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COVERAGE OF CORRUPTION in Moldovan Media

*Monitoring
Report No* **2**

S U M M A R Y



Chișinău, 2023

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The „Strengthening the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Mechanisms in the Republic of Moldova” project is co-funded by the European Union, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.



I. General

This report presents the results of the monitoring of how 13 media outlets covered corruption issues. This is the second of three planned reports. The monitoring is carried out within the project "Strengthening Investigative Journalist Network in Republic of Moldova and Increasing Their Capacity To Investigate Corruption Cases," implemented by the Association of Independent Press in partnership with the Center for Investigative Journalism (CIJM).

Subject of monitoring: media content on corruption in **education, health, social care, agri-food** or **other** areas, with an indication, but without qualitative assessment.

Period of monitoring: August – September 2023

Content of monitoring:

- a. In print and online media – full content;
- b. In broadcast media – main news edition of the day and, where appropriate, cycle or sporadic broadcast programs, between 17.00 and 23.00 – for television; and 17.00–20.00 – for radio.

Media outlets monitored: selection criteria

- a. Public and private
- b. Local/regional and national
- c. Print, online and broadcast
- d. Renown (audience of media outlets)
- e. Romanian and Russian language
- f. Non-specialized in journalistic investigations and/or coverage of corruption issues

List of media outlets monitored

- 1. TV Moldova 1
- 2. Jurnal TV
- 3. TV GRT (Comrat)
- 4. Elita TV (Rezina)

5. Protv.md
6. Publika.md
7. TV8.md
8. Nokta.md (Comrat)
9. Esp.md (Bălți)
10. Radio Moldova
11. Newspaper *Unghiul* (Ungheni)
12. Newspaper *Observatorul de Nord* (Soroca)
13. Studio-L (Căușeni), an outlet not monitored in the previous period

Monitoring indicators: quantitative and qualitative, according to the methodology (see Annex 1 in Romanian)

Collection of data

The data was collected for the entire monitoring period and covers the media outlets monitored taken together and separately, which allows to formulate general recommendations and recommendations for each media outlet monitored.

Quantitative data: the score given by the monitor to each content monitored according to the quantitative indicators in the Monitoring Sheet (*attached*) was summed up.

Interpretation of quantitative data:

The minimum score indicates insufficient coverage of the topics. Quantitative data are analyzed in a particular manner and are assessed/interpreted separately from the score collected by the qualitative indicators.

Obtaining qualitative data: the score given to each content according to the numerical values of the qualitative indicators in the Monitoring Sheet is summed. Each content subject to monitoring can score a maximum of 40 points.

Interpretation of qualitative data:

Up to 5 points: corruption coverage practically missing

Up to and including 12 points: corruption coverage is flawed

Up to and including 19 points: corruption coverage is acceptable

Up to and including 26 points: corruption coverage is relatively good

Up to and including 33 points: corruption coverage is good

Up to and including 40 points: corruption coverage is very good

CONCLUSIONS GENERATED BY QUANTITATIVE/ QUALITATIVE

1. During the reference period, there was a significant increase in the number of items in the themes monitored, but the frequency of the four themes, as in the previous period, has been uneven.
2. Similarly to the first monitoring period, in some decades thematic items were either few or absent, and in others – there was an abundance of them. This indicates that newsroomswait for items/events, rather than look for/plan them.
3. Media outlets, as in the previous period, in 75 percent of cases, covered the topics monitored by means of informative journalistic genres, although the specificity of the theme rather calls for analysis and investigation.
4. The number of own topics has increased and it would be good for this to become a clear trend.
5. The overall data show a relative balance among the main protagonists; however, there is lack of balance, some of which obvious, in several of the newsrooms monitored.
6. Compared to the previous monitoring period, the share of high-audience stories has increased, but the opportunities at hand to distribute media content as widely as possible have yet to be adequately exploited.
7. The geographical coverage of corruption issues is still narrow. In 4 months of monitoring, topics from the capital and 2 districts – Ialoveni and Ocnita – prevailed. Separate topics covered 9 other regions. At the same time, 25 municipalities and districts, or 2/3 of Moldova's 37, remained without monitored media attention in terms of corruption coverage.

8. In percentage terms, the share of low and high quality items decreased by 5 and 2 percent accordingly compared to the first monitoring period. In contrast, the share of average quality items increased by about 7 percent. In other words, the situation has stagnated rather than evolved in this segment.
9. The recommendations contained in Monitoring Report 1, although fully accepted, have been partially implemented. This state of affairs is also indicative of the results of Report 2 – those newsrooms which followed them evolved with more or less consistency and, conversely, those which ignored them stagnated and regressed. Heavy arguments would have to exist for one to either accept or ignore the recommendations.

General recommendations

1. Media outlets should plan their weekly/monthly activities in such a way as to ensure a sufficient number of media reports on the topics monitored, a systematic appearance in the media, and a more uniform distribution of such items over time, which would keep the phenomenon of corruption as a social scourge to be countered. Editors should seek out topics and cases and not just wait for them to come from outside.
2. In covering corruption cases, newsrooms should insistently explore analytical/investigative journalistic genres, which are best suited for the purpose, even if informative genres are neither to be condemned nor abandoned.
3. In reporting on corruption, newsrooms should place clear emphasis on producing their own content – the only content that can certify serious journalism. The takeovers can diversify, not replace, one's own media offer.
4. Social media popularity, first and foremost, should be used constantly to ensure the widest possible audience for each topic, for the public benefit and for the benefit of newsrooms.
5. Geographical coverage of corruption cases should expand primarily based on the thematic stories produced in the geographical areas where the monitored newsrooms operate.

6. Newsrooms, where appropriate, should invest in the skills of journalists covering corruption issues. Note: professional skills are the key determinant in ensuring quality media content.
7. Recommendations, once accepted, should be implemented with more insistence and consistency.

