

# Communication Regime of the Republic of Moldova: Assessment of Manageability

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**Abstract.** The article presents the results of a study of the controllability of the communication regime of the Republic of Moldova, carried out on the basis of a special methodology for comparative studies of country communication regimes. The main components of the communication regime, indicators of controllability, the location of the decision-making center, the degree of conventionality are analyzed. The peculiarities of the normative regulation of the communication regime, the system of its actors, the centers of influence on the communication regime of Moldova are examined. The problems of the communication regime in the country are revealed: non-execution of laws regulating communications and information; the concentration of the media in the hands of a narrow circle of persons and political forces; politicization of information; preferential re-broadcasting of foreign media content; low level of media literacy of the population; weak influence of civil institutions on the legislative regulation of the communication regime. The idea is affirmed that the communication regime is conditional on the political regime and that the communication regime of Moldova depends on external actors.

**Keywords:** Communication regime, Republic of Moldova, political regime, information sovereignty, information space, media sphere

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## Introduction

The study of communication regimes is a new area in the study of national and international socio-political processes. The problem of regimes should be actualized under the conditions of fragmentation of the world communication and under the conditions of the increased role of communication in political

processes. For the first time, the concept of “communication regime” was introduced in the works of V.I. Gasumyanov, V.V. Komleva (3, 6, 7), who continued their research at the National Research Institute for the Development of Communications (NRIDC) together with their colleagues - N.P. Gribin, M.E. Zvonova, Yu.P. Tikhonov, Yu.R. Sheveleva et al. (4, 5, 9, 10). Comparative studies and scientific discussions regarding the results of the investigation of controllability of communication regimes in different countries are conducted at the NRIDC. The research concerned, in particular, the countries of Central Asia (1), Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (2), Belarus (8). It is assumed that the established communication regime in the Republic of Moldova is driven by the economic and electoral interests dependent on external factors, which affects its manageability and the features of the country’s sovereign development. This hypothesis was tested during the research, and its results are presented in this article.

## Materials and Methods

The analysis of the controllability of the communication regime in Moldova was carried out on the basis of the methodology developed by V.V. Komleva (6, 7) and tested in a number of studies. The methodology is based on a number of criteria that allow to assess the degree of independence (or dependence) of the communication regime by determining the location (inside or outside the country) and the degree of conventionality of the communication regime control centre. While carrying out the analysis and interpretation of the results we relied on the classical works of Yu. Habermas, N. Viener, L. von Bertalanfi. Comparative and narrative sources were used. The source base is divided into six groups: national normative legal acts of the Republic of Moldova; ratified bilateral treaties within the framework of communication policy; international legally binding treaties and documents in the field of communication; official declarations of heads of state and documents of state official bodies; scientific research of the international law, political science and communication; and finally, a special group of narrative sources including mass media publications and Internet resources. The study was conducted in the period from November 2021 to May 2022 under the supervision of Doctor of Sociology, Professor V.V. Komleva.

## Results

The results of the study are presented according to the criteria by which the communication regime of Moldova was analysed.

## **Criterion 1. Location of the centre for decision-making and management of the communication regime (inside or outside the country)**

The control centre is located inside the country. Regulatory control of information flows and information security is provided by the following actors within the responsibility established by law: Parliament, Government, President of the Republic of Moldova, Supreme Security Council, Information and Security Service, Ministries (Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research), Prosecutor's Office, judicial authorities, Coordinating Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting, the Supervisory Council of the National Television and Radio Public Broadcaster "Teleradio-Moldova", the Central Election Commission, the National centre for Personal Data Protection<sup>1</sup>. The most important actor in implementation and control is the Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting.

De jure, almost all media outlets that disseminate information in Moldova are located (registered) on the territory of Moldova. However, the political change in the country's leadership has led to the emergence of contradictory geopolitical orientations. Pro-Russian parties and pro-European parties followed one another in power, and all this happened amid concealed corruption and economic interests that prevented the development of a clear and effective legislative framework for regulating the media. The Moldovan media landscape is subject to a biased view on the news, where different political trends collide. The lack of media independence and political and economic interests has left an opportunity for foreign forces to interfere and influence the Moldovan communication regime. De facto, therefore, it is fair to say that the control centre of the communication regime is located inside the country, but at the same time external pressures on the Republic are so strong that the communication regime of Moldova cannot be determined without them.

Depending on the change of political course, the position of the most significant media changes rapidly. They can either take a position of support for government policy or they can go into opposition overnight. The lack of consistency affects citizens' trust in the media and creates problems for objective information processing. Thus, the pro-Russian media group enjoyed the generosity of the authorities until 2009, when Vladimir Voronin's Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova was replaced by the Alliance for European Integration (AEI), uniting right-wing and centre-left parties. Despite the AEI's pro-European orientation, the leaders of the political movement, including Vladimir Filat and Vladimir Plahotniuc, neglected their declared will to resist Russian influence in Moldova because of their personal economic interests. For example, one of the TV channels owned by Vladimir Plahotniuc, PRIME TV, broadcast programs from the most popular Russian governmental channel "Channel One" until 2019. The latter owned 4 out of 5 TV channels broadcasting at the national level, and then transferred two of them to a new company set up by one of

<sup>1</sup> The Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Moldova. Law № 299 21.12.2017. (Item 28). 2017. Available from [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=105660&lang=ru](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105660&lang=ru)

his relatives when the law on limiting the number of broadcasting licenses was passed in March 2017<sup>2</sup>. The arrival of Socialists with the election of Igor Dodon in 2016 revived the pro-Russian political position in the government. In 2020, Maya Sandu, the head of the pro-European Action and Solidarity Party, was appointed the President of the Republic of Moldova. She clearly stated her desire to bring Moldovan communication practices in line with European standards. Since the situation in Moldova is extremely unstable, the typology of various media positions in relation to the control centre should be considered with respect to the date when this article is published.

The influence of various political and economic forces in the media space of Moldova is very dynamic. For example, in 2019-2020, the channels that supported the regime were: Moldova 1 (State RM-RM); Moldova 2 (State RM - RM); GRT-Gagauziya Radio Televizionu (State RM - RM).

"Neutral" channels criticizing the state and opposition parties: Jurnal TV (Viktor Tsora – Germany/RM); TV8 (Alternative Media Public Association-RM); ProTV (CME Media Enterprises, Ronald Loder – Netherlands/Bermuda/USA).

An off-and-on support of the control centre is characteristic for Plahotniuc's media empire (he has been living abroad since 2019) (13)<sup>3</sup>. He owns PRIME TV; Publika TV; Canal 2 (formally owned by Lilian Bushtyuk, an employee of Plahotniuc's media holding General Media Group); Canal 3 (formally owned by an employee of Plahotniuc's media holding General Media Group Lilian Bushtyuk)(14)<sup>4</sup>; CTC Mega (formally registered to Victoria Rusu); Familia Domashniy (formally registered to Victoria Rusu). After V. Plahotniuc went abroad<sup>5</sup> his media empire weakened the spheres of influence of the Socialist Party and former President Igor Dodon<sup>6</sup>.

A number of experts note that the following channels are connected with the Socialist Party: Channel One in Moldova<sup>7</sup> (Media Invest Service, Vadim Chubara and Igor Chaika (Russia) until August 2021. The channel was sold to Russian citizens Samvel Grigoryan and Natalia Ermilova<sup>8</sup>); Accent TV (Media Invest Service, Vadim Chubara and Igor Chaika - Russia until August 2021. The channel was sold to Russian citizens Samvel Grigoryan

2 Rosca Allaxo Media in Moldova: Between Freedom and Monopoly. Foreign policy research institute. September 13, 2017. Available from: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/09/media-moldova-freedom-monopoly/>

3 Barbăroșie Lilianaxo Unde se află Vlad Plahotniuc? Dificil de spus. 06 octombrie, 2020. Available from: <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/unde-se-afl%C4%83-vlad-plahotniuc-dificil-de-spus/30878398.html>.

4 Nikolai Pohlinsky, the Owner of the media. How the media market was reshaped in Moldova in a year. Website Newsmaker.md. May 4, 2020. Available from: <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/hozyain-media-kak-v-moldove-za-god-perekroili-rynok-smi/>

5 Pursued V. Plahotniuc for fraud and embezzlement of public money in Moldova, Russia, the European Union, the USA.

6 Nikolai Pohlinsky, the Owner of the media. How the media market was reshaped in Moldova in a year. Website Newsmaker.md. May 4, 2020. Available from: <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/hozyain-media-kak-v-moldove-za-god-perekroili-rynok-smi/>

7 In Moldovan: Primul în Moldova.

8 Igor Chaika no longer owns the Primul în Moldova and Accent TV channels. Website Point.md. August 24, 2021. Available from: <https://point.md/ru/novosti/obschestvo/igor-chaika-bol-she-ne-vladeet-telekanalami-primul-in-moldova-i-accent-tv/>

and Natalia Ermilova); NTV (Exclusiv Media SRL, Corneliu Furkultse - RM); TNT-Exclusive (Exclusiv Media SRL, Corneliu Furkultse - RM); Ren TV (Intermedia SRL, Vyacheslav Fiodor - RM); and finally, RTR (Rosmediacom - RF, Valentina Stetsko - RM, Galina Syrbu and Oksana Borshevich - RM) is registered in Moldova and works from there, but half of the capital comes from the Russian government.

The current communication regime control centre actually gets little declared support from the national media, with the exception of state channels. However, the media of Jurnal TV, Pro TV and TV8 cannot be considered to be in opposition to it. The Western funding that Jurnal TV and Pro TV receive de facto puts them in the same geopolitical orientation with the current government. Plahotniuc's media empire is also not subject to government repression and calls for order, which can be explained by its weakening after Plahotniuc left abroad. At the same time, he weakened politically, but retained many ties within the political and economic establishment. Finally, the media close to the Socialist Party are numerous and Moldovan authorities regularly call them to order as regards the broadcast content and positions taken on political issues. They represent opposition forces in relation to the current government, but it is difficult to call them "alternative" media, since they have been part of the Moldovan media landscape for many years and have a big audience. As for the financing of the media and their property, direct funding from foreign Powers is relatively limited, but the issue of foreign programs rebroadcasting remains very problematic. So, the main paradigms of the Moldovan communication regime are the lack of production of national content and the concentration of the media in the hands of a limited number of politically interested persons using the media space to promote their electoral interests and their preferred geopolitical sphere.

Faced with the influence of the Socialist Party and the media empire of Plahotniuc, it is difficult to determine the channels of influence of Maya Sandu. In fact, the results of the presidential election showed that the majority of votes in her favour came from the capital Chisinau and the Moldovan diaspora, which makes up to 1/3 of the total population of Moldova. The Moldovan diaspora voted 93% for the candidate in the second round (15)<sup>9</sup>. Social media was an important tool in the previous political campaign, and the current president was able to invest in these new means of communication. Facebook has recorded that the number of interactions caused by the posts of presidential candidates (Sandu and Dodon) has doubled compared to 2016<sup>10</sup>. Moldovans living abroad were mobilized through Facebook groups in each city/country of emigration, usually serving as a platform for mutual support. One of the support groups for candidate Maya Sandu reached 72,000 members just a few days after its creation. Live chats were purposefully organized for the diaspora through social networks in which candidates participated. Maya Sandu also produced videos on Tiktok and mobilized local influencers by giving interviews on their

9 Cenuşa Dionis. Moldova has a new President: strong popular vote for a "weak" political institution. Eastern Europe Studies centre. 20 November 2020. Available from: <https://www.eesc.lt/en/2020/11/20/moldova-has-a-new-president-strong-popular-vote-for-a-weak-political-institution/>

10 Mediapoint (Moldova) and MEMO 98 (Slovakia). 2020 Moldova, Presidential election, Social media monitoring final report. 17 December 2020. P.5. Available from: [https://memo98.sk/uploads/content\\_galleries/source/memo/moldova/Final%20report/final-report.pdf](https://memo98.sk/uploads/content_galleries/source/memo/moldova/Final%20report/final-report.pdf)

Instagram, Youtube and Facebook channels. Facebook and Instagram sponsored content received 19,398 euros from Maya Sandu's campaign team, compared to 2,291 euros from Igor Dodon<sup>11</sup>. Maya Sandu relied on social media to attract the young and urban electorate, while the Socialists preferred audiovisual channels and the press, to which rural and elderly electorate is more sensitive.

In Moldova, the main secondary channels in the field of communication (websites and other information resources of analytical centres) are: Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent (centre for Independent Journalism), Asociația Presei Independente (Association of Independent Press), Institutul pentru Politici și Reforme Europene (Institute of European Politics and Reforms), WatchDog.md (community of analytical centers of civil society in the Republic of Moldova). Funded mainly by Western international organizations, they are the main observers of the political and media scene in Moldova and the first actors in improving media literacy, which is actually poorly regulated by the Moldovan government. Despite the fact that they are very critical of government structures, civil society organizations are behind the adoption of significant legislative acts concerning the regulation of the media. However, the application of law remains difficult due to corruption and lack of political will. Therefore, the influence of think tanks and other civil society organizations remains very relative.

## **Criterion 2. The degree of conventionality of the decision-making and communication regime management centre**

Conventional control centers are those which have the right to legitimately establish communication rules, formulate the foundations of state information policy, create communication institutions, monitor the implementation of rules and apply sanctions for non-compliance. Unconventional control centers are self-proclaimed decision-making centers regarding the norms and rules for the execution of decisions of conventional centers. The consent of the public with unconventional centers often leads to unconventional behaviour of certain groups.

The Government of Moldova is a conventional centre for decision-making and regulatory actions in the communications sector. The main regulatory acts adopted recently are:

1. In November 2018, the Code on Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova was adopted<sup>12</sup>. It regulates audiovisual media and their distribution, includes measures to protect the individual, society and the state. Finally, it defines the "hate speech". It should be noted that "This Code transposes the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council 2010/13/EC of March 10, 2010", the purpose of which is to harmonize European legislation in this area.

11 Mediapoint (Moldova) and MEMO 98 (Slovakia). 2020 Moldova, Presidential election, Social media monitoring final report. 17 December 2020. P.30. Available from: [https://memo98.sk/uploads/content\\_galleries/source/memo/moldova/Final%20report/final-report.pdf](https://memo98.sk/uploads/content_galleries/source/memo/moldova/Final%20report/final-report.pdf)

12 The Code of the Republic of Moldova on Audiovisual Media Services. Code No. 174 of 08-11-2018. Available from: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=120081&lang=ru](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=120081&lang=ru) (date of appeal: 21.07.2022).

2. On January 12, 2018, the so-called law “On Anti-propaganda” came into force and was integrated into the Code on Audiovisual Media Services. This is aimed at ensuring Moldova’s information security by preventing too much external influence. The law prohibits the broadcasting of any analytical, political or military programs, except those produced on the territory of the countries that have ratified the European Convention on Cross-Border Television. The law directly concerns the Russian Federation, which is not a member of the Convention. It should be noted that the law does not apply to rebroadcasting of Russian entertainment programs.

In 2020, the parliament repealed the provisions of the “On anti-propaganda” law on the eve of inauguration of new President Maya Sandu. The paragraphs of the article establishing quotas for broadcasting in favour of European or national products were cancelled. Military-related programs produced in countries that had not ratified the European Convention on Cross-Border Television were again allowed to be broadcast in Moldova.

With the start of the military conflict in Ukraine, programs devoted to military topics from the Russian Federation were again banned on the ad hoc basis in March 2022. On June 2, 2022, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova officially amended the wording of Article 17 of the Code on Audiovisual Media Services - Part (4), paragraph (a): “suppliers of audiovisual media services must not broadcast, and distributors of audiovisual media services must not retransmit audiovisual television and radio broadcasting programs with informational, informational-analytical, military and political content that were produced in the States other than the Member States of the European Union, the United States of America, Canada, as well as in the States that have ratified the European Convention on Cross-Border Television, with the exception of films and entertainment programs, not containing militaristic content<sup>13</sup>”. The law was signed by the President on June 19 and published on June 24 in the Official Journal.

3. In December 2017, the Information Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova was adopted<sup>14</sup>, in which information security is defined as “the status of protection of information resources, as well as individuals, society and the state in the information space”. The protection of the national space is also considered, and the risks of propaganda and media aggression (internal and external) are a matter of concern for the security of society. State administrative bodies are appointed responsible for the implementation of information security programme within the framework of the regulatory system established by certain institutional entities (see section Criteria 1).

4. In June 2018, the Parliament adopted the National Concept for the Media Development of the Republic of Moldova<sup>15</sup>, which should serve as a guideline for state policy

13 Law No. 143 of 02-06-2022 on Amendments to the Code of the Republic of Moldova on Audiovisual Media Services No. 174/2018. Published: 22-06-2022 in Monitorul Oficial No. 185 article No. 347. Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. 2022. Available from: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=131800&lang=ru](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=131800&lang=ru) (date of appeal: 26.07.2022).

14 The Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Moldova. Law No. 299 of 21-12-2017. Available from: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=105660&lang=ru](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105660&lang=ru) (date of appeal: 21.07.2022).

15 The National Concept of development of mass Media of the Republic of Moldova. Law No. 67 of 26-07-2018. Available from: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=105449&lang=ru](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105449&lang=ru) (accessed: 07/21/2022).

regarding the media. The strategy has 4 components: cybersecurity, media and information security, strengthening operational capacity, internal coordination and international cooperation.

5. The Information Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2019-2024 and the Action Plan for its implementation<sup>16</sup>. The strategy, which came into force in 2019, is aimed at implementing the EU Directive on Network and Information Security (NIS), which pursues the following objectives: ensuring the security of information cyberspace and investigating cybercrime; ensuring the security of the media information space; strengthening operational capabilities; increasing the effectiveness of internal coordination and international cooperation in the field of information security.

The implementation of the strategy is extremely important because although the Moldovan regulatory authorities are the centre of decision-making, the decisions taken are often subject to failures on the part of the objects of communication regime. The Moldovan Government and state bodies do not ensure systematic compliance with existing laws, and sanctions often depend on a system of corruption that permeates the political and economic class. As a result, some violations of the law are not punished. Most often, the reason is that the Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting (CTR) does not enjoy political and institutional independence. Moreover, with regard to cybersecurity and media literacy issues, the Moldovan state does not have enough funds to implement its policy, despite regulatory achievements. State bodies have very few resources to implement state policy in this area<sup>17</sup>.

For this reason, despite the increase in the number of legal instruments regulating communications and information policy, public confidence in the neutrality of the media remains very limited. As for the opinion of society on public actions and foreign relations of Moldova, the results are more nuanced than it may seem at first glance. According to a survey conducted by the "Public Opinion Barometer" in June 2021, 56% of the population believe that the country is actually governed by an institutional body (President, Parliament or Prime Minister). Thus, the indicator of confidence in the actions of the state and the legislature is significantly higher than the indicator of those who believe that the country is governed from abroad or by a hidden group within the country, whose total indicator is 30.8%<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, President Maia Sandu is the Moldovan politician whom the citizens trust the most. Her party is also leading in the polls<sup>19</sup>. In addition, 1.5 years after the election, the government still enjoys democratic legitimacy (in terms of trust) to govern the country and regulate communications.

16 The Information Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2019-2024 and the Action Plan for its implementation. 2019. P.3. Available from: <https://rm.coe.int/3-moldova-strategy/168097eceb>

17 Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent, Moldova Country Report 2021. 10 February 2022. P.6. Available from: [https://cji.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ML\\_Moldova\\_Country\\_Report\\_2021-1.pdf](https://cji.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ML_Moldova_Country_Report_2021-1.pdf)

18 Poll "Barometer of Public Opinion". Question: "In your opinion, who actually runs the Republic of Moldova?" June 2021. Available from: <http://bop.ipp.md/ru>

19 Mikhalkina Alina, Sandu and PAS. How their trust ratings in Moldova changed in six months. Website Newsmaker.md. December 17, 2021. Available from: <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/opros-iri-maje-sandu-doverayut-vdvoe-bolshe-chem-igoryu-dodonu/>

As for the influence of the European Union and the Russian Federation on Moldova, the survey by the Barometer of Public Opinion from June 2021 shows that 70.6% of Moldovans believe that the country has good relations with the European Union, 54.6% believe in good relations with Russia. Almost a third of respondents (29.8%) believe that relations with the Russian Federation are poor, while only 8.2% noted troubled relations with the EU. The United States enjoy a lower plebiscite than the European Union: 60.8% of respondents rate relations with Moldova as good, and 15.7% as bad<sup>20</sup>. However, these results should be compared with the answers to the question «Which country, in your opinion, should be the main strategic partner of the Republic of Moldova?» The Russian Federation has higher indicators (32.5%) than, for example, Romania (28.1%)<sup>21</sup>.

Above we noted such a feature of Moldova's communication regime as unpunished non-compliance with the adopted laws regulating communication and information processes. This conclusion correlates with the results of the Public Opinion Barometer survey; according to which 28.8% of the population believes that the courts are completely dependent and only 8.6% of the population believe that the courts are completely independent. In general, the share of the population inclined to admit the lack of independence is 48.8%, and the share inclined to admit some independence is 41.3%<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, confidence over the ability of the country's judicial system to resolve disputes and ensure compliance with the law is extremely relative. The results obtained in relation to the independence of the prosecutor's office are about the same as in relation to the courts.

### Criterion 3. Assessment of controllability indicators

*3.1. Controllability criterion: the ability of communication regime control centres to transfer it from one state to another without conflict*

A major step in the state regulation of communications and information was the adoption of the Code on Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova in 2018. In a report on disinformation, in which the Moldovan analytical centre Watchdog participated, V. Gotisan, a media sphere analyst in Moldova, explains that the adoption of the Code allowed us to make a step forward from a regulatory point of view by clarifying the law. However, there is still no signs of its implementation in real conditions<sup>23</sup>. Thus, we are no longer talking about the quality of legislation, but about the ability and political will of public services to implement it. Since television remains the most widespread means

20 The survey "Public Opinion Barometer". Question: "How do you assess the current relations of the Republic of Moldova with the following countries/organizations? EU / Russian Federation". Ionia 2021. Available from: <http://bop.ipp.md/ru>

21 The survey "Public Opinion Barometer". Question: «Which country, in your opinion, should be the main strategic partner of the Republic of Moldova?» Ionia 2021. Available from: <http://bop.ipp.md/ru>

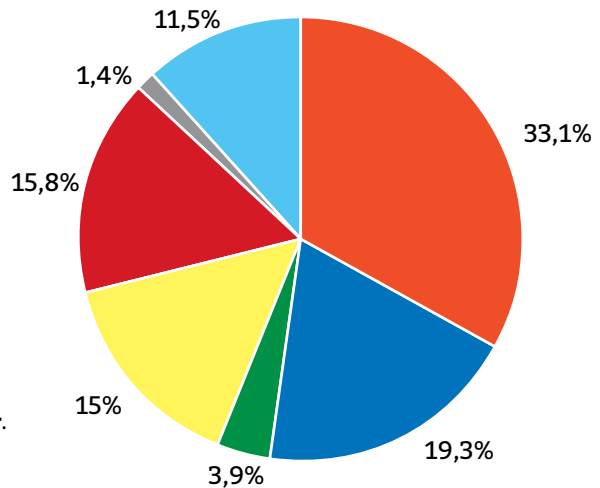
22 Poll «Public Opinion Barometer». Question: «What do you think about the level of independence of law enforcement officers?» Ionia 2021. Available from: <http://bop.ipp.md/ru>

23 Disinformation resilience index in Central and Eastern Europe in 2021. EAST centre. 2021. Available from: <https://east-centre.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/DRI-report-2021.pdf>

**Figure 1. Republic of Moldova Public Opinion Barometer**

In your opinion, who rules the Republic of Moldova in actuality?  
Perioada: 06.2021

- Parliament
- Prime-minister
- Some circles of interest inside the country
- Some circles of interest outside the country
- Someone else
- Don't know/No answer



Number of respondents: 1161

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Institute of Public Policies.

Accessed: 11.05.2022

Available: <http://bop.ipp.md>

of information dissemination in Moldova, special control had to be carried out over the implementation of the provisions of the Code.

In the period from 2021 to May 2022, in order to strengthen the manageability of the communication regime in Moldova, amendments were made to the legislation. In 2021, the Parliament strengthened control over the Supervisory Board of the public company "Teleradio-Moldova" and the Council on Television and Radio (CTR). If the Parliament rejects the annual report of the Council on Television and Radio, then all its members have to resign. The CTR and the Supervisory Board had nine members each, and now their number in both structures will be reduced to seven, of which three are now proposed by the Parliament, one by the President and the Government, and two by civil society and non-governmental organizations [Law No. 158 04.11.2021 "On Amendments to the Code of the Republic of Moldova on Audiovisual Media services" No. 174/2018. Published on 05.11.2021 in Monitorul Oficial No. 273 article No. 363]

In March 2022, the Constitutional Court received a request to verify compliance with the Constitution from the deputy of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova S. Litvinenko (Action and Solidarity Party). The Court recognized Article 28 (prohibition for non-profit organizations to carry out the activities of a private provider of audiovisual media services<sup>24</sup>) of the Code on Audiovisual Media Services as unconstitutional (art. 16, 46 and 54 of the Constitution) and abolished it. In fact, the court's decision states: "The Constitutional Court notes that this situation indicates a different appeal to legal entities

<sup>24</sup> Code on Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova No. 174 of 08.11.2018, as amended by ZP241 of 16.12.20, MO353-357 of 22.12.20, MO273/05.11.21 of Article 363 of 05.11.21, ZP60 of 17.03.22, MO98-105/08.04.22 of Article 169.

of private law, depending on the orientation of their activities for profit, that is, if they are commercial or non-profit organizations, regarding the possibility of providing audiovisual media services". [Resolution of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova No. 6 of 10.03.2022 in part (1) of Article 28 of the Code on Audiovisual Media Services (Appeal No. 78a/2021). Published on 03/25/2022 in Monitorul Oficial No. 80–87 article No. 43].

Finally, in April 2022, the Parliament decided that the transition to digital terrestrial television in the Republic of Moldova should be completed no later than May 1, 2022, and provided state support for the first two years of operation [Law No. 60 of 17.03.2022 "On Amendments to Certain Regulatory Acts". Published 08.04.2022 in Monitorul Oficial No. 98-105 article No. 169]. In early May 2022, Deputy Prime Minister-Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development of the Republic of Moldova Andrei Spynu said that the modernization process, which began 14 years ago, had been completed and covered 98 percent of the country's territory<sup>25</sup>. The process took a long time, but this example shows that despite state's limited resources political will is an important factor for the implementation of legislative measures.

However, in most cases, the issues of media regulation, especially audiovisual, are at the centre of public debate and cause strong political opposition depending on political changes. This hinders political continuity in legislative decisions and their implementation. The most striking example of this problem is the law "On Anti-propaganda". The following changes in Article 17 of the Code until today have been presented above, but now we will more precisely consider the process that led to the adoption of the latest amendment of the law and future problems in its implementation. Since 2020, the decision to re-authorize the broadcast of content related to military topics was criticized by the current political majority. Despite the growing instability in the region, this provision was not reviewed by the current parliament until June 2, 2022. However, in the context of the military conflict in Ukraine, a state of emergency was introduced in the Republic of Moldova and legislative provisions were circumvented by an ad hoc measure of the National Commission for Emergency Situations (CES). In fact, in this regard, on March 2, 2022, the CES banned the retransmission of Russian information programmes and military-related programmes in Moldova. The Socialist Party responded to this measure with a press release stating that the fines imposed by the CTR were directed exclusively at channels dissatisfied with the government, and that they symbolize: "the dangerous trend of introducing censorship in the media, including on television"<sup>26</sup>. On the part of civil society, the trend is quite contrary: Moldovan associations of journalists condemn the inaction of the CTR and believe that this allows pro-Russian content to spread. Director of the Asociația Press Independente in Petru Macovei believes that "Our media market is oversaturated with Russian-language products, but the Audiovisual Council does not want to take any measures, although the Code of

<sup>25</sup> Moldova Switched to Digital TV Broadcasting. CIS Internet portal. 4 May, 2022. Available from: <https://e-cis.info/news/567/100087/>

<sup>26</sup> The SPRM Condemns the Approach of the New Composition of the Broadcasting Council towards to Some Media. SPRM website. March 11, 2022. Available from: <https://socialistii.md/psrm-condamna-modul-in-care-noua-componenta-a-consiliului-audiovizualului-adopta-hotarari-in-raport-cu-unele-institutii-media/>

Audiovisual Media Services, in the form in which it exists, provides for some possible steps. The fact is that the members of the council do not want to come into conflict with the ruling Socialist Party, which controls a large share of the television media market"<sup>27</sup>.

Thus, the Government and the Presidency, which currently enjoy a political majority, are able to issue new legislative provisions. However, the ability of the communication regime control centre to transfer these provisions from one government to another without conflict (in accordance with the political change) is extremely relative. The Communication Regime Control centre is experiencing difficulties in confronting its political opponents, who enjoy strong media influence, and continues to be seriously criticized by civil society organizations. As a result, the legal framework for the media is extremely unstable, as is the political situation in the country. Besides the lack of economic resources, the lack of continuity of State policy hinders the real implementation of legislative provisions.

*3.2. Controllability criterion: ability to achieve the target and controlled parameters of the communication regime*

The most important target indicator is information sovereignty. The issue of information sovereignty is a new form of expression of the problems of external influence, to which Moldova is particularly susceptible. The recent tensions over the broadcast of Russian military-related content illustrate the lack of consensus in the Moldovan political community, as well as the lack of economic and political resources for the government to achieve its goals. Even before the new law "On Anti-propaganda" came into force, the CTR was instructed to ensure compliance with the temporary ban on military content programs produced in the Russian Federation. This turned out to be quite difficult for the CTR and sheds light on the difficulties of implementation that the law "On anti-propaganda" will face in its new form.

After the decision of the CES, the new Chair of the CTR, Liliana Vitsu, advocated "a return to the provisions of Article 17 [of the Code of the Republic of Moldova on Audiovisual Media Services], which relate to the protection of national audiovisual space, as well as the share of at least 50% of European content"<sup>28</sup> in order to clarify the legal basis of the CTR and its activities. In other words, she already wanted to establish a real legal continuity, but not on the principle of ad hoc decisions that contribute to greater political manipulation. However, she acknowledged that "the CTR is a weak institution in terms of human and technical resources", and admitted she is concerned that if the legislation on disinformation is changed, it will complicate the task of her department as it will mean new sanctions that will need to be applied.

Indeed, the CTR has already experienced difficulties in enforcing current provisions which are relatively weak. For example, due to the decision of the Emergency Committee, cable operators suspended the broadcasting of some Russian cable TV channels, for example,

<sup>27</sup> Index of Resistance to Disinformation in Central and Eastern Europe in 2021. EAST centre. 2021:167. Available from: <https://east-centre.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/DRI-report-2021.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> The new Chairman of the Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting (CTR) Liliana Vitsu: "The War in Ukraine has Shown Us that we are Still Vulnerable to External Propaganda", March 18, 2022. Website media-azi.md Available from: <https://media-azi.md/ru/noua-presedinta-ca-liliana-vitu-razboiul-din-ucraina-a-demonstrat-ca-suntem-inca-vulnerabili-la-propaganda-din-exterior/>

Nostalgia, MIR or RTVi. However, according to the Internet portal Newsmaker.md, owners of satellite dishes can watch Russian information programs<sup>29</sup>. Prior to that, the channels PRIME TV, Moldova 1, Jurnal TV, Primul in Moldova (First Channel in Moldova) and NTV-Moldova were closely monitored by the Council on Television and Radio. According to the results of the monitoring, the CTR fined NTV-Moldova 5,000 lei (18597 rubles), and Primul in Moldova, which is close to the Socialists, was fined 20,000 lei (74390 rubles). CTR stated that these two TV channels did not give their viewers any point of view different from the one provided by the Russian Federation, and therefore did not treat the events in Ukraine fairly. Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent, a Moldovan NGO, stated that after February 24, Primul in Moldova, NTV-Moldova and RTR-Moldova “preferred to broadcast films or other types of programs, ignoring the topic of war”<sup>30</sup> or occasionally showed it in television news. On March 17, NTV and RTR were again fined for “one-sided coverage, mixing of facts and opinions and other violations of the Code of Audiovisual Media Services”<sup>31</sup>.

Thus, the ability of the State to achieve target and controlled indicators is estimated as relatively low. Fines are sporadic, and their amounts are very small. The decisions of the CTR are more political symbolism than unified and comprehensive control. Information sovereignty is still far from being achieved, as it is subject to external influences, which Moldova, not having sufficient resources, is trying to limit. In addition, the mechanisms of political patronage and corruption make it difficult to effectively implement legislative provisions. Finally, the cybersecurity, information security or media literacy sectors do not have sufficient human and financial resources to help the country and its population protect themselves from cyber attacks and disinformation, despite the growth of both phenomena with the development of new technologies. All these factors must be integrated so that the law “On anti-propaganda” should become meaningful and effective, and not just a geopolitical confrontation.

*3.3. Controllability indicator - the ability to use self-organization mechanisms of management objects to regulate communication regimes.*

The civil society of Moldova is organized through the associations specializing in the protection of human rights, freedom of speech, journalistic and political issues. One of the goals of the National Concept for the Development of Mass Media of the Republic of Moldova<sup>32</sup> – internal coordination and international cooperation. Therefore, it is a generally recognized fact for the Moldovan state that the construction of a communication

29 Newsmaker.md .Available from: <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/otkuda-zhiteli-moldovy-poluchayut-informatsiyu-o-voynе-v-ukraine/>

30 Case Study. News and speeches from Moscow with elements of propaganda in favour of the Russian Federation, broadcast by three TV stations in the Republic of Moldova. March 17, 2022. Website CJL.md. Available from: <https://cjl.md/en/case-study-news-and-speeches-from-moscow-with-elements-of-propaganda-in-favour-of-the-russian-federation-broadcast-by-three-tv-stations-in-the-republic-of-moldova/>

31 The CTR imposed sanctions on RTR Moldova and NTV Moldova for one-sided coverage, mixing of facts and opinions and other violations of the Audiovisual Media Services Code. Website Media-azi.md . March 17, 2022. Available from: <https://media-azi.md/ru/ca-a-sanctionat-rtr-moldova-si-ntv-moldova-pentru-reflectare-unilateral-a-mestec-dintre-fapte-si-opinii-si-alte-incalcari-ale-csma/>

32 The National Concept of Development of Mass Media of the Republic of Moldova. 2018. Available from: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=105449&lang=ru](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105449&lang=ru)

regime should include the easing of political and social tensions in order to ensure an internal consensus that promotes a dynamics which is favorable for information security. However, the Moldovan government is still trying to impart to a “power – society” dialogue the same strength as it has in the “media – power” subsystem. Indeed, as we have seen, the integration of the media and the authorities is quite strong, not least because they are based on common financial interests. On the other hand, the Moldovan government does not finance civil society organizations whose projects are financed by foreign, mainly Western, organizations.

This allows organizations to remain critical of government decisions, but the feedback between society and the authorities is low. For example, we have told above about the reform of the Code on Audiovisual Media Services, aimed at reconsidering the operation activities of the CTR, adopted at the end of 2021<sup>33</sup>. While the amendment to the law was in draft form, seven NGOs, including the centre for Investigative Journalism, the Independent Press Association, the Electronic Press Association and RISE Moldova, joined together to express their concern about the bill. Of particular concern in the joint statement is the appointment of members of the supervisory board of the public company Teleradio Moldova by the President, the Government and the Parliament. “Public television can fulfill its mission only if the government renounces the levers of influence that it can use to promote its interests”<sup>34</sup>. Their request remained unanswered by the State authorities, despite the respected status of these organizations in this area. In addition, members of civil society condemn the lack of political independence of the country for many years.

However, it can be noted that after the Covid-19 pandemic, some TV channels, such as TV8 and Jurnal TV, or news sites on the Internet, Agora.md, Nokta.md, Newsmaker.md, Cotidianul.md, and the newspaper Ziarul de Gardă, were involved in debunking fake news. These media outlets also have good relations with civil society organizations, which encourage more journalists to participate in initiatives to improve media literacy and good intelligence. These connections help to nourish the “media – society” subsystem, which was previously very weak. A news website launched in 2014 Newsmaker.md is an attempt by a new generation of media to participate in the improvement of journalism and media literacy in Moldova, an attempt to talk to young people in the language that is understandable and interesting for them. Most of its readers are people aged from 25 to 34. Newsmaker.md has a Telegram channel, pages in Facebook, Instagram, a YouTube channel and account in Twitter, where the audience is very active. The peculiarity of this project is that it is published in Russian and Romanian. The editorial board claims to be independent and publishes a list of permanent donors to the project. The project is funded by the Open Society Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy and the Foundation for Human Rights of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The project is also

33 Law No. 158 of 04-11-2021 on Amendments to the Code on Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova No. 174/3.

34 “Teleradio-Moldova”: Controlled and (not) Dependent? Website Noi.md. 25 Nov. 2021. Available from: <https://noi.md/ru/analitika/teleradio-moldova-podkontrolinoe-i-ne-zavisimoe>

funded from the funds of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) within the framework of the European Union's Confidence-building Measures Program<sup>35</sup>.

Thus, the Government of the Republic of Moldova is experiencing difficulties in establishing links with civil society organizations and implementing national programs to improve the communication regime where the Government and civil society could cooperate. In other words, the Moldovan government does not use civil society initiatives enough to regulate the communication regime. As a result, Moldovan civil society organizations look for help from foreign countries and are mainly funded by Western organizations. Although civil society is gradually developing, the self-organization of the population is not yet a sufficiently structured system with sufficient support to become a real counter-force.

## Discussion

The conducted research has revealed a number of problems in the controllability of the communication regime in the Republic of Moldova, which can be brought up for scientific discussion and become lines of further research.

The concentration of the media in the hands of a narrow group of individuals. Only in November 2015, and with the active mobilization of civil society organizations, the Parliament amended the law on mass media, obliging companies to openly publish the name of their owners. After that, it was publicly revealed that V. Plahotniuc owns 4 out of 5 national TV channels and 3 radio stations (Publika TV, PRIME TV, Canal 2 TV, Canal 3 TV and Publika FM, MuzFM and Maestro FM). According to estimates of Moldstreet.md, these 4 TV channels occupied 70% of the audiovisual market (16)<sup>36</sup>, that is, Plahotniuc's political party, the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM), occupied a dominant position in the media market, thereby providing large-scale influence and, in fact, controlling information and communications in the country. Plahotniuc is not an isolated case. Igor Dodon and his Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) at the time of his presidency were associated with three television stations: Accent TV, NTV Moldova and Exclusiv TV. Ilan Shor, a businessman and the leader of the Shor Party, was the actual beneficiary of Alt TV and Euro TV (now Televiziunea Centrala – TVC) (17)<sup>37</sup>. To counteract the established practice, in March 2017, amendments were adopted to the country's legislation limiting the number of broadcasting licenses (two licenses per person). However, the expected advantages for media pluralism were not observed.

To circumvent the law, for example, General Media Group (V.Plahotniuc) decided to transfer the rights to Canal 2TV and Canal 3TV to a new company called Telestar Media

<sup>35</sup> About the project Website Newsmaker.md. URL: <https://newsmaker.md/rus/o-proekte/>

<sup>36</sup> Gogu Nadine, Who really rules the airwaves in Moldova? Open Democracy website. 28 March 2016. Available from: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/who-really-rules-airwaves-in-moldova/>

<sup>37</sup> Zgibartsa Laura. The Fourth Power in the Making: regulation and reform of the Media in Moldova. March 2020. №11.

(headed by V.Plahotniuc's close associate). In 2017, DPM de facto retained the same number of audiovisual channels as before<sup>38</sup>. Currently, the "tradition" that has developed in Moldova continues to be preserved. All the media are strongly connected with the political and business establishment of the country, where the control centers are located.

We have identified an attempt to form alternative control centers for the communication regime of Moldova by NGOs getting Western investments. One cannot say that these attempts are unsuccessful (they periodically exert pressure on political forces, demanding changes in legislation), but so far these centers do not have a significant impact on the communication regime of Moldova.

High level of information politicization and political propaganda. The majority of the population believes that the media are not independent, especially because of the close proximity between the political elite and the owners of the media. The politicization of the information space is extreme, especially during election campaigns. Each media outlet supports its candidate or party.

In November 2020, Magenta Consulting Agency conducted a survey on "Public Perception of Mass Media and Media Skills in the Republic of Moldova"<sup>39</sup>. The interest of the report is in the possibility to compare the results of 2018 and 2020. Despite the fact that between 2018 and 2020, the share of the population who believe that the media work under pressure decreased by 11%, the total share of those who believe that the media are influenced remained at the same level (85% in 2018 and 84% in 2020). The level of trust in the independence and objectivity of information sources in Moldova is assessed as extremely low. The media are considered primarily as tools of political propaganda.

Political and media news is currently defined by the military actions in Ukraine. In this context, the celebration of Victory Day on May 9, 2022 became a divisive issue between the pro-Russian and pro-European political classes. Although the authorities decided not to organize an official parade, they allowed spontaneous commemorative meetings. However, the wearing of the St. George ribbon was prohibited. The Centrul Pentru Jurnalism Independent website conducted a study of the media processing of the day performed by 10 Moldovan Internet news portals.

Kp.com (Komsomolskaya Pravda), Aif.md (Arguments and facts in Moldova) and Ntv.com (NTV) emphasized the presence of representatives of the Socialist Party in the ranks of the marching. Tv6.md, owned by Ilan Shor, focused on members of the Shor party. Besides, the research notes the use by these sites of distorted or exaggerated statements and facts against President Maya Sandu or in connection with the situation in Ukraine: "mixing of facts and opinions, manipulation of statistics, (intentional) exaggerations related to the president's health, (intentional) associations between possible provocations and terrorist

<sup>38</sup> Rosca Alla. Media in Moldova: Between Freedom and Monopoly. Foreign policy research institute. 13 September 2017. Available from: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/09/media-moldova-freedom-monopoly/>

<sup>39</sup> Magenta Consulting, National Study. Population Perception of the Media And Media Skills in the Republic of Moldova. November 2020. P.18. Available from: [https://internews.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/INTERNEWS\\_Final-report\\_24.11.20\\_EN.pdf](https://internews.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/INTERNEWS_Final-report_24.11.20_EN.pdf)

attacks and Ukrainian refugees»<sup>40</sup>. In general, the study carried out by the Centrul Pentru Jurnalism Independent indicates the absence of secondary sources confirming these statements, including the public television website Trm.md. Finally, the website Jurnal.md is accused of not representing a balanced opinion, not giving the people against whom their articles are directed the right to reply. For example, a former member of parliament criticized Igor Dodon's decision not to comply with the law and wear a St. George ribbon, furiously calling it a "military ribbon". Igor Dodon's position on this issue is not presented in the article. Only Newsmaker.md and Publika.md are not subject to criticism in the study.

The attitude of the media towards May 9 quite accurately reflects the political preferences of the news sites. The lack of nuances is striking, and the information politicization takes the form of exaggeration of facts or partial communication of information to readers who cannot form a free opinion by reading one media outlet.

Low level of media literacy of the population. Media literacy concerns the ability of society to access information and critically perceives and comprehends it. This aspect of information dissemination is very important today due to the multiplication of information channels (official publications, traditional media channels, publications of individuals in social networks, information channels in messengers, etc.). The Covid-19 pandemic and misinformation around the issue of vaccines have shown how important it is that the population could independently recognize fake news and other elements of disinformation. In the face of this pandemic, the Moldovan authorities managed with great difficulty to stop the spread of fake news in Moldova. The Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent believes that "In the Republic of Moldova there is no national policy, concept and strategy operating in particular in the field of media literacy, and there is no specially designated institution or body that would monitor it within its mission".<sup>41</sup>

Initiatives of civil society organizations and some mass media are aimed at solving this problem. For example, in November 2020, the Newsmaker (one of the most popular Russian-language Internet portals in Moldova, but promoting an anti-Russian agenda) decided to address the issue of media literacy by creating the first online series in Screenlife format (in Russian)<sup>42</sup>.

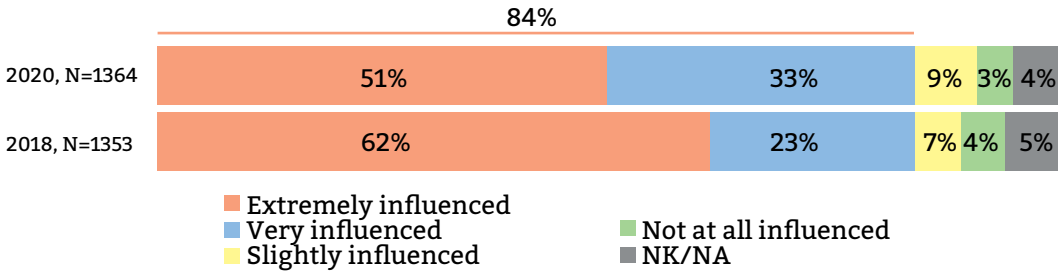
Problems of production of national media content. The study revealed the phenomenon of "retransmission", which is massively practiced by Moldovan channels, despite the tasks of increasing national content, including in Romanian. The Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting pays special attention to political news content, but the issue of entertainment content also comes into view. On March 30, 2021, Bravo TV, which mainly broadcasts cartoons, was sanctioned by the Council "for the lack of its own product

40 Gututui Olga, Case Study. 9 May on 10 News Websites: Impartiality vs. Deviations from Deontology. Centrul Pentru Jurnalism Independent. 31 May 2022. Available from: <https://cji.md/en/case-study-9-may-on-10-news-websites-impartiality-vs-deviations-from-deontology/>

41 Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent, Moldova, Country Report 2021. P.4

42 The President without a mask. Episode 1. Website Newsmaker.md. November 26, 2020. Available from: <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/prezident-bez-maski-pervyy-v-moldove-serial-v-formate-screenlife-epizod-1-video/>

**Figure 2.** The share of respondents who believe that the news in the Republic of Moldova is influenced by politics. 'Q29. In your opinion, is the news in the Republic of Moldova influenced by politics?



Source: Survey Magenta Consulting, National Study, Population perception of the media and media skills in the Republic of Moldova. November 2020. P.18.

and product in Romanian"<sup>43</sup>. By law, the channel had to broadcast at least four hours of its own production, including 80% in Romanian. Moreover, the cartoons were not dubbed or voiced in Romanian. In 2022, the tasks related to broadcast content became particularly relevant. In the context of changing political orientations of the Moldovan authorities, the strategy of ousting Russian-language content and strengthening English- and Romanian-speaking content is being applied. If initially the retransmission of content was due to the fact that Moldovan companies were reluctant to invest in the production of local content, now the retransmission is connected with the political goals of the current government of Moldova and with the strengthening of the positions of Western media investors in Moldova.

The Moldovan authorities believe that the question of programmes production on the national territory, especially on political, social and military issues, is fundamental in ensuring the information sovereignty of Moldova. Among the initiatives in this area, we can highlight the creation of the first MEDIACOR digital media production centre on the basis of Moldovan State University at the end of 2021<sup>44</sup>. Its foundation was funded by the US Embassy, USAID, the Governments of Sweden and the UK, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the State University of Moldova and the COR Association.

## Conclusion

The period after achievement of the statehood in the Republic of Moldova was marked by the adoption of a new legal framework regulating communications and information

<sup>43</sup> Bravo TV, which mainly broadcasts cartoons, sanctioned by the BC for lack of its own product and product in Romanian. Media site-Azi. March 30, 2022. Available from: <https://media-azi.md/en/bravo-tv-care-difuzeaza-preponderent-desene-animat-sanctionat-de-ca-pentru-lipsa-de-produs-propriu-si-in-limba-romana/>

<sup>44</sup> MEDIACOR digital-media production centre inaugurated at Moldovan State University. Website Moldpres.md. November 17, 2021. Available from: <https://www.moldpres.md/en/news/2021/11/17/21008765>.

flows. The established regime is characterized, first of all, by the dependence of the media sphere and its mobilization by political and administrative elites in order to reproduce the mechanisms of power (political continuum). The imperfect regulatory framework and its regular application make it possible to concentrate media and economic assets in the hands of a small number of individuals. The media sphere does not position itself as the fourth power, and the phenomenon of mass communication is mobilized by elites to protect their own interests. In the Republic of Moldova, the border between the media space and the dynamics of power (economic and political) is considerably blurred. The Moldovan communication regime intersects with a biased view on information, which reflects the division in the political field.

The controllability of the communication regime in the Republic of Moldova, despite the laws adopted, is not perfect on the part of the current political authorities. The latest regulatory documents adopted in Moldova are aimed at harmonizing standards with the European Union. First of all, it is clear that Moldova is experiencing difficulties with creating its own legislation system, as well as its own media content. Therefore, it is constantly dependent on foreign policy choices, which have a strong impact on the domestic political life of the country. The lack of independence, combined with high political instability and weak institutions, makes the control centre of the communication regime dependent on external resources. After the victory of Maya Sandu and the pro-European bloc, the United States and the European Union saw that their opportunities in Moldova were growing. Thanks to the latest changes in Article 17 of the Code, they could see the growth of their influence in the media sphere. Secondly, it should be noted that pro-Russian and pro-European influence is currently carried out through different channels. Since television is the dominant medium of information, Russia has long valued its presence on screens. The language helps, and Russian influence is transmitted directly to viewers through information programs (political influence) or entertainment (cultural influence) broadcast on Moldovan channels. Thus, according to recent polls, "about 23% of the RM population believe that Russia protects the unrecognized republics of Donbass ("Donetsk People's Republic" and "Lugansk People's Republic") from attacks by Ukraine, another 15.2% believe that Russia is conducting an operation to liberate Ukraine from Nazism<sup>45</sup>". 40% think that "Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not justified by anything." Despite the adoption of pro-European legislation on the media, half of the public opinion is still mobilized in favour of a profound mutual understanding with Russia. Unlike them, European states or the United States do not have such direct channels of communication with the Moldovan population. As we have already noted, their influence is exerted at the legislative level, and on the secondary sources of information: NGOs, analytical centers, elite training, etc. Thus, Western funding is aimed at a more elite audience and therefore covers a smaller part of the population so far. The task of the EU and the USA is to use the political climate

<sup>45</sup> Ekaterina Dubasova, More than 40% of Moldovan citizens consider Russia's invasion to Ukraine is not justified by anything. What else the survey showed. Website Newsmaker.md . May 10, 2022. Available from: <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/opros-watchdog-iipis-405-respondentov-schitayut-vtorzhenie-rossii-vukrainu-neobosnovannym/>

favorable to them in order to promote and, in fact, make Russian channels of information and communication outsiders of the communication regime in Moldova.

New technologies and new media have had a certain impact on the communication regimes in Moldova, but their impact remains very limited. Despite the evolution of the regulatory framework, its implementation is still conditioned by the weakness of civil institutions and personal interests of a limited number of actors. This undermines the possibility for developing balanced relations between the Power - Media, Power - Society and Media - Society subsystems.

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