Digital Television as soon as possible. Also, provisions for fair and transparent digital multiplex license competitions and spectrum competitions, must-carry rules, and technical standards should be developed without delay.

9.1.1.2 Public Awareness Campaign on Digital Switch-over

Issue

The switch-off date is only four years away, but to date there have been neither information campaigns nor public debates on the process of digitization. There is limited awareness and understanding by the public of the approaching change, and of its purpose and implications.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Information Technology and Communications and the regulator, ANRCETI, should develop and carry out campaigns promoting the purpose and general advantages of the digitization of broadcasting, and providing practical advice to media consumers on the use of digital television.

9.2   Media Law and Regulation

9.2.1   Media Ownership

9.2.1.1 Transparency of Media Ownership

Issues

The law does not require disclosure of ultimate beneficial owners. As a result, the identity of real owners may remain unknown to the public.

Recommendations

Parliament should pass the new Broadcasting Code (currently being drafted by APEL) without delay, as soon as it is submitted. As the Broadcasting Code will apply only to broadcasters, civil society actors should develop proposals for amendments to the existing legislation to make ownership transparency a requirement for all types of media, including online outlets.

9.2.2   Media Regulation

9.2.2.1 Reform of the Broadcasting Regulator

Issues

Despite recent attempts to reform the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (CCA), the Council is still perceived by the media and the general public as both corrupt and biased. While the member selection procedure has improved on paper, the political affiliation of the candidates continues to play a role in selection. In addition, the Council's decision-making process remains opaque.

Recommendations

The new Broadcasting Code should include (1) clear safeguards to ensure the functional independence of the Council, and (2) provisions to guarantee its accountability to the public (e.g. full publication of decisions, with reasoning, and individual votes).

9.3   Public Service in the Media

9.3.1   Public Service Media Funding Reform

Issue

Direct funding of the public broadcasters from the government budget is detrimental to the editorial and financial independence of these institutions. Indeed, funding was routinely used as a tool of influence during 2001–2009, when the country was ruled by the Communist Party.

Recommendation

Moldova 1 television and Radio Moldova, in cooperation with civil society actors, should undertake research and draft a concept paper on alternative models of funding the public service broadcasters, which should then be publicly discussed.

9.4   Journalism

9.4.1   Revision of Copyright Protection

Issue

"News theft" is a common trend in Moldovan media. Legal loopholes contribute to such unethical behavior, because the legal framework does not contain clear provisions regarding copyright protection of journalistic content and other related rights of journalists and media institutions.

Recommendation

Parliament should amend the Broadcasting Code and the Press Law to define clearly what constitutes plagiarism in the media. The Law on Copyright should be made fit for purpose in the digital age, and to conform with existing EU standards. Concurrently, a public campaign should be designed and carried out by the Press Council, to publicize the provisions of the Law on Copyright and the Press Council's role as a self-regulatory institution, promoting ethical behavior and media accountability.

9.4.2   Increasing Access to Information

Issue

With help from the World Bank, the Government has launched an e-governance project to facilitate access to the documents of the Cabinet of Ministers. However, the available data are not always posted with the public interest in mind, nor are they easy to use. Vague legal definitions make it easy to hide information on public procurement.

Recommendation

The Government, the Tax Inspectorate, the Chamber of Commerce and the State Registration Chamber should reduce impediments to accessing data in their possession, including on public expenditures and procurement, including by the creation of online databases. Civil society organizations should take the lead in drafting and lobbying for relevant amendments to achieve this.

9.5   Digital Media Literacy

9.5.1   Training on Digital Rights and Tools

Issue

Digitization has provided the Moldovan population with new content consumption and production opportunities. Internet users, including journalists, however, lack awareness of how freedom of expression and intellectual property rights apply in the digital environment. They also are unaware of how best to benefit from the new opportunities afforded by the digital environment.

Recommendation

Media and youth organizations should engage in training and workshops for young media audiences on the issues of privacy, freedom of expression, copyright, and media accountability in the digital environment. To address the lack of digital skills in the journalist community, workshops for journalists should be designed on the use of digital databases, on how to assess the trustworthiness of online sources, on the best interactive tools and search techniques, and on the use of international investigative journalism networks.

List of Abbreviations, Figures, Tables, and Companies

Abbreviations

3G	third generation
AAPM	Association of Advertising Agencies of Moldova
ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
AED	Academy for Educational Development – Moldova
AGEPI	State Agency for Intellectual Property
AIE	Alliance for European Integration
ANRCETI	National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and IT
APEL	Electronic Press Association from Moldova
API	Association of Independent Press
ATIC	National Association of Private IT and Communications Companies
BATI	Audit Bureau for Circulations and Internet
BNS	National Bureau of Statistics
CCA	Broadcasting Coordinating Council
CCC	Central Commission for Control
CEC	Central Electoral Commission
CIJ	Independent Journalism Center
CIN	Center for Journalistic Investigations
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNFR	National Radio Frequency Center
CSFR	State Radio Frequency Commission
DTT	digital terrestrial television
EBU	European Broadcasting Union
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPP	Institute for Public Policy
IPTV	internet protocol television

IREX   International Research & Exchanges Board
ISP   Internet service provider
ITU   International Telecommunication Union
MDL   Moldovan leu
NCE   National Commission of Ethics
NGO   non-governmental organization
OSCE   Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PACE   Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PC   personal computer
PCRM   Communist Party
PLDM   Liberal Democratic Party
PpNT   Antimafia Movement and of the Party for the Nation and Country
PPCD   Popular Christian Democrat Party
PSB   public service broadcasting
RFE/RL Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
TNABF National Table of Frequency Allocations
TRM   TeleRadio-Moldova
UGC   User-generated content
USAID   United States Agency for International Development
UTM   Technical University of Moldova

Figures

Tables

Companies

Adevărul Holding

AGB Moldova

AMT

Analytic Media Group

Arax–Impex

Casa Media

IDC

IMAS–INC

Evenimentul Zilei

Flux Media Group

Jurnal de Chisinau Plus

Jurnal Trust Media

New Media Group

Novosti Dnya

Moldcell

Moldtelecom

Orange Moldova

Prime TV

Realitatea–Catavencu

Reforma Advertising

Rheinstein Media Management

StarNet

Stiri Media Group

Sun Communications

Telefe M International

ZenithOptimedia

Web Consulting Agency

Mapping Digital Media: Country Reports

1. Romania
2. Thailand
3. Mexico
4. Morocco
5. United Kingdom
6. Sweden
7. Russia
8. Lithuania
9. Italy
10. Germany
11. United States
12. Latvia
13. Serbia
14. Netherlands
15. Albania

Mapping Digital Media is a project of the **Open Society Media Program** and the **Open Society Information Program.**

Open Society Media Program

The Media Program works globally to support independent and professional media as crucial players for informing citizens and allowing for their democratic participation in debate. The program provides operational and developmental support to independent media outlets and networks around the world, proposes engaging media policies, and engages in efforts towards improving media laws and creating an enabling legal environment for good, brave and enterprising journalism to flourish. In order to promote transparency and accountability, and tackle issues of organized crime and corruption the Program also fosters quality investigative journalism.

Open Society Information Program

The Open Society Information Program works to increase public access to knowledge, facilitate civil society communication, and protect civil liberties and the freedom to communicate in the digital environment. The Program pays particular attention to the information needs of disadvantaged groups and people in less developed parts of the world. The Program also uses new tools and techniques to empower civil society groups in their various international, national, and local efforts to promote open society.

Open Society Foundations

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities in more than 70 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.