

## **Moldova**

### **Monitoring and analysis of TV news programs Moldova 1 and TV7**

## **HOW THEY DO IT**

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### **Introduction**

**T**he small country of Moldova has a small media market. Since 1989, when the country became independent, the TV market evolved at a slow pace. At the very beginning, alongside TV Moldova, there were Romanian and Russian state TVs available throughout the country (still available). Nowadays there are eight TV stations broadcasting from Chisinau - Moldova 1 (state owned), Pervii Canal Moldova (commercial), N4 (commercial), Pro TV Chisinau (commercial), TV7 (commercial), Euro TV Chisinau (commercial, former municipal public), Muz TV Moldova (commercial), NIT (commercial). Six of them (Moldova 1, N4, Pro TV Chisinau, TV7, Euro TV Chisinau, NIT) broadcast local news.

Moldovan TV stations are favored by the fact that the population trusts media in general and television in particular. According to a recent survey<sup>1</sup>, 66% of the population trusts mass media, while 73% uses television as the main source of information.

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<sup>1</sup> Barometrul Opiniei Publice, May 2007, available at [www.ipp.md](http://www.ipp.md)

Hence, there are also challenges. Another study<sup>2</sup> shows that 97.1% of the population receives TV signal, and that external antenna is the most important means (45.4%). Cable is available to 1/3 of the population, while the rest uses indoor antenna or satellite antenna. Cable is widespread in urban areas (more than 50% of city populations have access to cable TV). At the same time, only about 12% of those living in villages can access cable. The way people receive TV made the Broadcasting Coordinating Council<sup>3</sup> conclude that "The broadcasting sector in Moldova is developing to the detriment of informing the population. (...) Non-uniform distribution of frequencies determined an obvious discrepancy in the quality of informing citizens from rural areas and those from urban areas".

### **Monitored TV stations**

Moldova 1 ([www.trm.md](http://www.trm.md)) is the national TV station, public by law, founded in 1958. It is part of the Teleradio-Moldova state-owned company and covers the whole territory of the country with its signal. The channel is financed from public money, funds being allocated each year by the Parliament. Moldova 1 broadcasts six news bulletins a day, with its main newscast at 21.00 (in Romanian language). It has no sports. The weather forecast is broadcast separately.

TV7 ([www.tv7.md](http://www.tv7.md)) is a commercial TV station, launched in 2006, covering Chisinau with terrestrial signal and major cities by cable. It gets its money from advertising. The channel belongs to the private "Analitic Media Group" company. TV7 used to rebroadcast in Moldova the Russian channel NTV and started its own local newscast in March 2006. It has three news bulletins a day, with its main bulletin at 20.30 (in Russian language). Sport is included in the main newscast, while the weather forecast is

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<sup>2</sup> "Usage of communication and information technologies by the population of the Republic of Moldova - 2006", by the United Nations Development Program, quoted in the Strategy of Moldovan Broadcasting Sector Development elaborated by the Broadcasting Coordinating Council, [www.cca.md](http://www.cca.md)

<sup>3</sup> Strategy by the Broadcasting Coordinating Council, [www.cca.md](http://www.cca.md)

broadcast separately.

Both stations start their newscasts with short headlines 40 to 60 seconds long and both programs have women anchors.

## **Analysis**

### *Technical aspects*

The most obvious difference between the public and private monitored stations is that of picture quality. Clear, very well framed and shot images are the rule at TV 7, while dark picture, unclear images and lack of focus can often be seen on Moldova 1. For example, in the story on a strategy approved by the broadcasting coordinating council on 02.04.2007, an interview with the institution's chairman badly lacked focus; an item on seeding in Soroca county on 02.04.2007 had picture of very low quality; a report on the new president of Teleradio-Moldova Company taking over his duties on 11.04.2007 had interviews shot with strong backlight; a story about a policeman kidnapped in Corjova village by Transnistrian<sup>4</sup> militia, on 12.04.2007, had poorly framed interviews. Theoretically, the two channels should have picture of comparable quality, as both use technical means of comparable quality and age.

### *Form of news and form of presentation*

During the monitored period, Moldova 1 broadcast 139 news stories. More than one-third<sup>5</sup> were in the form of voice over (short stories read by the anchor and partially covered with picture, with no recorded interviews).

VOs are usually used when journalists cannot reach protagonists of a news story, but this is not always the case at Moldova 1. On 02.04.2007, an opposition leader held a press conference, demanding the President to resign. The event was covered by TV7, as well as Moldova 1. But the private station broadcast a

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<sup>4</sup> Transnistria is a small part of the Republic of Moldova, on the left bank of the Nistru River, uncontrolled by official authorities. In 1990 local leaders proclaimed the region's independence, but no country recognized it. In 1992 there was an armed conflict which lasted several months.

Since then, the parties have been negotiating a solution for the region.

<sup>5</sup> See Annex, chart "Form (Moldova 1)"

full length report (1'52"), while Moldova 1 had a short (37") voice over. In its story, the PBS did not even mention that the politician demanded the President's dismissal. The item starts with *"The leader of the Social Democracy Party, Dumitru Braghis, sent President Vladimir Voronin a letter. In the message, the economic situation of Moldova is described as catastrophic..."*, goes on with appreciations given by Dumitru Braghis to the Moldovan investment climate, and ends with *"Braghis also said that problems can be solved and Moldova still has a chance to join developed European countries"*. This represents a serious violation of journalistic ethics, if not a possible attempt to manipulate the audience. Essential facts are omitted, which in the end distorts the message. The form in which the event was covered made it appear less important and less interesting than other reports, which had recorded interviews and normal length.

Most of the news, 54% at Moldova 1 and 53% at TV7, represented journalistic items with recorded interviews and covered current events. But if the private station concentrated on press conferences and public meetings, the PBS targeted the President's, Prime Minister's and Parliament Speaker's activities (23 stories out of 73 items with recorded interviews directly covered meetings, speeches or public events with the participation of at least one of the three top officials). Examples:

- 02.04.2007 President introducing the new chairman of the Supreme Court (first news story)
- 02.04.2007 Prime Minister visiting a pig farm
- 03.04.2007 Prime Minister chairing a meeting on organizing an economic forum
- 11.04.2007 President meeting an American official from Millennium Challenge (first news, VO)
- 12.04.2007 President opening a tractor station in a village in Transnistria
- 12.04.2007 Prime Minister visiting a farm in the south of Moldova
- 12.04.2007 Parliament Speaker visiting the capital of Gagauzia<sup>6</sup> autonomy etc.)

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<sup>6</sup> Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri) is a territorial-administrative autonomy within the Republic of Moldova

Neither Moldova 1, nor TV7 had live reports. However, the PBS did use telephone reports in three cases, two of which (02.04.2007 and 20.04.2007) were about a political crisis in a neighboring country.

Also, there were events covered by TV7 that Moldova 1 completely ignored. On 11.04.2007, 24.04.2007 and 25.04.2007 the commercial station reported on a trial which involved the President. A Parliament Member took the President to court, accusing him of libel and calumny. On 11.04.2007 the court set the date for the trial, then on 24.04 and 25.04 there were two judicial sittings (also covered by other TV stations). In the end, the judge threw out the MP's complaint. Anyway, the trial put the President in a bad light, but the PBS viewers could not follow the case, as Moldova 1 broadcast nothing about it.

Long interviews are a serious deficiency at Moldova 1. Officials are allowed to talk for more than a minute on complicated and often strictly technical issues. For instance, on 11.04.2007, PBS reported on resuming exports of fruits and vegetables to Russia. The whole story, 1'43" long, consisted of an interview with the deputy minister of agriculture, who explained the procedure exporters will have to follow to deliver goods to Russia. This story had a limited target group - exporters, who anyway could not take notes from what the deputy minister was saying about the customs procedures.

### ***Sources of information and balance***

Government officials, NGOs, political parties, public institutions and independent experts serve as sources of information for both the commercial and public TVs. Each of them uses sources differently and concentrates on different categories. Moldova 1 gets information mostly from government officials (see above - 23 items out of 73 directly cover the top three officials). Most of the economic news stories at PBS have as the main source of information the Government - 13 out of 25 items (six out of 23 at TV7).

While TV 7 sometimes uses common people as sources of information, to address day-by-day problems - for example, a story broadcast on 03.04.2007 about a woman in conflict with a construction company, which wanted to buy and demolish her house - Moldova 1 has no stories about common people. The commercial station also made a Vox Pop concerning local elections and candidates for Chisinau Mayoralty. Moldova 1 had no Vox

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## **INDICATOR OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

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Pops. Also, the PBS did not use any independent experts to comment on official documents or decisions. NGOs and political parties had very little coverage in the national station's newscast.

There are different approaches to sources when the two stations are in identical conditions. On 20.04.2007, the President brought his economic initiatives to the Parliament. Both TV7 and Moldova 1 covered the event using eight and, respectively, nine interviews each. The distribution varied very much<sup>7</sup>:

### **TV7**

- 1) For initiatives (V. Voronin)
- 2) For (I. Dodon)
- 3) Against initiatives (I. Gutu)
- 4) Against (V. Cosarciuc)
- 5) Against (A. Taranu)
- 6) Against (Iu. Bolboceanu)
- 7) For (E. Ostapciuc)
- 8) For (Iu. Rosca)

### **Moldova 1**

- 1) For (V. Voronin)
- 2) For (I. Dodon)
- 3) Against (I. Gutu)
- 4) For (E. Ostapciuc)
- 5) For (Iu. Rosca)
- 6) Neutral (D. Diacov)
- 7) For (I. Dodon)
- 8) For (N. Bondarciuc)
- 9) For (V. Voronin)

(An ironic stand by the reporter could be added here, and the shot of a rude gesture by the President, who slightly pushed the Prime Minister)

Thus, TV 7 had four interviews which supported the President's initiatives and four sound bites against them. Moldova 1 put on air seven favorable interviews, only one against the proposals and one neutral.

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<sup>7</sup> **Vladimir Voronin**, President of the Republic of Moldova, leader of the Communists' Party

**Igor Dodon**, Minister of Economy and Commerce

**Ion Gutu**, member of the opposition party "Alianta Moldova Noastra"

**Valeriu Cosarciuc**, member of the opposition party "Alianta Moldova Noastra"

**Anatol Taranu**, unaffiliated deputy, member of the opposition National Liberal Party

**Iurie Bolboceanu**, unaffiliated deputy, member of the opposition Social Democracy party

**Eugenia Ostapciuc**, leader of the Communist Party fraction in the Parliament

**Iurie Rosca**, Deputy Chairman of the Parliament, leader of the Christian-Democratic People's Party

**Dumitru Diacov**, leader of the Democratic Party

**Nicolae Bondarciuc**, communist deputy

In addition, the commercial station allocated each person approximately equal time. At Moldova 1, "Against" and "Neutral" both had less than any "For" voice.

There are serious problems with balancing stories on crime. PBS had seven such items, TV7 had six. All stories were taken from the police and even most of the picture used for them was shot by policemen. None of the reports had a second source - neither suspects, nor their lawyers were quoted or interviewed by journalists in the reports (Moldova 1 and TV 7 covered in practically the same manner a story on a lawyer who tried to hire a professional killer to kill a former partner and was caught by police - 02.04.2007).

### *Story length*

The total amount of broadcast time is comparable at the two stations. Moldova 1 had about three hours and 20 minutes and TV7 two hours and 31 minutes. The length of news bulletins varied, for PBS from 23 to 31 minutes, and for the commercial station - from 16 to 22 minutes.

Items on different issues have almost the same share of time and same number in news bulletins. At Moldova 1, stories on politics, for example, represent 15% of the total number of stories and hold 14% of the total amount of time. The difference is bigger for items on economic issues - 18% of the total number and 21% of the total amount of time. This is partially explained by the length of individual stories.

Statistics<sup>8</sup> on item length on Moldova 1 show that the public broadcaster often fills its newscast with stories that last more than two minutes and sometimes there can be stories of five to six minutes. For example, a report on the President opening a tractor station in a village, on 12.04.2007, had exactly six minutes, news on the President presenting his economic initiatives in Parliament, on 20.04.2007, lasted for 6'26"; and a story about the Parliament Speaker meeting students on 23.04.2007 had almost four minutes. The commercial station also has longer stories, but six minutes, which, in fact, represents a quarter of a regular news bulletin, is an unbeatable record.

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<sup>8</sup> See Annex, chart "Length of item content (Moldova1)"

### ***Criticism and attitude***

In April 2007, Moldovan media reported largely on three economic initiatives, which covered the investment climate, launched by the Moldovan President. Moldova 1, during the monitoring period, made four news stories on this issue, which represents 15% of all economic items.

In two cases there were reports on reactions caused by the President's proposals. A story broadcast on 11.04.2007 was introduced by the anchor with the words *"There are already positive reactions from economic agents... "*. The report that followed contained two interviews, one with the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce - who is a public official - and another with a man presented as an economic agent. The picture used for that story suggested that the "economic agent" was a representative of a Russian owned factory in Chisinau. Both interviewees were supporting the President's initiatives. A similar report, on 12.04.2007, was introduced by the anchor with the words *"New opinions concerning the President's initiative appear..."*. The story had two interviews - one with a public official from Gagauzia autonomy, and another with a man presented as an economic agent from Gagauzia. The President's initiatives were also covered on 12.04.2007 in a short story on a forthcoming visit of an International Monetary Fund mission, and in a large report about Parliament discussions on them, on 20.04.2007 (see 2.3 Sources of information and balance). None of these items contained any critical comments (except a short sound bite in the news story broadcast on 20.04.2007) on economic proposals made by the head of state.

The commercial station broadcast two stories on the President's initiatives - one on 12.04.2007, when a president's advisor explained the initiatives - an unbalanced story, with only one interview from the official only, but treated neutrally. The second one, on 20.04.2007, was a more or less balanced story on discussions in Parliament (see 2.3 Sources of information and balance).

On 02.04.2007, Chisinau Mayorality announced that starting the next day, city streets would be washed every morning. Both TV7 and Moldova 1 reported on that statement. But it was only the commercial station that followed up the story the next day, with an item showing that the Mayorality failed to keep the promise.

Both monitored TV stations had stories in which journalists', or stations', attitudes were obvious. Half of the stories broadcast by Moldova 1 would be interpreted as positive coverage of positive events. Among these are: story on budget revenues (03.04.2007), Prime Minister's visit to a farm in the south of Moldova (12.04.2007), an item on a presentation of Moldovan wines in Sweden (20.04.2007), etc. A total of 41% is the share of stories with neutral attitude, although the content varies - positive, negative or neutral. In most cases, this is world affairs news. Negative attitude in negative context (5%) is the case of news on crimes.

### *Territorial distribution of news and topics*

Public broadcasters are supposed, by their nature, to cover as much territory as possible and a range of issues as wide as possible. As a matter of fact, this derives from the definition of public broadcasting station.

Although Moldova 1 covers with its signal the whole territory of the country, while the commercial station only covers the capital, territorial distribution of stories is practically equal - 88% RM, 4% Transnistria and 1% Gagauzia for TV7 and 76% RM, 1% Transnistria and 1% Gagauzia in the case of Moldova 1.

This means three news stories from the two regions on Moldova 1 - one from Gagauzia and two from Transnistria. In two cases, stories from the regions covered officials' visits - on 12.04.07 the President opened a tractor station on the left bank of the Nistru River, on 12.04.07 the Parliament Speaker met local deputies from Comrat, the capital of Gagauzia autonomy. Only one story, on the same day, about a Moldovan policeman kidnapped by Transnistrian militia, did not involve officials.

Beside news from the two major regions, Moldova 1 broadcast items concerning international affairs and, implicitly, other countries (31 items/22% of the total).

An absolute majority of the news stories covering the main territory - 97 out of 105 - were related to the capital of Moldova, Chisinau. Eight items concerned events from other towns. TV7 had three stories out of 104 on events from cities other than Chisinau. However, Moldova 1 has national coverage, while TV7 has only local coverage.

Commercial TV stations look for sensational news stories that would raise the audience interest and therefore increase their ratings and revenues from advertising. In this respect, the public broadcaster has less to worry about, as its budget is approved at the beginning of the year. Yet, the topic distribution at the two stations is almost similar<sup>9</sup>. Politics, economy and social news are predominant on Moldova 1 and TV7. Culture is less treated by both, while education, science, religion and ecology almost had no place on the public and commercial TV stations.

## Conclusions

### *Professional dimension.*

- Quality of picture and video editing on the public broadcaster has to be drastically improved.
- Moldova 1 could make use of a wider range of forms of news stories, including, but not limited to, live reports and Vox-pops.
- A diversification of sources of information, and first of all inclusion of common people in the list of sources, is of crucial importance for the PBS.
- Many stories broadcast by Moldova 1 lack balance - an issue that may raise concerns regarding the station's credibility.
- An obvious case of inaccurate information (02.04.2007 the opposition leader's letter to the President) leaves room for uncertainty and may determine one to fear that there could be other similar cases. Because of that, accuracy of information should be strictly monitored.

### *Social dimension*

- Moldova 1 should move the focus from public officials to common people. Events have to be approached from the point of view of those watching the newscast and stories ought to start with the effects that events, phenomena or decisions might have on people's lives.

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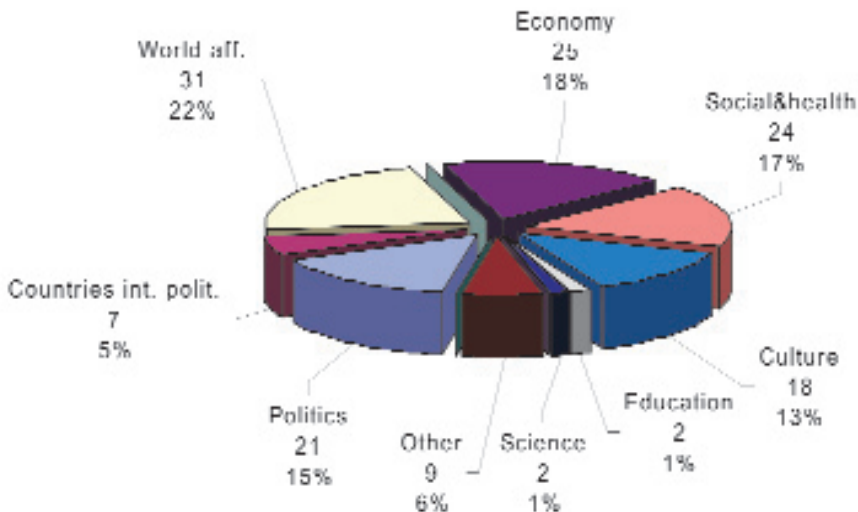
<sup>9</sup> See Annex, chart "Topic (Moldova 1)"

- The public broadcaster has to report more on events happening outside the capital - including Gagauzia, Transnistria and other regions.
- Critique is an essential part of the decision-making process and implementing decisions - opposition, independent experts and NGOs have a lot to say and should have their place in the national station's newscast.
- Foreign affairs news should hold less space (now 22% of the total number of items and 12% of the total time).

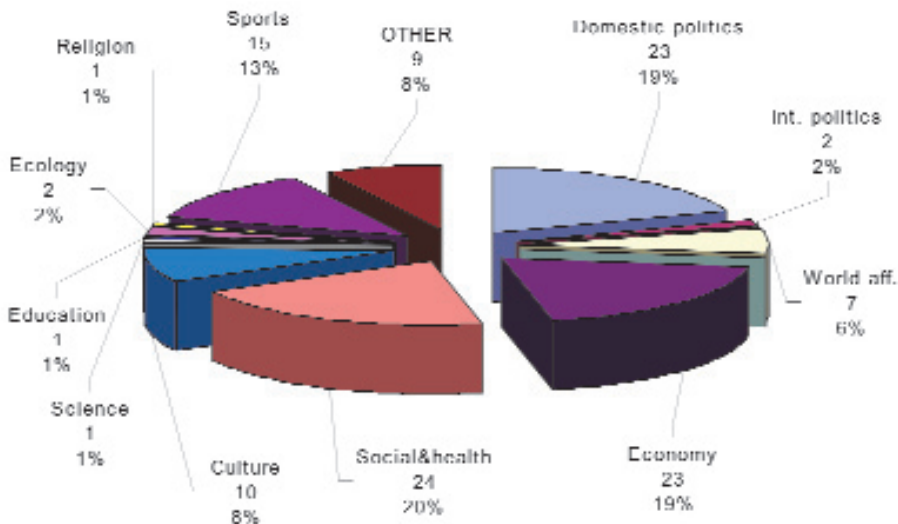
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**Statistics**

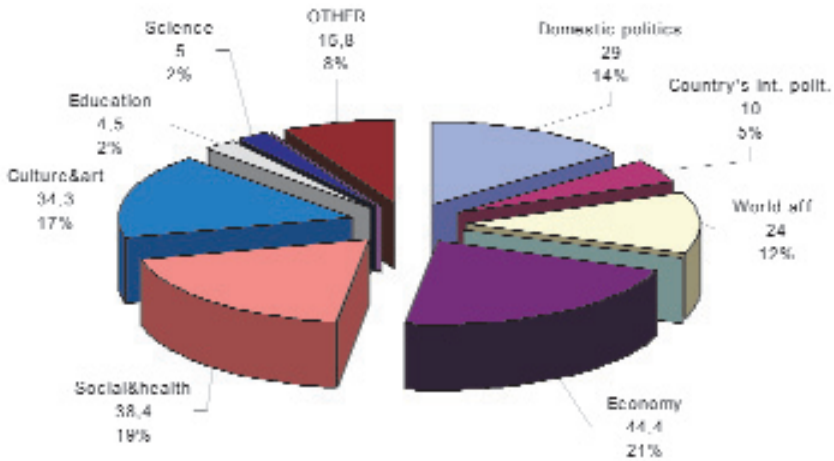
**MOLDOVA 1 - TOPIC**  
**(War crimes, ecology, religion, youth, sports - 0/0%)**



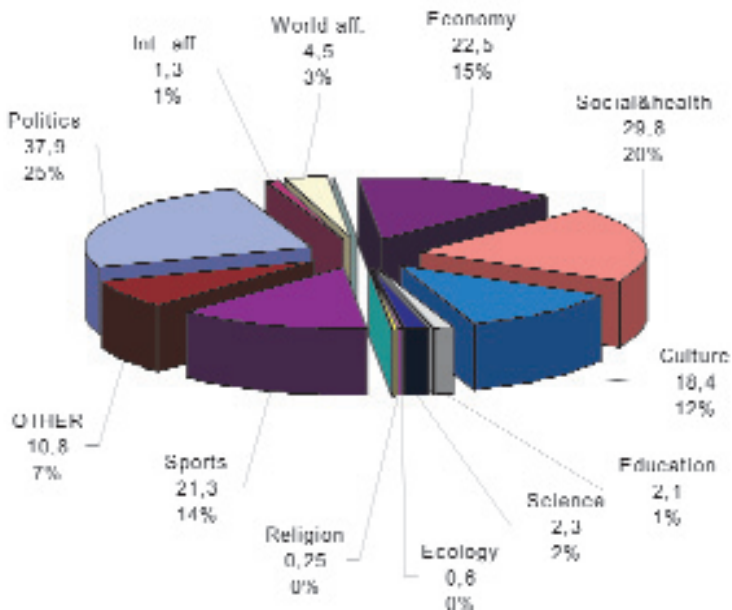
**TV7 - TOPIC**  
**(War crimes, youth & children - 0/0%)**



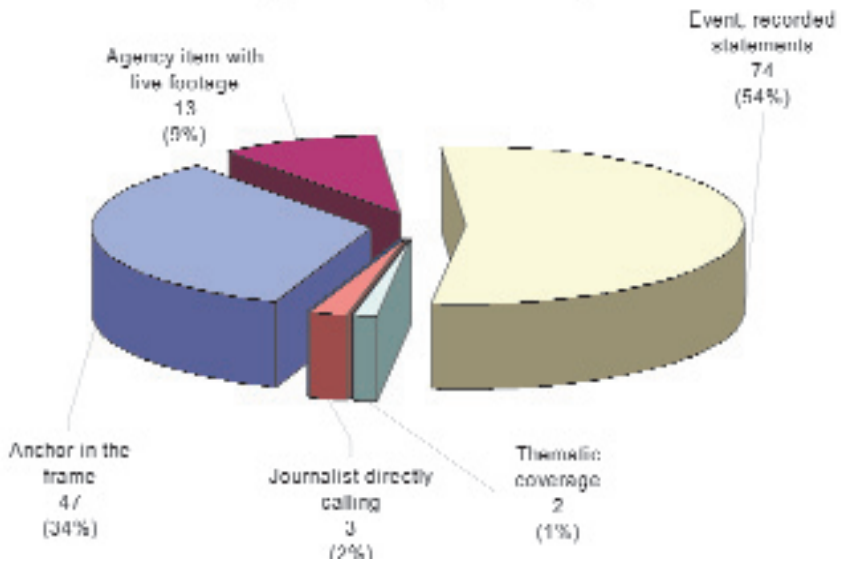
**MOLDOVA 1 - LENGHT OF ITEM CONTENT**  
 (War crimes, ecology, religion, youth, sports - 0/0%)



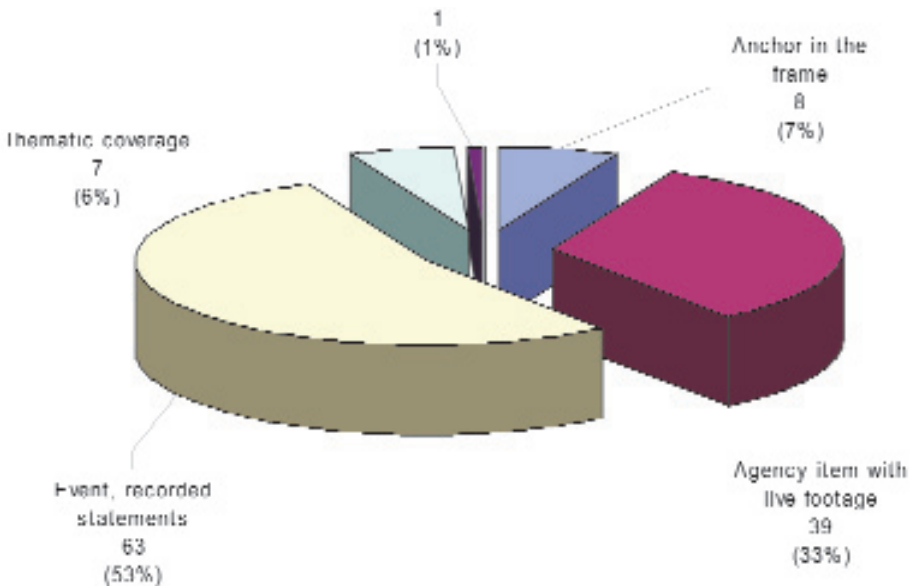
**MOLDOVA 1 - LENGHT OF ITEM CONTENT**



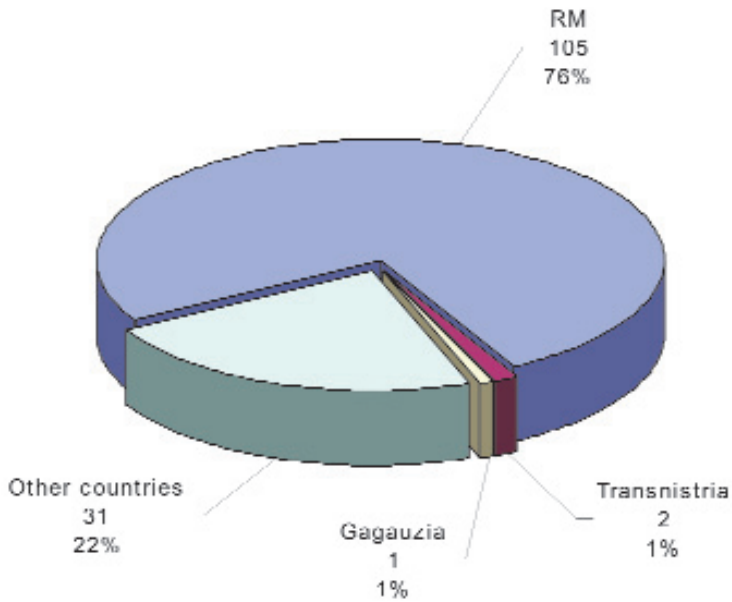
**MOLDOVA 1 - FORM  
(Poll/interview, other - 0/0%)**



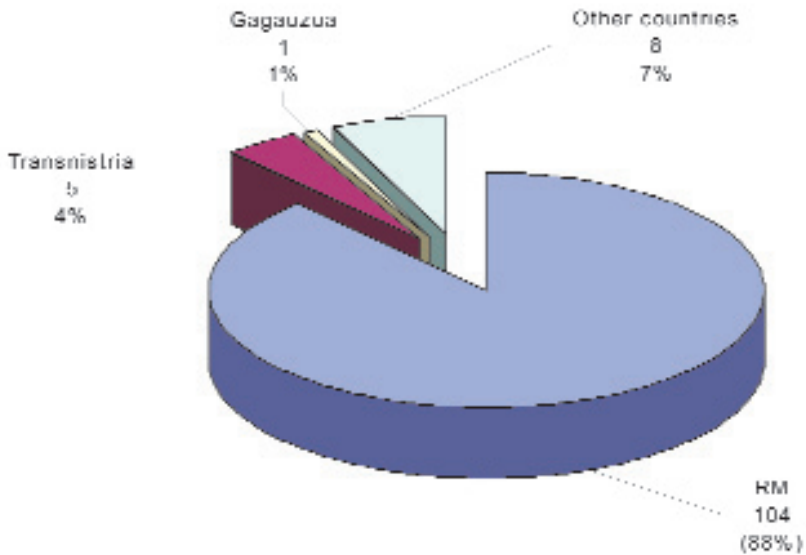
**TV7 - FORM OF NEWS ITEMS**



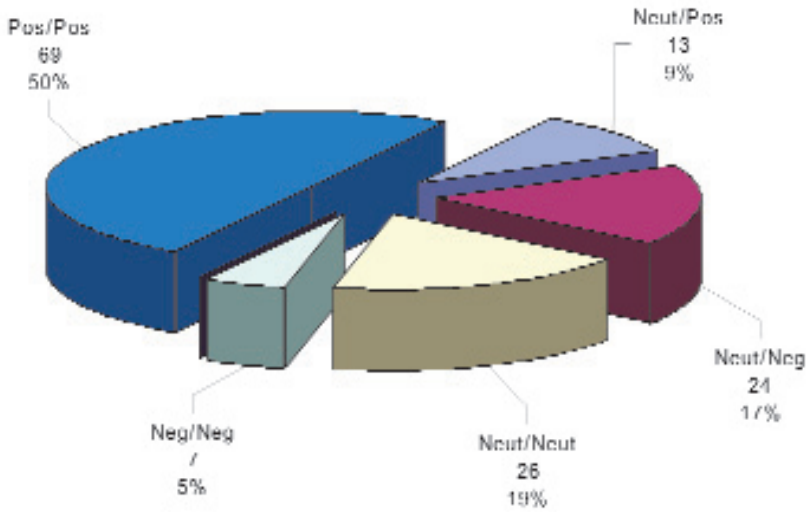
### MOLDOVA 1 - TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION



### TV7 - TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION



**Top Channel - EVALUATION OF CONTENT  
- ORIENTATION TO THE SUBJECT  
(Neg/Pos, Pos/Neg - 0/0%)**



**TV7- EVALUATION OF CONTENT  
- ORIENTATION TO THE SUBJECT**

