

‘MOLDNET’ AND THE 2019 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: NAVIGATING MOLDOVA’S RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE DIGITAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

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Between 11 and 15 percent of the Republic of Moldova’s nearly 3 million people self-identify as Russian-speaking. This group includes ethnic Russians, as well as Bulgarians, Gagauz, Ukrainians, Jewish communities, and other nationalities. Many of these predominately Russian-speaking communities are situated in Moldova’s northern and southern regions, including Balti, Orhei, Taraclia, and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. These communities tend to consume public interest information and news in Russian. In the past, television has tended to be the go-to media source for Moldova’s Russian-speaking populations.¹ However, with the growth in popularity of internet resources in Moldova, including online media and social media platforms, Russian-language digital media will indubitably have a strong influence on informing the opinions of Russian-speaking citizens around candidates and political developments ahead of and during the 2019 Parliamentary elections.

This policy brief analyzes online media’s rise in popularity in Moldova and the current landscape, ownership, affiliations, and political leanings of digital media. This brief carefully assesses existing digital media sources that target Moldova’s predominately Russian-speaking populations, and offers some recommendations on how to promote objectivity and a broader range of opinions in the digital space.

Russian-Speaking Audiences in Moldova’s Digital Space

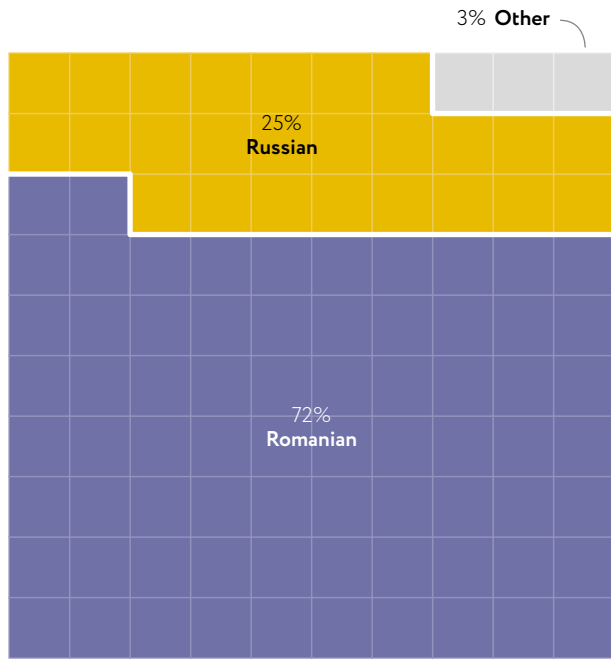
According to the 2014 census, which was the most recent official census conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 54.6 percent of the Moldovan population usually speak

Romanian as their primary language. According to these statistics, Russian language is used as the primary language by 14.5 percent of the population. Other primary languages include Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, and Romani, but these are the predominant languages for a comparatively smaller percentage of the population.²

1 These media include the channels Prime, Publika, Canal 2, Canal 3, NTV Moldova, Prime, RTR Moldova, and Accent TV. Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2018: Moldova*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/moldova>.

2 The population of the Republic of Moldova at the time of the most recent census (2014) was 2,998,235. Transnistria conducted its own separate census during the same year. “The Population of the Republic of Moldova at the Time of the Census was 2,998,235,” National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, March, 2017. <http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=en&id=5582&idc=30>.

Figure 1. The main languages of communication with the family in Moldova



Data by BATI; <http://www.bati.md/news/0010>

In comparison, the Audit Bureau of Circulation’s (BATI) analytical note³ paints a different picture. BATI’s report indicates that, in the first nine months of 2018, the total number of Moldovan internet users reached 1,840,020.⁴ Out of this total, 25 percent use Russian as the main language of communication with their families, while 72 percent use Romanian and 3 percent use other languages.⁵

BATI’s data is more recent than that of the most recent census conducted by NBS. Taking this into consideration, we argue that Russian speakers make up closer to 25 percent of the Moldovan population. That is a significant enough group of voters to affect the results of the 2019 Parliamentary elections.

The 2019 Electoral Landscape

The four main electoral competitors in the 2019 Parliamentary elections are the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), led by Vladimir Plahotniuc, which presents itself as nominally pro-European; the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM), led President Igor Dodon, which presents itself as pro-Russian; the electoral bloc ACUM, comprised of Dignity and Truth (DA, led by Andrei Nastase) and Action and Solidarity (PAS, led by Maia Sandu); and the pro-Romanian Liberal Party. ACUM presents itself as pro-European, pro-reform, and tough on corruption.⁶

In the lead-up to the Parliamentary elections, PSRM appears to be leading the most active campaign targeting Moldova’s Russian-speaking electorate, while PDM seems to promote their agenda less among this group of voters. ACUM falls significantly behind both PSRM and PDM. According survey results published in November 2018 by the Institute for Marketing and Social Studies (IMAS), 27.1 percent of respondents indicated that they would support PSRM, with 15.7 percent expressing an interest in supporting PDM. Members of the ACUM Bloc lagged far behind – a mere 7.1 percent of respondents indicated they would support DA, and 6.4 percent would choose PAS.⁷ These attitudes arise amidst a backdrop of low public faith in electoral integrity. According to a recent poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI), a whopping 57 percent of respondents indicated that they think the Parliamentary elections will be somewhat or completely not free and fair.⁸

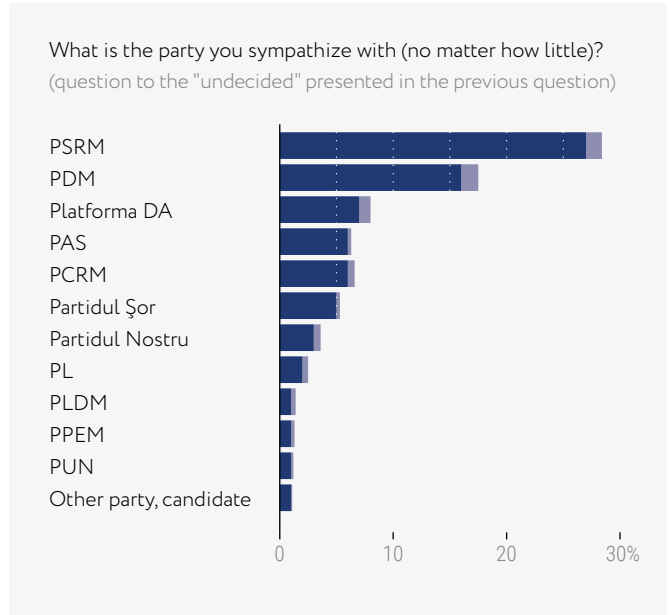
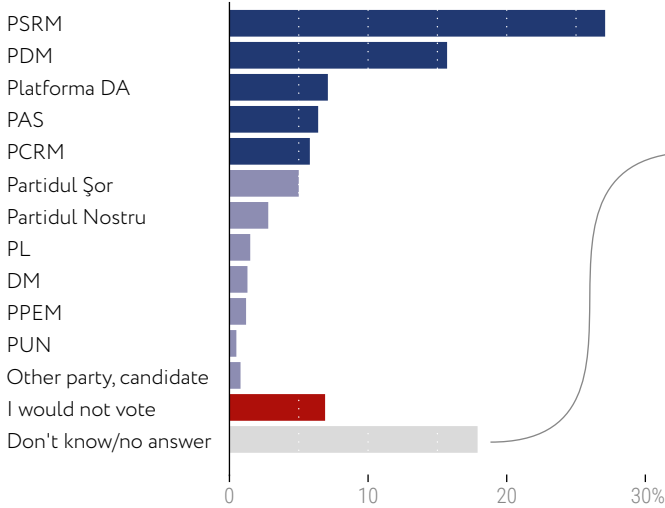
The official outcome of the election could of course differ from these predictions. The electoral threshold is 6 percent; thus, any slight changes in undecided voters’ priorities could potentially bring the Communist Party or the Șor Party into the Parliament in March, squeeze out ACUM, or otherwise rearrange party representation in a way that could considerably affect the current Parliament’s balance of power.⁹

3 “Online Audience Study Report,” *BATI*, September 2018, <http://www.bati.md/news/0010>.
 4 BATI is a non-profit media and advertising industry organization, which collaborates with print and online media publishers and advertising agencies. “Ce este BATI?” Biroul de audit al tirajelor si internetului, accessed February 5, 2019, <http://www.bati.md/>.
 5 The internet audience is measured using Gemius audience tool, which is based on the real users concept and thus one may avoid working with browser files. In so doing, only the national internet segment is taken into account, i.e., only visitors from Moldova. The users specify the main language while filling out Gemius’ online questionnaires. BATI membership is offered on a fee-paying basis and the publisher pays for the Gemius tool to conduct monitoring.
 6 “ACUM electoral bloc of Moldova makes public list of candidates for parliamentary polls,” *Moldpres*, December 26, 2018. <https://www.moldpres.md/en/news/2018/12/26/18011522>.
 7 Doru Petruți, “The dynamics of perceptions about the social environment, economic and politics.” *Imas.md*, November 2018, [http://imas.md/pic/archives/13/\[imas\]20dinamica20perceptiilor202016-2018.pdf](http://imas.md/pic/archives/13/[imas]20dinamica20perceptiilor202016-2018.pdf).
 8 “Moldovans Concerned About Corruption and Electoral Integrity,” *International Republican Institute*, November 15, 2018, <https://www.iri.org/resource/moldovans-concerned-about-corruption-and-electoral-integrity>.
 9 Around 17.9 percent, according to the IMAS data (please see Figure 2 on page 3).

Figure 2. Voters' support to political parties in Moldova in November 2018

If early parliamentary elections had to take place the following Sunday, which party do you intend to vote for?

% of the total sample, 1475 respondents



Data by imas; <http://imas.md/>

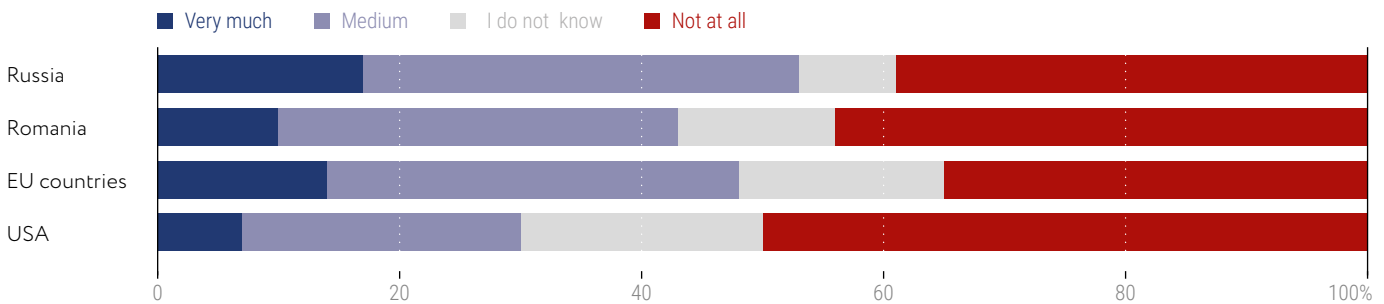
Is Russian-Language Online Media's Popularity Increasing?

Research has shown that Moldovans trust Russian media more than European, Romanian and American news sources.¹⁰ However, on November 7, 2017, the Moldovan Parliament adopted amendments to the Audiovisual Broadcasting Code that prohibit Moldovan television and radio operators from rebroadcasting media from countries that have not signed the European Convention on Trans-

frontier Television, which includes news and informational programs from the Russian Federation.¹¹ On January 10, 2018, Parliamentary Speaker Andrian Candu approved these amendments after President Dodon previously blocked them.¹² As a result, Russian-speaking audiences were left without some of their key sources of information. Thus, at least some of those people who want to receive content in Russian that was previously available on TV have switched to online media as their major news source.

Figure 3. Trust of inhabitants of Moldova towards media from Russia, Moldova, EU and US

How do Moldovans perceive the foreign media available in Moldova?
How much do the Moldovans trust the media from ...?



Data by Independent Journalism Center; <http://media-azi.md/en/>"media-consumption-and-consumers'-perceptions-media-manipulation"

10 "Media Consumption and Consumers' Perceptions of Media Manipulation," *Independent Journalism Center*, September 2018. <http://media-azi.md/en/%E2%80%9Cmedia-consumption-and-consumers%E2%80%99-perceptions-media-manipulation%E2%80%9D>

11 European Convention on Transfrontier Television. Signed May 5, 1989; in force for Moldova as of July 1, 2003. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/132>

12 According to the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, in case the Parliament upholds a certain project of law after the President has blocked it once, the President is obliged to support it. According to Article 165 of the Constitution, if the president has failed to do it, the Constitutional court decides on the President's removal from the office.

An Introduction to Moldova's Russian-Language Digital Media Landscape

In Moldova, online media is not subject to the same types of registration as traditional media.¹³ In 2016, the editor-in-chief of the Romanian-language news portal *diez.md*, Alexander Lebedev, estimated that there are more than 600 portals and blogs on the Moldovan internet (known colloquially as 'Moldnet'), adding that "no one knows exactly."¹⁴ It is especially difficult to keep track of the number of Russian-language outlets since many websites translate their articles

from Romanian into Russian (i.e., *timpul.md*, *zdg.md*, *deschide.md*, *anticoruptie.md*, *europalibera.org*, *rise.md*, and others included on the list below). For the purposes of this brief, we will consider that Russian-language media are all media that publish articles in Russian or translate all of their content into Russian.

The brief uses BATI's statistics to define the largest market players.¹⁵ The company has drawn up a list of the most frequently visited websites in Moldova in the first nine months of 2018. The list includes not only media portals, but also platforms such as *ok.ru* (a social network), *ria.ru* (the

Figure 4. Most accessed websites in Moldova in January 2018 – September 2018

Reach internet, %	Total (1.84M users)	PC (1.34M users)	Mobile (1.2M users)	Tablet (0.3M users)
<i>ok.ru</i>	44.96	49.15	31.77	31.88
<i>md.mail.ru</i>	37.55	49.14	2.83	16.21
<i>999.md</i>	34.78	31.30	32.71	29.74
<i>point.md</i>	21.07	19.00	17.99	21.17
<i>ivi.ru</i>	12.64	10.94	5.79	13.41
<i>sputnik.md</i>	15.04	10.49	11.92	12.37
<i>protv.md</i>	12.34	8.97	12.55	8.85
<i>noi.md</i>	9.72	8.55	5.67	7.31
<i>rutube.ru</i>	9.26	7.56	5.69	9.56
<i>mama.md</i>	8.71	6.99	5.48	5.67
<i>unimedia.md</i>	8.19	5.94	7.81	5.61
<i>kp.md</i>	6.62	5.80	3.53	6.52
<i>ria.ru</i>	6.19	5.71	2.65	6.45
<i>diez.md</i>	8.98	5.31	8.24	4.14
<i>timpul.md</i>	6.50	4.55	5.01	4.27
<i>perfecte.md</i>	4.97	4.05	3.82	2.83
<i>megogo.net</i>	4.13	3.66	1.49	3.48
<i>sporter.md</i>	3.28	3.59	0.68	1.90
<i>zgd.md</i>	5.07	2.87	4.65	3.13
<i>agora.md</i>	4.31	2.63	4.03	2.23
<i>ea.md</i>	4.14	2.16	4.17	2.17
<i>mamaplust.md</i>	5.62	2.13	6.09	3.12
<i>unica.md</i>	5.24	2.05	5.92	2.69
<i>deschide.md</i>	2.96	2.01	2.49	2.30
<i>newsmaker.md</i>	3.86	1.66	3.73	3.94
<i>moldovenii.md</i>	4.02	1.46	4.00	2.88
<i>esp.md</i>	2.61	1.37	2.44	2.31
<i>europalibera.org</i>	1.45	1.24	0.75	0.88
<i>anticoruptie.md</i>	2.12	0.95	2.01	1.32
<i>play.md</i>	1.16	0.91	0.71	0.82
<i>rise.md</i>	1.42	0.88	1.04	0.79
<i>forum.md</i>	1.31	0.83	0.93	0.90
<i>altfel.md</i>	1.06	0.73	0.85	0.37

Data by BATI; <http://www.bati.md/news/0010>

13 Татьяна Пуя, Ольга Гуцуцуй, "Оценка правовой основы регулирования и саморегулирования деятельности средств массовой информации в Республике Молдова," *Media-azi*, 2018, http://media-azi.md/sites/default/files/proiect_studiu%20de%20evaluare_mass%20%20media_final%20redactat%20%28%29_RomRus%281%29.pdf.

14 Interview conducted at the 2016 Mass Media Forum, held by the Association of Independent Press (API) in Chisinau.

15 "Online Audience Study Report," *BATI*, September 2018, <http://www.bati.md/news/0010>.

largest Russian Federation news agency), and rutube.ru (the Russian Federation's YouTube analogue). While BATI tracks statistics internationally, director Stanislav Popov, in a private conversation with the author, assured that its Moldovan rating only includes the data traffic within Moldova. The author used other sources (similarweb.com, alexa.com, and interviews with trusted interlocutors) as additional sources to assess 'Moldnet's' landscape of Russian-language digital media.

Key Players on 'Moldnet'

To better understand the digital Russian-language media landscape, the author focused their analysis on those news portals with the strongest potential influence on voters. The author analyzed the most frequently visited Russian-language news portals between January and September 2018; statistics captured below are taken from that period.

Point.md was accessed by 387,671 visitors (real users) from Moldova, making it the most frequently visited Moldovan news website by Russian-speakers and others.¹⁶ The portal's target audience is Moldova's Russian-speaking residents. The site is an aggregator and reprints news from other websites. In an interview with the author, Point.md founder Dmitry Voloshin stated, "We do not steal news. We have contracts with all the resources from which we republish them. Point.md is not a news agency, but a news aggregator. We enter into contract with the site, take its news, and link it back to the original source. Thanks to this efficient model, Point.md has become one of the most popular information resources in the country."¹⁷

Point.md began hiring journalists to translate Romanian-language media into Russian about one year ago.¹⁸ Point.md originally had a Romanian version but the administration recently closed it and started developing a separate monolingual aggregate, **stiri.md**. Stiri.md offers objective information when covering political topics. Among other things, the portal publishes verified news about any initiatives or defamatory statements that infringe on the rights of Russian-speaking citizens.

Point.md is a part of the Simpals Group, led by businessmen Dmitri Voloshin and Roman Stirbu. Voloshin stated that some years ago, Simpals used the private advertising portal **999.md** as the financial base for all of its subordinate companies. Recently, Point.md has become a profitable resource in its own right. The Simpals group includes other websites that are rather popular among Moldovans: **forum.md**, **mama.md**, and **sporter.md**. The group also includes the biggest sales house in Moldova, **Numbers.md**.

Advertising on Point.md consists mostly of stationary banners from Numbers.md and text advertising in the news feed that may include political advertisements by those political parties participating in elections. According to Moldovan legislation, no media can deny the placement of advertisements from any political party participating in elections unless the advertising is paid through a financial transfer from the Electoral Fund. Paying in cash is strictly forbidden.¹⁹ However, that regulation is applicable only to media outlets – according to existing legislation, online platforms in Moldova are not considered media outlets. Thus, Simpals has indicated that its activities include data processing, advertising, and financial intermediation, rather than directly admitting that it is a media outlet.²⁰

During the first nine months of 2018, **Sputnik.md** garnered 276,670 visitors from Moldova.²¹ Sputnik Moldova is part of the Russian media group "Russia Today" (Federal State Unitary Enterprise International News Agency "Russia Today"). The group was created by Vladimir Putin's Presidential Decree nearly six years ago.²² It is one of the biggest information agencies in the world, with its headquarters in Moscow. Sputnik is a subsidiary news agency and radio outlet that includes multimedia information hubs in dozens of countries, including Poland²³, Spain²⁴, and France.²⁵ It has websites, digital broadcasting, mobile apps and social network pages.

In Moldova, Sputnik is registered as the FSUE "Russia Today" representative office and is led by Vladimir Novosadiuk.²⁶ Sputnik Moldova publishes in two languages, Russian

16 "Online Audience Study Report," *BATI*, September 2018, <http://www.bati.md/news/0010>.

17 Дмитрий Волошин, "Мы около десяти лет жили, что называется, на фасоли: все, что зарабатывали, вкладывали в расширение," *NewsMaker*, February 16, 2015, <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/dmitriy-voloshin-my-okolo-desyati-let-zhili-cto-nazyvaetsya-na-fasoli-vse-cto-za-8820>.

18 According to the author's personal observations.

19 Election Code of the Republic of Moldova. In force as of November 21, 1997. <http://lex.justice.md/ru/312765/>.

20 "Societatea cu Răspundere Limitată Simpals Point," Data of legal units on enterprises registered in Moldova, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://www.bizzer.md/entitate/1096568/societatea-cu-r%C4%83spundere-limitat%C4%83-simpals-point>.

21 "Online Audience Study Report," *BATI*, September 2018, <http://www.bati.md/news/0010>.

22 Executive order on measures to make state media more effective. Kremlin press release, December 9, 2013. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19805>

23 *Sputnik Polska*, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://pl.sputniknews.com/>.

24 *Sputnik Mundo*, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://mundo.sputniknews.com/>.

25 *Sputnik France*, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://fr.sputniknews.com/>.

26 "Reprezentanța Întreprinderii Federale Unitare de Stat Agenția Internațională de Informații "Rossiya Segodnya"," Data of legal units on enterprises registered in Moldova, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://www.bizzer.md/entitate/1037170/reprezentan%C5%A3a-%C3%Aentreprinderii-federale-unitare-de-stat-agen%C5%A3ia-interna%C5%A3ional%C4%83-de-informa%C5%A3ii-rossiya-segodnya>.

and Romanian, and targets Moldovan society writ large, regardless of language. According to its editorial policy, the platform publishes material that is generally sympathetic towards President Igor Dodon, which is most likely motivated by his attempts to restore and develop a stronger relationship between Moldova and Russia. There is no advertising on Sputnik Moldova.

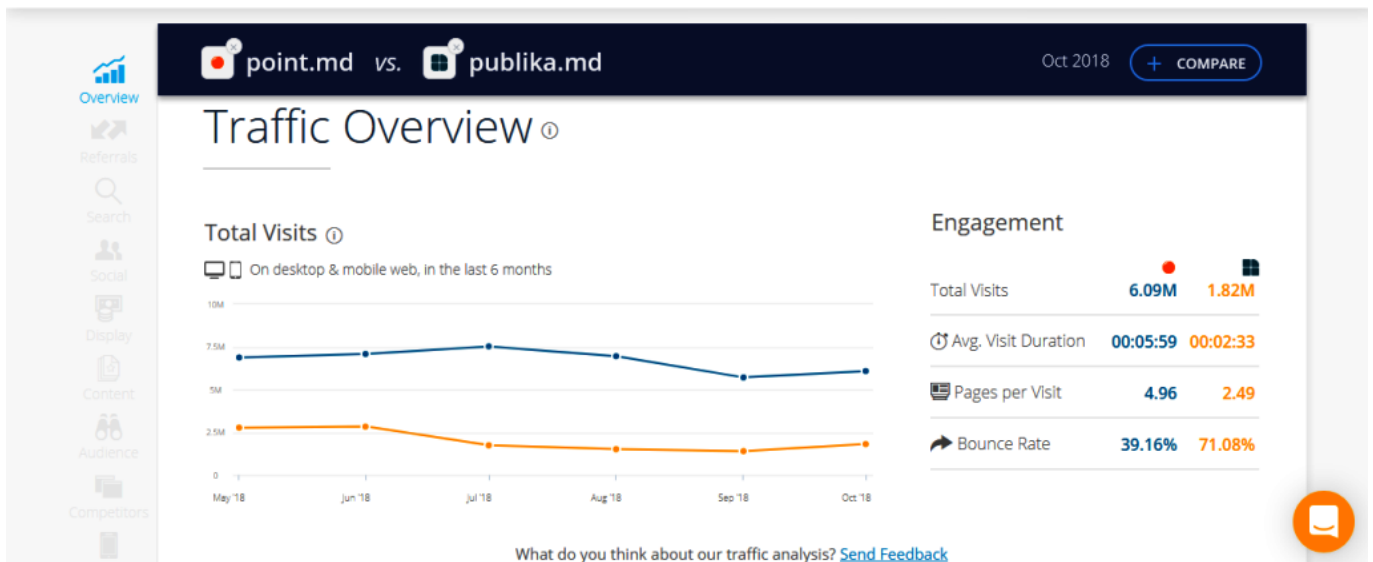
[Noi.md](#) was visited by 178,778 users in Moldova. The articles are written in Romanian and Russian. Romanian- and Russian-speaking journalists produce almost all of the portal's articles. All materials, even the reprinted news from monolingual sites, are translated into two languages. The portal is controlled by Vasili Chirtoca, a Moldovan businessman.²⁷ He is the head of financial and industrial group JSC DAAC HERMES and the Councilor of Chisinau's Municipal Council. Noi.md's founders are represented by several companies and members of the DAAC group.²⁸ Noi.md is a commercial project. It collaborates with news agencies, sales houses and it publishes commercial advertising from DAAC group holding divisions. Generally, political processes are covered objectively. The Noi.md group includes other websites, for example [moldovenii.md](#) (73,908 visitors), [ecology.md](#), [metrica.md](#). These websites try to attract advertising from a broad range of sources.

[Kp.md](#) was accessed by 121,815 visitors in Moldova.²⁹ The website belongs to the largest Russian-language newspaper in Moldova, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove*, which was created during Soviet times. The administrator of it is TC "Komsomolskaya Pravda - Besarabia" which was founded by ME Media Invest LLC, directed by Serghei Ciurikov.³⁰ Kp.md has a reputation as producing "yellow press"³¹ in Moldova. Through its content, the newspaper's directors and editors support the development of good neighborly relations with Russia, and its content indicates some skepticism about the current government. It is financed by advertising that is included in its printed version.

[Newsmaker.md](#) attracted 71,050 visitors from within Moldova. The news site targets readers in search of analytical and objective information. According to the website, the editorial staff consists of journalists that previously worked for the site [Kommersant.md](#), which closed in 2014.³²

Newsmaker.md is owned by LLC News Maker, which was founded by Vladimir Soloviov. The project has previously received funding through the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in Moldova, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).³³ The news portal also uses advertising on the site in the form of articles and teasers of native

Figure 5. Web traffic of point.md and publika.md.



Data by SimilarWeb; <https://www.similarweb.com>

27 Анатолие Ешану, "Прозрачность и владельцы новостных порталов," *Ziarul de Gardă*, February 1, 2016, <https://www.zdg.md/ru/?p=3330>.

28 "Online Audience Study Report," *BATI*, September 2018, <http://www.bati.md/news/0010>.

29 "Online Audience Study Report," *BATI*, September 2018, <http://www.bati.md/news/0010>.

30 "Întreprinderea Mixtă Media Invest S.R.L.," Data of legal units on enterprises registered in Moldova, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://www.bizzer.md/entitate/1131369/%c3%aentreprinderea-mixt%c4%83-media-invest-s-r-l>.

31 Lurid features and sensationalized news are used to attract readers and increase circulation.

32 "Коллектив закрывшегося kommersant.md запустил новый сайт," *Noi.md*, August 5, 2014, https://noi.md/ru/news_id/45141.

33 "O proiecte," *NewsMaker*, accessed February 5, 2019, <http://newsmaker.md/rus/o-proekte>

advertising from [Totul.md](#). According to the author's observations, recently Newsmaker.md has published material that appears to be nominally supportive of PAS and DA and critical of the current government.³⁴

This research would not be complete without mentioning another major online resource – [Publika.md](#). It has pages in Romanian, Russian, and English. The portal represents the internet version of the Publika TV channel, which is one of the biggest in Moldova. The website republishes transcripts of aired news.

Publika TV was founded in 2010 by a Romanian billionaire, Sorin Vintu, but later in 2011 was purchased by the Moldovan entrepreneur Vladimir Plahotniuc, who is also the leader of PDM.³⁵ After its ownership changed, it garnered a reputation as a mouthpiece and tool of PDM. It is considered neither a pro-European nor a pro-Russian channel. In an interview with the author, Stanislav Popov from BATI said that Publika.md was previously monitored by BATI, but by 2015 it refused this service. To analyze this platform, the author used SimilarWeb, which utilizes Google Analytics data showing the number of visits. The author compared Publika.md with point.md to provide comparable results.

Publika.md publishes Google AdSense teasers and advertising from Casa Media Plus, LLC, a major media holding that is owned by Plahotniuc.

Other players: online information agencies

It is worth highlighting three additional Russian-language media groups that are important in delivering information to Russian-speaking Moldovans. These include five key national information agencies: [Moldpres.md](#) (which is state-owned), [infotag.md](#), [ipn.md](#), [infomarket.md](#), and [interlic.md](#), all four of which are privately owned. These are considered objective sources of information in that their content does not overtly or covertly support any particular political party or position. Their information is used and republished by newspapers, websites, television, embassies, and banks.

There are four national information agencies that are directly affiliated with PSRM. They include [actualitati.md](#); [socialistii.md](#), which is PSRM's official news website; [aif.md](#), the Moldovan online version of the Russian weekly newsletter "Argumenty i fakty;" [bloknot-moldova.md](#), which is part of the Russian international information network [plainnews.ru](#); and [golos.md](#). All of them publish their materials in Russian. Other parties participating in the elections do not have similar Russian language sites.

There are three regional online information agencies that could potentially play an important role in informing citizens' opinions in the lead-up to the February elections. These include:

- [Esp.md](#): an online version of the private newspaper "SP" (*Spros i predlozhenie*) in Balti. It has rather wide readership and, in the first nine months of 2018, was accessed by 48,020 visitors from Moldova. The publisher is JSC "Publicatia periodica SP"
- [Orhei.md](#): an outlet that serves the Orhei region of Moldova. It has Romanian- and Russian-language versions and is financed by the Orhei City Council, which is headed by Ilan Shor.
- [Gagauzinfo.md](#): a platform financed by the authorities of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia.

Conclusions

Up to 25 percent of active Moldovan internet users consider themselves to be predominately Russian-speaking. This is a significant population in Moldova's small and concentrated information space. What is more, Russian-speaking audiences will be important constituents in Moldova's upcoming elections, particularly in the country's key regions (Balti, Orhei, Gagauzia, and Taraclia). Russian-language online space in Moldova is almost equally divided between politically unaffiliated media, websites that directly support PSRM, and platforms that are controlled by state-owned Russian media holdings that call for the restoration of relations with Russia. A much smaller sample of these digital platforms support the messaging of PDM and ACUM. Accordingly, the digital media space disproportionately plays into PSRM's positions and, in turn, Kremlin narratives about Moldova's political direction.

It is clear that Moldova's existing Russian-language online media do not cover the country's entire political spectrum. Therefore, those political players interested in garnering greater support from Moldova's Russian-speaking population must think about how they can deliver their message far and wide across 'Moldnet.'

Recommendations:

1. To ensure that Moldova's Russian-speaking population has better access to information about key government decisions, introduce a Russian-language version of the websites of the Parliament of Moldova, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, and other key government bodies. At present, many of them are available only in Romanian, English, and French. This way, Moldova's Russian-speaking audiences will be more informed about the Parliament's policies and legislation.
2. To reach Moldova's Russian-speaking population in key regions, particularly Orhei, Balti, Gagauzia, and Taraclia, political players outside of the two major parties (PSRM and

34 "За компанию! Что делают "аполитичные" госсекретари в голубом автобусе Демпартии", Newsmaker, February 8, 2019, <http://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/za-kampaniyu-cto-delayut-apolitichnye-gossekreteri-v-golubom-avtobuse-dempartii-41652>.

35 "Плахотнюк купил телеканал Publika TV со всеми долгами," eNews.md, May 10, 2011, http://www.vedomosti.md/news/Plahotnyuk_Kupil_Telekanal_Publika_Tv_So_Vsemi_Dolgami; Виктор Мошняг, "Бенефициары телеканалов," Ziarul de Gardă, October 5, 2016, <http://www.zdg.md/ru/?p=5884>.

- PDM) must engage with online platforms. Working with both national and regional media platforms to get their messaging and perspectives to Russian-speaking news consumers will ensure that their positions reach a wider audience.
3. Politically unaffiliated online platforms may consider using crowdfunding support to help bolster their sustainability and reach. This will help to steward a culture of public donations and support for online media, and reduce platforms' reliance on politically paid advertising or affiliations with political actors.
 4. Information about international efforts in Moldova are often available online in Romanian and English, but not in Russian. Updates, press releases, and other online materials about and related to international projects operating in Moldova, especially those in Gagauzia and Transnistria, should be available in Russian so that a wider audience may be informed of them. This will ensure that Russian-speaking audiences understand the effects of international efforts in Moldova.



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The Media Forward policy brief series is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Freedom House, Internews, USAID or the United States Government.



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