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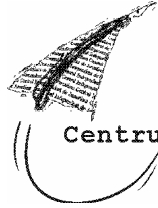


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Academy for Educational Development

Strengthening Civil Society Monitoring Capacity in Moldova



Centrul Independent de Jurnalism

Assessing Media Coverage of Corruption

Media monitoring report
February 2008

The Strengthening Civil Society Monitoring Capacity in Moldova (SCSMC) program is funded by the U.S. Government through the Millennium Challenge Corporation and is managed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). SCSMC is implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), an American organization, with technical support from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX).

GENERAL OVERVIEW

This report is a summary¹ of the results of monitoring 15 public and private print and broadcast media outlets.² It assesses the manner in which the Moldovan media cover corruption-related issues and the mismanagement of public funds as well as anti-corruption steps undertaken by government, political and non-government entities. All articles referring to corruption in general, to corrupt practices, to allegations of corruption made by various parties, to the mismanagement of public funds and to anti-corruption programs were studied.

PRINT MEDIA

In February 2008, the 8 newspapers monitored published 107 reports on corruption and the mismanagement of public funds which accounted for a 73% increase compared with the previous month. Most of the stories were in *Timpul de Dimineață* (28), followed by *Ziarul de Gardă* and *Moldova Suverana* (19 each), and *Jurnal de Chișinău* (18) (see Figure 1). The total space allotted to reports on corruption was 25,243 cm². However, taking into account the ratio of space allotted to frequency of publication, the most space on corruption-related issues was allotted by *Ziarul de Gardă* (1,556 cm² per issue), followed by *Jurnal de Chișinău* (560 cm²), *Timpul de Dimineață* (301 cm²) and SP (298 cm² per issue).

The results of the print media monitoring in February 2008 are the following:

- About half of the relevant articles published in the newspapers monitored contained allegations of corruption about various people, especially about policemen and politicians (46% compared to 36% registered in January 2008). Cases of individual corruption were tackled in only 9% of the articles whereas stories on the mismanagement of public funds were tackled in 12% of the total number of 107 articles analyzed. Anti-corruption strategies and programs accounted for 14% of the total number of relevant stories. The rest referred to corruption in general (see Figure 2).
- Relevant stories referred most often to the central public administration (CPA), mainly in the context of corruption in general or of statements/allegations of corruption. Representatives of political parties (RPP) were often featured prominently in statements/allegations of corruption, and non-government organizations (NGOs) were mentioned, in most cases, in news reports on anti-corruption programs (see Figure 3).
- Most of the articles (58 or 54%) referred directly to corruption, 30 stories (28%) made reference to corruption in the context of other subjects, whereas 18 stories (17%) just mentioned it among other topics. Most of the primary emphasis stories came out in *Jurnal de Chișinău* (15 of the 18 relevant articles), *Ziarul de Gardă* (13 of 19), *Timpul de Dimineață* (15 of 28), and in SP (5 of 7). *Nezavisimaia Moldova* published only one primary emphasis story of its total of 9 reports.
- Corruption-related issues and the mismanagement of public funds were not prominently featured in the publications monitored. Only 25 print articles (about 23%) were positioned on the front page, most of them (46 print articles or about 43%) were positioned on the second or third page. *Ziarul de Gardă* and *Moldova Suverană* most often published relevant stories on their front pages (7 of 19 each). As well as in the previous monitoring period, in the case of *Moldova Suverană* the stories had a secondary emphasis and usually tackled corruption indirectly.
- Print media preferred to tackle corruption in news stories that accounted for 63% of the total number of news articles. Also, the 8 newspapers published 14 editorials/opinion pieces

¹ A detailed analysis of media monitoring results will be presented in quarterly reports broadcast regularly during 2008.

² Details on project objectives, media selection criteria and categories monitored can be found in the attached annex.

(13%), 11 interviews (10.5%), and 10 analytical reports (9% of the total of 107 stories analyzed). In February, two investigative reports came out in print media: one in *Timpul de Dimineață* and the second one in *Ziarul de Gardă*. There were also two vox pops, or 'man on the street' surveys, published.

- In February 2008 two of the publications monitored, *Moldova Suverană* and *Jurnal de Chișinău*, had to apologize for allegations of corruption by issuing corrections to some poorly documented analytical reports published in previous issues.
- In approximately 77% of the 78 relevant news articles, and analytical and investigative reports, facts were described in a neutral way; the author's personal opinion was not obvious. Eighteen stories (23%) also expressed the author's personal attitude or opinion toward the events/characters in addition to a description of the facts. Usually, news articles on controversies were presented in an unbalanced manner (28 of 49). In the rest of the cases both parties were quoted (21 news articles), however the parties did not always get equal space to express their opinion.
- Most of the publications monitored did not quote many and varied sources. On average, they cited 1.9 sources per article. The largest number of sources was quoted in *Ziarul de Gardă* (3.1), *Jurnal de Chișinău* (2.1), and *Timpul de Dimineață* (2.0), whereas the smallest number was in *Novoe Vremea*, *Vesti Gagauzii*, and *SP* (one source per article each).
- Anti-corruption strategies and programs were presented rarely. Such articles, in most cases, reported on various NGO activities held with the support of international institutions. In several instances, print media made reference to "Assets on Display" campaign started by the Independent Press Association and the Anti-Corruption Alliance which encouraged high-level officials and civil servants to declare their income and assets.

Most relevant stories that covered **cases of individual corruption** reported on issues such as:

- The new lawsuit filed against Nicolae Andronic, former prime vice-prime minister ("Nicolae Andronic Detained by Police" *Jurnal de Chișinău* Feb 12, p.2; "Popular Republican Party Leader will Notify the CEHR" *Timpul de Dimineață* Feb 14, p.3)
- The lawsuit filed by the General Prosecutor's Office against the mayor of Chisinau for allegedly hiring a relative as a driver at the City Hall ("The City Mayor Signed a Fake Employment Order" *Moldova Suverană* Feb 21, p.1)
- The dismissal of the Environment Minister for misuse of power and involvement in embezzlement of public funds ("Ex-Minister Mihailescu Knows More..." *Timpul de Dimineață* Feb 28, p.1. This news item quotes anonymous sources alleging that the Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev is involved in this case of embezzlement of public funds.)

Anti-corruption programs, namely steps undertaken by the government and by local and international organizations in order to deter corruption, were presented in news reports and articles on:

- The change of legislation on the criminal responsibility of judges ("The Degree of Independence of the Judges Will Decrease" *Timpul de Dimineață* Feb 14, p.3; "The Parliament Passed Changes to the Law on the Judges' Status" *Moldova Suverană* Feb 22, p.3; "The Law That Will Limit the Independence of Judges" *Jurnal de Chișinău* Feb 22, p.2)
- The "Assets on Display" campaign initiated by the Independent Press Association and the Anti-Corruption Alliance that encouraged high-level officials and civil servants to declare their income and assets ("The Assets of Civil Servants on Display" *Jurnal de Chișinău* Feb 5, p.2; "Assets on Display" *Ziarul de Gardă* Feb 7, p.3; "Assets on Display and Out of

Display” *Timpul de Dimineață* Feb 19, p.3; “Assets Are on Display Only in 2007” *Jurnal de Chișinău* Feb 26, p.3)

- Assessing media coverage of corruption (“SP – Among the Best to Fight Corruption” *SP* Feb 6, p.4; “IJC Monitors Corruption” *Timpul de Dimineață* Feb 8, p.4; “Ziarul de Gardă – Tens of Square Meters for Combating Corruption” *Ziarul de Gardă* Feb 7, p. 1)
- In February 2008, *Jurnal de Jurnal de Chișinău* and *SP* added the second issue of the anti-corruption supplement “Obiectiv” (4 pages, A3) published by the Independent Press Association which focuses entirely on aspects of combating corruption

The most representative stories on the **mismanagement of public funds** referred to:

- The infringements made by the Government when purchasing 15 “Skoda” cars (follow-up on the journalistic investigation “Skoda Deal. Luxury in the Country Stricken by Poverty. Episode III” *Timpul de Dimineață* Feb 8, p.8)
- The mismanagement of public funds by the Supreme Court of Justice (“Financial Fraud at the Supreme Court of Justice” *Jurnal de Chișinău* Feb 1, p.5)
- And in two instances, *Moldova Suverană* reported on the alleged misuse and embezzlement of public funds by the former leadership of “Cereal Products Enterprise” JS company (“Questionable Deals with Public Funds. Private Companies Take Advantage of the Speculative Prices on Grains from the State Reserve” Feb 6, p.2 and “The State Takes Over Debts Amounting to Tens of Millions of Lei of Some Bankrupt Enterprises” Feb 13, p.2). Shortly after though, the newspaper retracted the statements made in these articles (“The Right to Reply. Investigation with Inaccurate Findings” Feb 15, p.2; “Refutation” Feb 22, p.2).

Statements/ allegations of corruption were the focus of a number of articles published in February 2008, the most relevant ones were those accusing policemen and politicians of corruption:

- Many articles presented alleged cases of corruption involving policemen (“Caught Red-Handed with Policemen at Large” *Ziarul de Gardă* Feb 14, p.3; “Give a Tip to the Boys” *Jurnal de Chișinău* Feb 22, p.8; “Truculent Policemen are Promoted” *Jurnal de Chișinău* Feb 29, p.3). Also, corruption in the police was the subject of a journalistic investigation (“Corruption in the Form of Financial Aid at the General Police Station” *Ziarul de Gardă* Feb 7, p.3) in which the author pointed to the fact that in order to obtain a license from the police, businesses had to pay bribes under the name of “voluntary financial aid.”
- *Moldova Suverană* allotted a big share of its editorial space to some statements of corruption about deputies and opposition party leaders (“Patriotic” Clan or Criminal Groups?” Feb 13, p.3; “Party Life: Current Affairs. Vlad Filat Is Not Adopted by SRI. And That Is Worse” Feb 20, p.3) Print media covered, to a large extent, mutual charges brought by the Christian Democratic Popular Party and the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (“Voting Machine” Ignored All Opposition’s Proposals” *Timpul de Dimineață* Feb 29, p.2; “Christian Democratic Popular Party Cannot Breathe Because of the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova” *Jurnal de Chișinău* Feb 29, p.2).

Figure 1. Number of Relevant Articles Produced by Print Media Monitored in February 2008

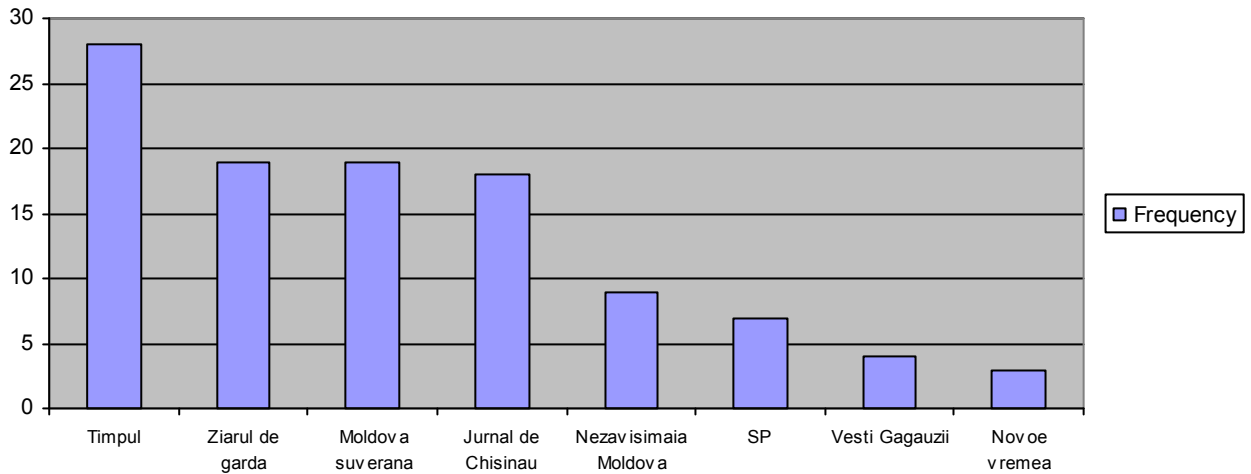


Figure 2. Number of Articles by Topic in the Print Media Monitored in February 2008

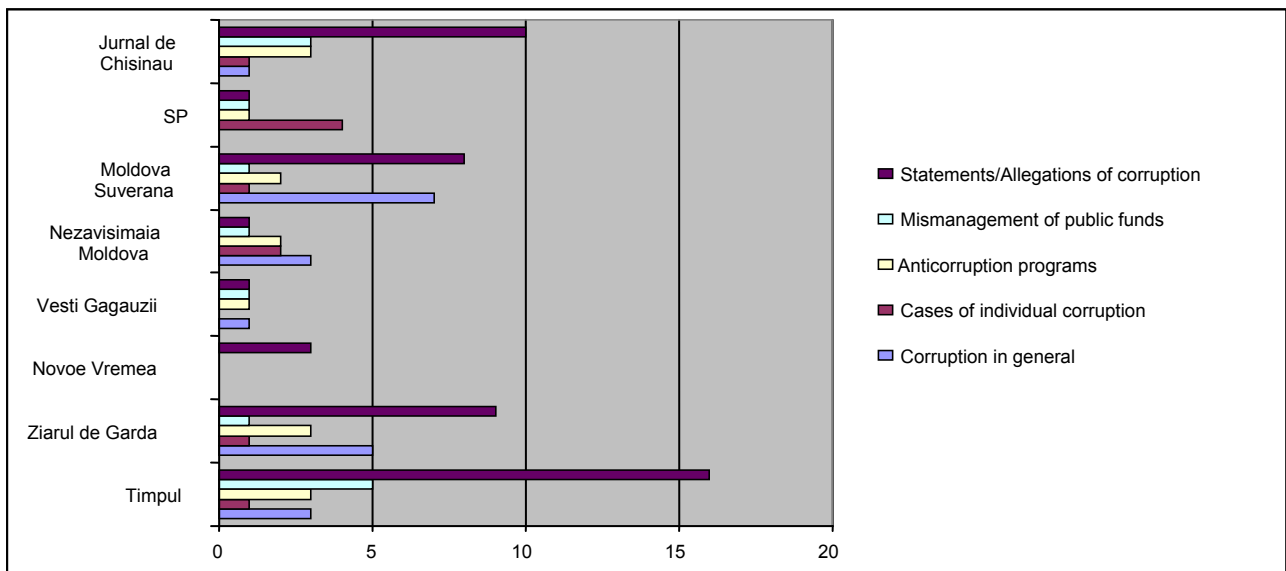
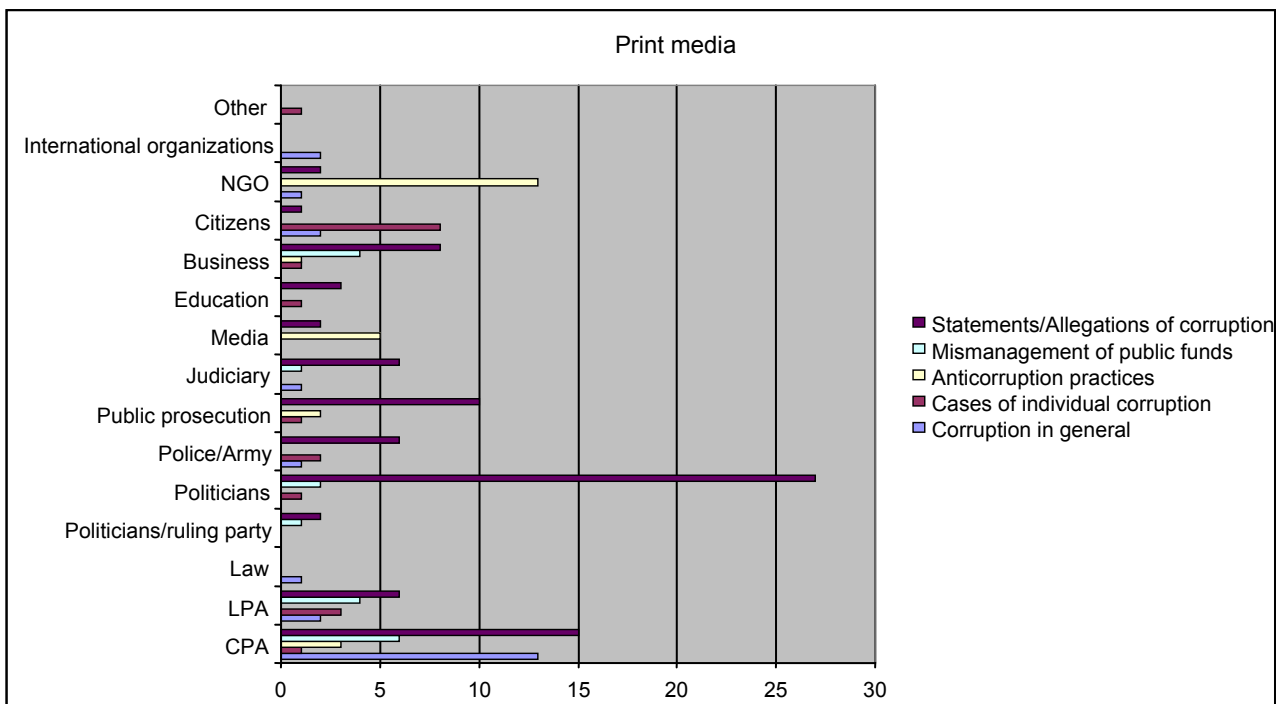


Figure 3. Number of Subjects Covered by Print Media Monitored in February 2008



BROADCAST MEDIA

In February 2008, all radio and TV stations monitored broadcast a total of 228 relevant news reports and programs which represented a 77% increase compared with the previous monitoring period of January 2008. The most were aired by Moldova 1 (45), as well as by other media outlets monitored that broadcast between 31 and 33 stories each (see Figure 4). In duration of broadcast, Pro TV (2 hours 53 min), Vocea Basarabiei (2 hours 40 min), and Euro TV (2 hours 25 min) ranked first.

The results of monitoring broadcast media in February are the following:

- The number of stories containing statements/allegations of corruption and cases of individual corruption increased, accounting for 26% and 19% of stories, respectively. At the same time, the number of stories referring to anti-corruption programs, corruption in general, and the mismanagement of public funds decreased, accounting for 22%, 17%, and 16% of stories respectively (see Figure 5).
- Relevant broadcasts referred most often to CPA which were in most cases mentioned in the context of anti-corruption programs, and to LPA in the context of the mismanagement of public funds. Also, the broadcasts analyzed most often had NGOs and international organizations as their subjects, which were mainly referred to in the context of anti-corruption programs (see Figure 6).
- Corruption-related issues were not prominently featured on the radio and TV stations monitored. Of the total number of 201 news stories, only 37 (about 18%) started the newscasts. Antena C started its newscasts with a news items concerning corruption the most often (11 of 32), though the majority of the stations (82%) mentioned corruption among other issues. Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova started their newscasts with corruption-related news items 6 times each, though half of them referred to corruption in the context of other events or among other issues.
- The number of broadcasts that directly referred to subjects monitored increased and accounted for 56% from the total number of the stories. The rest put a secondary emphasis on corruption (26%) or only mentioned it (18%). The largest number of stories with the primary emphasis on monitored subjects were broadcast on Euro TV (24 of 30), Pro TV (22 of 28), and Antena C (19 of 32).
- Current affairs programs accounted for 12% of the stories on corruption, while 88% were news items. Also, two vox pops on corruption came out in February for the first time. The greatest number of current affairs programs that discussed or mentioned corruption or the mismanagement of public funds were broadcast by Moldova 1 (10) and Vocea Basarabiei (9). Antena C and Radio Moldova had no programs on relevant issues.
- Most of the news reports (89%) broadcast in February separated facts from opinions, though 49% of the 108 news stories on controversies were unbalanced and presented the position of only one party to the conflict. In 56 news stories both parties were presented, though in only 30% of them the parties received equal time to express their opinions.
- The stations monitored got their information from various sources with an average number of 2.28 sources per story. The most sources were quoted by Pro TV (3.06 per broadcast), Euro TV (2.87 per broadcast), Radio Moldova (2.39), and Moldova 1 (2.26).
- On the average, in about 90% of the broadcasts, the radio and TV stations monitored limited themselves to covering either corruption cases announced by law-enforcement bodies, or statements/allegations of corruption that had not been confirmed by relevant bodies and had not been investigated additionally by journalists.

- Most stories broadcast by the public stations Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova referred to anti-corruption programs (9 and 13 respectively). Radio Moldova and Moldova 1 aired many stories on corruption in general (9 of 28 on Radio Moldova, and 11 of 45 on Moldova 1). However, both Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova aired the greatest number of stories with a secondary emphasis on corruption or that only mentioned corruption (43% each). Of the sources quoted by Moldova 1, 29% came from CPA; this indicator was 27% for Radio Moldova. Moldova 1 presented CPA in a positive, negative, and neutral way, whereas Radio Moldova presented CPA in only a positive and neutral light.

The issue that was covered most by broadcast media outlets in connection with the **mismanagement of public funds** referred to the lawsuit filed against the Chişinău Municipal Council (CMC) on charges of illegal hiring of CMC president. The Ministry of Local Public Administration, the plaintiff in this case, stated that the position of the CMC president was not provided for by the regulations and that public funds, which had not been foreseen in the budget, were used to financially support the activity of the Mihai Ghimpu's office. This subject was spotlighted by several of the media outlets monitored that reviewed the details every time they received new information regarding this case (see Pro TV Feb 18; Antena C Feb 22; Vocea Basarabiei Feb 18 and Feb 21).

A widely covered issue in the context of **anti-corruption programs** referred to the "Assets on Display" campaign initiated by the Independent Press Association (IPA) and the Anti-Corruption Alliance. As part of this campaign, state officials were encouraged to declare their income and assets and this information was published in the supplement "Obiectiv" issued by the IPA. Reports on various public officials' property were broadcast by Moldova 1 on Feb 15, Antena C on Feb 16, Pro TV on Feb 9, 17, and 23, and Vocea Basarabiei on Feb 8, 15, and 28.

Stories on **cases of individual corruption** included the arrest of a person on charges of taking a bribe of USD1,500 which, according to the suspect, had to be handed over to someone in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Euro TV on Feb 5; Moldova 1 on Feb 5). Another story referred to the arrest of a head of a department in the Ministry of Justice while in the act of taking a 200 euro bribe, according to law-enforcement bodies, in order to relieve someone of his/her community service. This case was covered by Euro TV on Feb 5, NIT on Feb 5, and Moldova 1 on Feb 5.

Most of the media outlets monitored broadcast the news story on **the allegations of corruption** brought against the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (LDPM) by members of the Christian Democratic Popular Party (CDPP) and the Democratic Party (DP) who declared that LDPM leader was bribing members of other parties in order to attract them to join his party. The CDPP filed a request with the law-enforcement bodies to check funding sources of the LDPM (see Euro TV on Feb 25 and 29; Pro TV on Feb 28 and 29; Moldova 1 on Feb 28; Vocea Basarabiei on Feb 29 and 29; NIT on Feb 29).

The allegations of corruption brought against the mayor of Chişinău by the General Prosecutor's Office, according to which the mayor illegally hired a driver at the City Hall, were also covered widely by broadcast media (Euro TV on Feb 19 and 28; Pro TV on Feb 19; Antena C on Feb 19; NIT on Feb 19).

It is worth mentioning that in February, for the first time since the beginning of the monitoring period, four programs that focused entirely on relevant issues were broadcast by the media outlets monitored, with the following results:

- The program "In profunzime/ In Depth" aired on Pro TV, which had the CMC president Mihai Ghimpu as invitee, and focused on the legality of his appointment and the associated budget expenses (Pro TV on Feb 18).
- On February 8, the program "Epicentru/ Epicenter," broadcast by Euro TV, tackled the issue of corruption in the education system in Moldova.

- The public broadcaster Moldova 1 dedicated its program “Contrapunct/ Counterpoint” on February 21 to changes in the legislation on criminal responsibility of judges.
- On February 24 Vocea Basarabiei broadcast the program “Dezbateri in aer liber/ Debates in Open Air” that focused on corruption and its scope in Moldova.

Figure 4. Number of Relevant Stories Broadcast by Radio and TV in February 2008

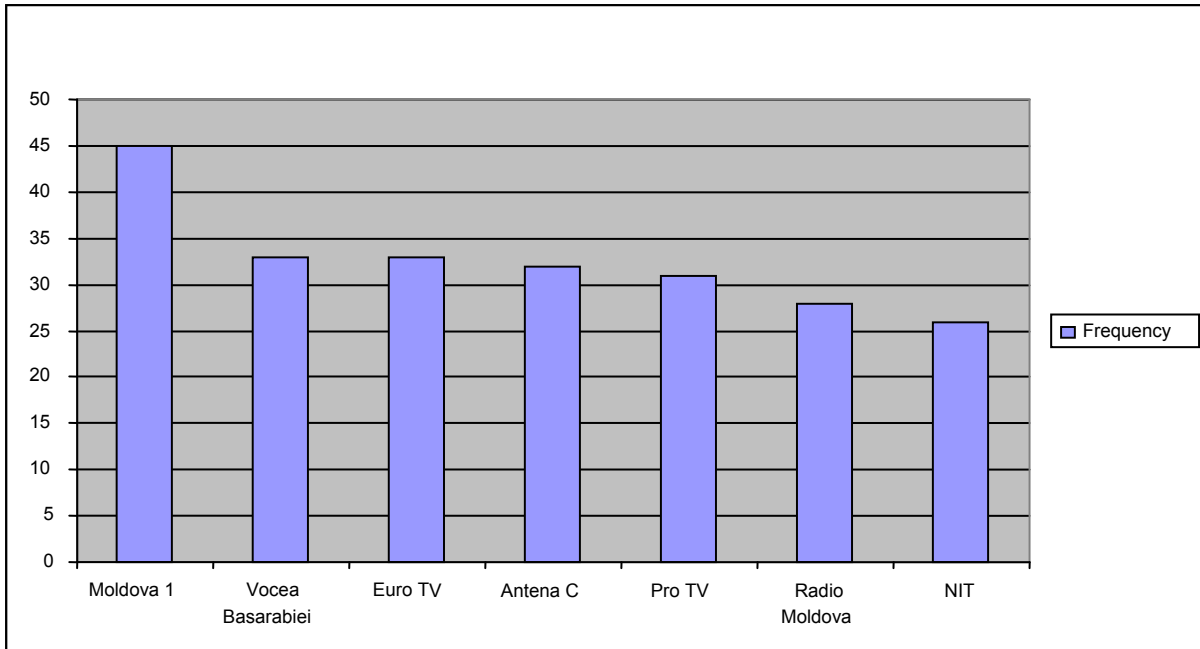


Figure 5. Number of Reports by Topic in the Broadcast Media Monitored in February 2008

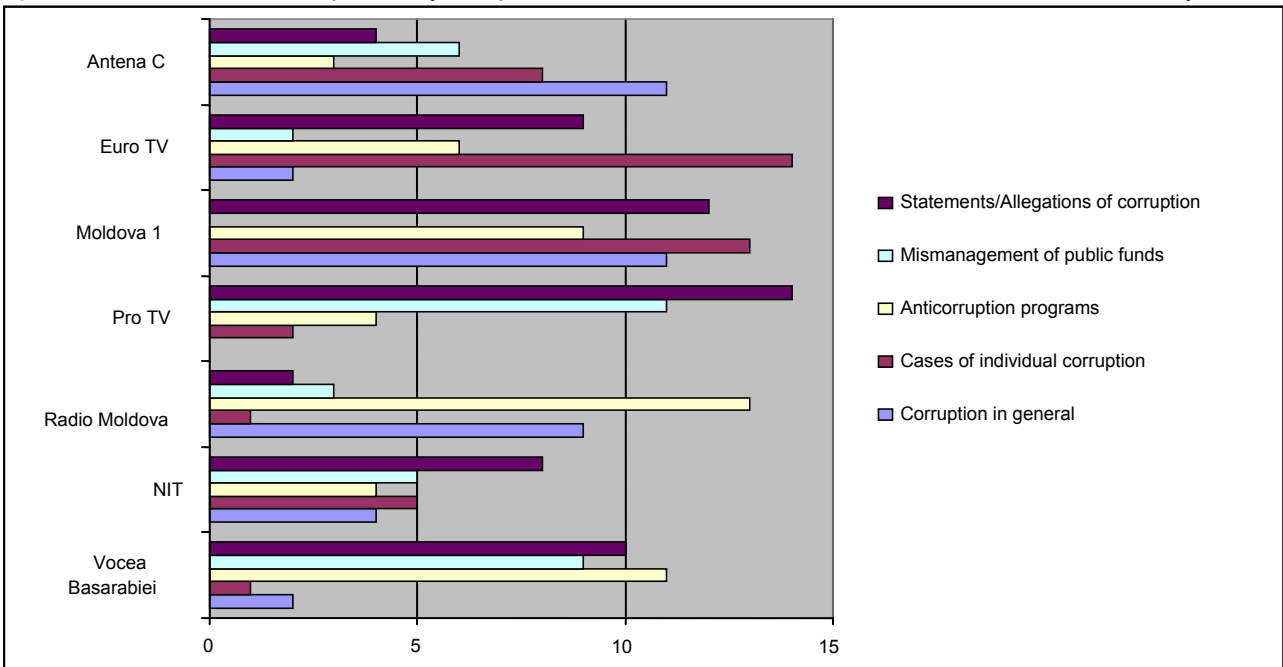
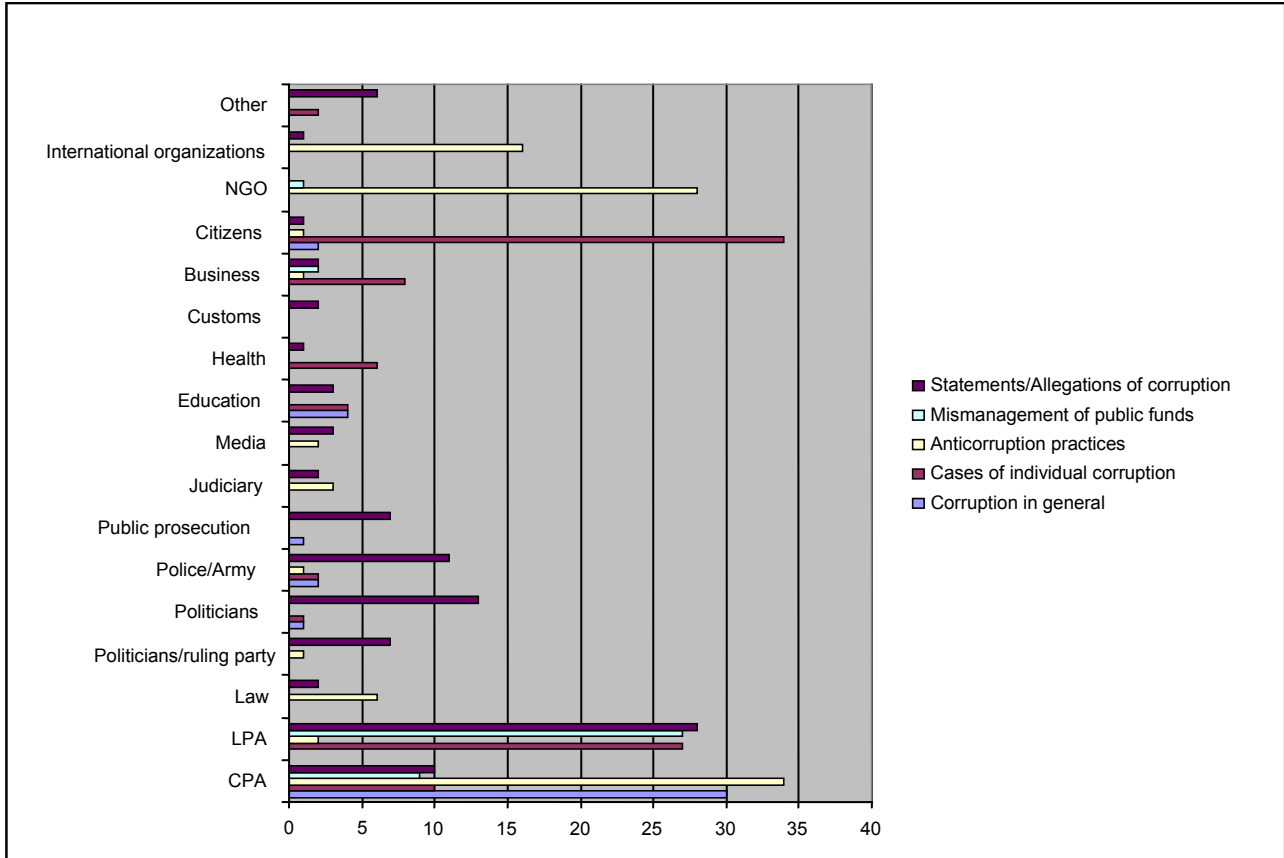


Figure 6: Number of Subjects Covered by Broadcast Media Monitored in February 2008



This report was made with funds provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Associate Award No. 121-A-00-07-00707 under Leader Award AEP -A-00-01-0004-00 implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) with technical support from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX). The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the USAID, AED or IREX