

# RADIOGRAPHY

## OF ATTACKS AGAINST NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

SEPTEMBER 2016 – DECEMBER 2017

This document provides information on the worsening operational environment of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Moldova, where increasingly more independent CSOs become the target of numerous mudslinging and defamation actions.

The main purpose of the document is to draw attention to the danger of orchestrated attacks on CSOs, and to determine public authorities, private organizations, and individuals to stop supporting those attacks and let CSOs operate freely. This document also aims at enabling CSOs to design timely response to attacks against them.

The term “attacks” as used in this document refers particularly to media articles or public interventions that present the nonprofit sector as promoting the interests of foreign countries or serving the interests of political parties. Some of these attacks take the form of direct administrative crackdown on CSOs by driving them out of policy-making process or by launching legislative initiatives aimed at deteriorating the CSOs' working environment.

Smearing and defamation campaigns are usually launched by media groups, bloggers, political party representatives, and other opinion-makers affiliated to ruling parties. Occasionally, these campaigns are even launched by representatives of particular CSOs. As a rule, the speeches of high-ranking officials or politicians inspire the attacks. Their purpose seems to be deterring the civil society sector from actively engaging in public affairs or to be outspoken against legislative initiatives that endanger democracy. Orchestrated attacks are indicative of a real danger for an adequate functioning of Moldovan CSOs and a threat to democracy.

This document draws on the information from online and social media, as well as based on their quantitative and qualitative analysis. The monitoring does not present itself to be exhaustive. Attacks are presented in chronological order starting with September 2016. Some attacks are grouped in single blocks, such as those targeted against CSOs that opposed the initiative to change the electoral system, or the attempted restriction of foreign funding for CSOs in the draft law on non-commercial organizations.

Signatory organizations will regularly update the information about the attacks. If you know a case that can be qualified as an attack on CSOs, you can report it to [ilie.chirtoaca@crjm.org](mailto:ilie.chirtoaca@crjm.org) so it can be included in the next monitoring report.

The idea of documenting and monitoring attacks comes from [Hungary](#), where the not-for-profit sector has experienced similar challenges for several years. The signatory organizations that prepared and released the document, including the initial data collection, are presented at the end of the document.

**The signatory organizations are presented at the end of the document. The list of signatories remains open.**

<b>2016</b>	
<b>15 September 2016</b>	<p>On 15 September 2016, 30 NGOs released a <a href="#">joint statement</a> expressing their disagreement with the cooperation of the <b>Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family (MLSPF)</b> with <b>Vlad PLAHOTNIUC's Edelweiss Foundation</b> and the public service “Child's Hotline” under the “Protected Families” campaign. The statement explained that the public service “Child's Hotline” financed from the state budget, was promoted in the campaign “Protected Families” as a private service of the above foundation, though its real owner and administrator was the MLSPF. The NGOs were concerned that a public service was associated with a foundation involved in politics and presidential election campaign.</p> <p>The MLSPF <a href="#">declared</a> that the “Child's Hotline” was a public service and any organization could promote it, provided they submitted a preliminary request to the Ministry. The Ministry added that they provided neither logistical, nor financial support to the “Protected Families” campaign, which was financed exclusively from the funds of Edelweiss Foundation. The Ministry <a href="#">expressed their regret</a> that the NGOs, <i>“instead of joining their efforts to improve the welfare of children and families of this country, choose to run sterile campaigns with political connotations.”</i> Later, this sentence <a href="#">disappeared</a> from MLSPF's website.</p>
<b>15 September 2016</b>	<p>After 30 NGOs published the <a href="#">joint statement</a> on their disagreement with mentioning a public service in Edelweiss Foundation's campaign (see above), <b>the blogger Eugen LUCHIANIUC</b> published an article titled <a href="#">“How NGOs (Including the Green Ones) Do PR for Plahotniuc.”</a> He wrote that the NGOs signed the statement for fear <i>“that Plahotniuc and other local foundations would not give them money for promotion activities, while a successful campaign could lead to a dramatic cut in the funds coming from abroad”</i>.</p>
<b>2017</b>	
<b>February – March 2017</b>  <b>The attempt to restrict NGOs' political activities in the National Integrity and Anti-corruption Strategy for 2017 – 2020</b>	<p>In February 2017, at the suggestion of some NGOs, the <b>National Anti-corruption Center (NAC)</b> completed the draft of the National Integrity and Anti-corruption Strategy for the years 2017 – 2020 (NIAS), which included Pillar VIII “Civil Society and Media.” The pillar's problem description contained tendentious statements about civil society, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>“a low level of trust in nongovernmental organizations (15%) and in the media (31%)”</i>. Though the level of trust is not high, it was still higher than the <a href="#">9.2%</a> of trust in the government in November 2016. Anyway, it is not clear how this relates to the NIAS;</li> <li>- <i>“the financial reliance of nongovernmental organizations on foreign funds to an extent of 85%, which influences their priorities”</i>, which is an unjustified and tendentious conclusion about how priorities are chosen, without any underlying analysis;</li> <li>- <i>“most nongovernmental organizations do not comply with ethics and integrity rules”</i> and there are <i>“allegations of political partisanship”</i>, without making any reference to an analysis supporting such a conclusion or to a concrete case, thus going into a dangerous generalization, without concrete examples and situations.</li> </ul> <p>The solutions included the prohibition of political membership and affiliation for the members of nongovernmental organizations' administration boards, which is a violation of European and international standards related to the freedom of association, and the</p>

	<p>prohibition of activities of political character for the beneficiaries of percentage mechanism and other public / state funding (with no definition of “activities of political character”, which could actually involve public policy activities, for instance the involvement in the development and commenting of draft legislation).</p> <p>After comments from several civil society organizations (CSOs), the NAC excluded the description from Pillar VIII of NIAS, but retained its title. The <a href="#">government</a> approved the draft proposed by the NAC on 1 March 2017, and the <a href="#">Parliament</a> adopted it on 30 March 2017. The Parliament kept the title of Pillar VIII, without a description of the situation and actions, despite the <a href="#">recommendations of CSOs</a> to exclude the title.</p>
<b>9 February 2017</b>	<p>During a meeting of the working group supervising the implementation of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy (JSRS), <b>Dorel MUSTEAȚĂ, member of the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM)</b>, stated publicly that “they” (SCM) were collecting data about the Legal Resources Center of Moldova (LRCM) and that they would soon provide a report about LRCM, insinuating that the data were disadvantaging LRCM. On 24 February 2017, LRCM sent an official letter to the SCM asking for more details about the nature of the reports mentioned by Mr. Musteață and whether his words represented the official position of the SCM. No answer was provided in reply.</p>
<b>20 February 2017</b>	<p><b>The online media platform Realitatea.md</b> published an article named <a href="#">“The Public Trust in NGOs, Media and Government Institutions from the Country has Decreased Dramatically! The Rates They Reached in 2016”</a>. The article speaks about the low level of trust in the civil society, which has decreased from 26 – 30% to 15%, referring to the <a href="#">Public Opinion Barometer (POB) of October 2016</a>. The authors of the article stressed that the trust in government institutions decreased by only 2 – 4%. According to the mentioned POB (p. 42), the level of trust in government institutions was lower than in the NGOs (Government – 9%, Parliament – 6%). The article mentioned some of the reasons why the trust in the NGOs decreased, such as “dependence on foreign financial grants (90%), with the establishment of the corresponding priorities” and “direct backing of political candidates”. The article listed several solutions for improving the situation provided by the Resource Center for Human Rights (CReDO), including the rejection of NGOs' politicization and their involvement in political activities.</p>
<b>22 February 2017</b>	<p>The <a href="#">Civic Forum on Monitoring the Implementation of the EU – Moldova Association Agreement</a> took place on 22 February 2017. During the event, the organizers were supposed to present three thematic reports on monitoring the implementation of the EU – Moldova Association Agreement in the field of environment, justice, and energy. The <b>Resource Center for Human Rights (CReDO)</b> was supposed to present the reports on justice and energy sectors, but the justice report had been neither published, nor presented to the Platform members before the event. The chairperson of CReDO spoke of the justice reform in mainly laudatory terms. The draft declaration on the justice reforms, which the participants at the event were supposed to adopt, was not even consulted beforehand with the Platform representatives, but rather handed to the participants on the day of the Conference and its content did not list several major issues in the field of justice.</p> <p>On 3 March 2017, a group of NGOs that are members of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum published a <a href="#">joint statement</a> where they denied any</p>

	<p>association with the opinions and presentations that CReDO made during the event of 22 February 2017. Additionally, the signatory NGOs expressed their concerns about the worsening of the working environment of the civil society organizations. They highlighted that some actions started recently in the government-affiliated media with the purpose to divide and discredit the civil society organizations, including by putting them against certain quasi-nongovernmental organizations, and highlighted an overall environment of intimidation of independent media by the public authorities.</p>
<p><b>11 March 2017</b></p>	<p><b>Info-Prim-Neo news agency</b> published a news story called "<a href="#">What makes situation of civil society worsen?</a>", which was taken over by the <b>online media platform Realitatea.md</b>, but published under a different name – "<a href="#">The Public Trust in NGOs is Getting Lower. Aspects that Deteriorate the Situation in the Civil Society Sector</a>". The article quoted Ion MANOLE, Executive Director of Promo-LEX Association, who had stated that the work of some nongovernmental organizations that are more critical or more visible in some areas is obstructed by pressure. This takes the form of the lack of openness of some state representatives toward the organizations that have the necessary expertise.</p> <p>The article also quoted <b>Sergiu OSTAF, chairperson of the Resource Center for Human Rights (CReDO)</b>, who had stated that the decreased trust in civil society was also due to their involvement in politics. He also mentioned the "<i>excessive dependence on foreign funding, when donors effectively set priorities, so that the organizations feel severed from people's interests</i>". "<i>I hear that some people from the organizations are involved in pending trials. This has not been confirmed yet, but I think that in one or two years it will become known. Those people will do well to announce their close of activity instead of waiting, because that is the civilized way of doing it,</i>" Ostaf added.</p> <p>The article ended with the words that "<i>several civil society organizations had reported recently about the worsening of the situation <b>inside the civil society sector</b></i>", thus suggesting that the deterioration of civil society situation is due to its own faults. This is a distortion of the public call of the SCOs of 3 March 2017 (see above), where they mentioned that the working environment of the civil society deteriorated because of the attacks by the politically-affiliated media and public authorities.</p>
<p><b>March 2017</b>  <b>"Block related to the amendment of the electoral system" –</b>  <b>Accusations of political affiliation because the civil society criticized the DPM's proposal to change the</b></p>	<p><b>6 March 2017 – Vladimir PLAHOTNIUC</b>, chairman of the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM) <a href="#">announced</a> the DPM's initiative to change the electoral system from the proportional into the uninominal (first-past-the-post) system.</p> <p><b>7 March 2017</b> – Some NGOs <a href="#">opposed</a> this initiative, because its topic was not a priority and it was against the previous commitments to amend the Electoral Code and the related legislation, based on the decisions of the Constitutional Court issued in December 2016, according to a <a href="#">public appeal</a> from 2 February 2017.</p> <p><b>7 March 2017 – the blogger Eugen LUCHIANIUC</b> published a tendentious <a href="#">article</a> about the civil society organizations' press conference, where he mentioned: "<i>Mr. Candu [address to the President of the Parliament], have a heart, the civil society cannot launder money through the uninominal voting system! Give them some time! ... Mr. Candu, don't you pity the poor "civil society", which lives from kickbacks and from developing draft laws during five or six years only to have a justification, so their partners would give them some more money ...I feel that "civil society" would have been very happy had Plaha adopted the draft</i></p>

<p><b>electoral system</b></p>	<p><i>act silently. Money would have come right away from the donors, with no need to write project proposals for that”.</i></p> <p><b>12 March 2017 – the political analyst Corneliu CIUREA</b> declared during a <a href="#">TV program</a> (timing: 09:40 – 10:20) with respect to the amendment of the electoral system that the position of NGOs that were against the change of the electoral system <i>“seems to be rather a political attitude, associated to the formations that disagree with this idea of a uninominal voting system”</i>. These statements were also reproduced on 13 March on <a href="#">Adevărul Moldova’s website</a>.</p> <p><b>7 May 2017 – 53 CSOs unknown to the public</b> declared that they supported the change of the electoral system. According to a <a href="#">journalistic investigation</a>, those CSOs included a number of organizations founded by representatives of political parties and their relatives who launched the initiative of changing the electoral system.</p> <p><b>11 May 2017 – The online media platform Today.md</b> published an article under the title <a href="#">“Who is Behind the NGOs Opposing the Direct Voting for the Parliament?”</a>, where they denigrate the NGOs that opposed the change of the electoral system, insinuating that they were connected with the ex-prime minister Vladimir FILAT and that they did it for financial resources.</p> <p><b>5 – 14 May 2017 – Several CSOs organized protests</b> against the change of the electoral system.</p> <p><b>15 May 2017 – Parliament Speaker Adrian CANDU</b>, declared during a <a href="#">TV program</a> (timing: 13:20 – 16:22) that the organizations opposing the change of the electoral system are politically affiliated. He also mentioned that the Legal Resources Center of Moldova, which is an NGO specialized in the justice reform, should not express opinions about an electoral topic, because that was a political recommendation.</p> <p><b>19 May 2017 – More than 20 CSOs released a joint declaration</b> that the attacks against CSOs that had opposed the change of the electoral system were inadmissible and that <b><i>expressing opinions on issues related to the electoral system did not represent political affiliation</i></b>. CSOs urged public authorities, political parties, and media outlets to refrain from attacks on active, independent CSOs that are critical about governmental initiatives.</p> <p><b>25 May 2017 – the analyst Victor GURAU declared</b> during Fabrika talk show broadcast by <b>Publika TV, affiliated to the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)</b>, that the civil society was carrying out orders: <i>“Who are these civil society representatives... what orders they carry out... because the devil is here, among us – it's not Putin, Shoygu or Kiselyov from Moscow”</i> (timing: 35:45). <i>“Everything that these so-called independent media and civil society are doing, in the fight against government's initiative to change the electoral system, is actually favoring Dodon and Moscow”</i> (timing: 37:45).</p> <p><b>11 – 12 June 2017 – Publika TV, affiliated to the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)</b>, published a <a href="#">report</a> about a protest in front of the Parliament against the amendment of the electoral system held on 11 June 2017. The report claimed that the protesters assaulted the journalists of this TV channel. The reporter stated among other things that <i>“assaulting the journalists was deemed justified by Petru MACOVEI, the director of the Independent Press Association, organization that is supposed to protect journalists' interests”</i>. Mr. Macovei declared the following in the news report: <i>“I believe that any action and any</i></p>
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*physical or verbal violence is inadmissible. However, I think that such an attitude of the protesters is also a consequence of the fact that television channels from your trusts manipulate the public opinion with respect to this protest*". The following day, **Parliament Speaker Adrian CANDU** published a [Facebook post](#) where he accused Petru MACOVEI of justifying the aggression against some journalists from Publika TV. In his post, Candu tagged the representatives of diplomatic missions and, particularly, foreign donors that operate in Moldova. Mr. Macovei [replied](#) that the journalists had distorted the statement Candu referred to and that he had said that aggression was inadmissible, but that the aggressive behavior was caused, among others, by the fact that Publika TV manipulated the public opinion, instead of informing accurately about the protests.

**13 June 2017 – DPM's President Vladimir PLAHOTNIUC** [accused](#) NGOs of political affiliation: *"We believe really regretful the fact that ... the very few NGOs that show political affiliation fight against the right of Moldovans to choose their MPs directly. ... We respect their right to a different opinion and to express it the way they want. However, we cannot accept that these small groups would have in captivity the notion of civil society and pretend that they represent all Moldovans, when it is obvious that they represent a very small group of citizens"*.

**15 June 2017** – A number of CSO representatives organized a [press conference](#) regarding the conclusions of the protests against changing the electoral system. They listed the shortcomings of the initiative of changing the electoral system and recommended the authorities to abandon the draft legal act.

**30 June 2017** – A number of CSOs published a [joint statement](#) where they asked the authorities to give up on changing the electoral system, also saying that this concurred with the [recommendation of the Venice Commission](#) after the consideration of the draft law.

**18 July 2017 – Publika TV, affiliated to the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)**, discussed the results of [IMAS's survey](#) of 18 July 2017 regarding the change of the electoral system during Fabrika talk show on the topic *"People do not trust the civil society"*. The **report prepared for the talk show** mentioned: *"According to [IMAS's] survey, 70% of the respondents do not intend to attend the protests organized by nongovernmental organizations if the mixed voting system is adopted in the final reading"* (timing: 26:05). The **spokesperson for the DPM Vitalie GĂMURARI** declared: *"We never hide behind any institutions when we present such surveys, unlike other political parties, which hide behind nongovernmental organizations"* (timing: 10:38). **Vitalie LUNGU, journalist and moderator of the program**, declared: *"How should the government, the party or parties from the majority coalition proceed – is there any room to step back or, on the contrary, they should take into account what the people, the citizens want and not what the NGOs want, for NGOs are paid by money coming from abroad, to represent and play the game of foreign powers that do not necessarily mean well for the Republic of Moldova"* (timing: 19:00). Speaking of the percentage of people that would be satisfied if DPM dropped the mixed voting initiative (32%), Lungu qualified them as *"fans of the Moldovan civil society"* (timing: 22:40). **The journalist Valeriu RENIȚĂ** mentioned that *"The civil society wants to convince us that there are some laws that can never change for the Republic of Moldova and that there are some scenarios made in Brussels that we must follow precisely to avoid a catastrophe."* (timing: 22:13) The **analyst Victor GURĂU** said: *"If you look at the last flash-mob, as they called it, in front of the Parliament, you will notice a new actor, the Legal Resources Center, if I am*

	<p><i>not mistaken. Well, people know that recently they've got a sack of money worth one million four hundred thousand bucks.” (timing: 36:30)</i></p> <p><b>20 July 2017</b> – The Parliament passed at the second reading the <a href="#">Law no. 154</a> changing the electoral system into a mixed one.</p>
<b>15 March 2017</b>	<p>The <b>blogger Veaceslav BALACCI</b> published an <a href="#">article</a> where he alluded that some representatives of the media and of the civil society, whom he even named, benefited from the billion stolen as a result of the robbery of the three Moldovan banks. The article contains strong language.</p>
<b>17 March 2017</b>	<p>The <b>prosecutor general Eduard HARUNJEN</b> stated during a public event organized by Freedom House under the title “Building Bridges of Trust Between the Civil Society and the Justice Sector” that the civil society distorts public information. He <a href="#">declared</a>: <i>“Unfortunately, we often see that you [the civil society] work with assumptions, ideas that are a product of manipulation, distortions. It is regretful that you use these ideas without even getting informed firsthand” (timing: 02:45:50 – 02:46:10). “Do you know what's the biggest problem? It's not you having a different position or not seeing the truth or not willing to see it. The biggest problem is that you are trustworthy in the eyes of our development partners. And here's where the impact is most negative” (timing: 02:47:00 – 02:47:15). “If someone wants to do politics, let them do so openly, not in a camouflaged manner. ... So, I think that those who want to do politics, who chose a strategy of total opposition related to everything that is done in an authority should review their positions. Otherwise, we'll have to rally our strength to inform our and your donors that the reforms will fall short of their effects so much anticipated both abroad and in the country ... (timing: 02:51:00 – 02:51:56).</i></p>
<b>7 May 2017</b>	<p>In a <a href="#">Facebook post</a>, <b>MP Sergiu SÎRBU, member of the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)</b>, recommended all foreign donors to stop funding Promo-LEX Association. The MP accused the NGO of manipulation and falsification of data in a report on the monitoring of a political party: <i>“For the attention of foreign donors! Over 1.2 million leis (approximately 50,000 British pounds) donated by the British Embassy for a false report from Promo-LEX!!! I have a suggestion. Disburse the next funding tranches to Promo-LEX in 2022! If they prove that they are not doing obvious political partisanship anymore! You can see below additional arguments of how a financial report gets manipulated and falsified, how the law gets abusively interpreted and how donors' money gets STOLEN to the advantage of certain parties!”</i></p>
<b>16 May 2017</b>	<p>The <b>blogger Veaceslav BALACCI</b> <a href="#">launched a campaign</a> challenging NGO leaders to publish declarations of their income. <i>“It is no secret that many leaders of NGOs, aka ‘grant devourers’ feeding on million-dollar grants from the Western partners of Moldova who offer donations to help the country's population rather than a handful of people who have formed an NGO cartel, raise monthly fees of 4,000 – 5,000 euros, equivalent to approximately 100 thousand Moldovan lei! ... I call on all NGO leaders to publish declarations of their assets, income and income sources, including fees and other remuneration received over the past five years from internal or external donors, including politicians, alongside the taxes paid to the State from this income, on the websites of their organizations”.</i></p>

	This statement quickly spread across media platforms, including those directly or indirectly supporting the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), namely <a href="#">Realitatea.md</a> , <a href="#">Today.md</a> , <a href="#">Evenimentul.md</a> , <a href="#">Politics.md</a> and <a href="#">Timpul.md</a> .
<b>17 May 2017</b>	The <b>journalist Petru BOGATU</b> said in a <a href="#">Facebook post</a> that NGOs can engage in politics by taking stance, protests, and supporting a popular movement, except political partisanship. Bogatu wrote that an NGO that pretended to be independent, whose name he withheld, had been paid by Renato USATÍI, president of the political party “Partidul Nostru”: <i>“Things get, however, outright appalling when an NGO that acts as an arbitrator takes money from a party like that of the Russophile thug Renato Usatii”</i> . Making vague allegations without giving names casts aspersions on the entire civil society.
<b>18 May 2017</b>	The <b>blogger Veaceslav BALACCI</b> published an <a href="#">article</a> using denigrating and scurrilous language about the work of some media and civil society representatives, reiterating the call for NGO leaders to publish declarations of income.
<b>19 May 2017</b>	<b>More than 20 CSOs</b> released a <a href="#">joint declaration</a> that the attacks against CSOs that had opposed the change of the electoral system were inadmissible and that expressing opinions on issues related to the electoral system did not represent political affiliation. CSOs urged public authorities, political parties, and media outlets to refrain from attacks on active, independent CSOs that are critical about governmental initiatives.
<b>22 May 2017</b>	The <b>blogger Eugen LUCHIANIUC</b> published a controversial <a href="#">article</a> about the work of some media outlets and CSOs, referring to their declaration of 19 May 2017, on the deterioration of the working environment: <i>“I have read a statement signed by NGOs, in which they claim to have been tortured and bullied. The Association of Independent TV Journalists was the sixth in the list. It is sad they forgot to include the organization named “V.I.P.” In fact, the owner of that NGO, Aneta Grosu, is also the co-founder of Ziarul de Gardă. The NGO is just another money-laundering machine for European roubles, but here it is – signing statements”</i> .
<b>26 May 2017</b>	During a business visit to Budapest, <b>President of the Republic of Moldova Igor DODON</b> met with the president of Hungary and discussed, among other things, Hungary's experience with the transparency of NGOs' funding. The president's office published a <a href="#">press release</a> on its website, stating: <i>“We discussed new legislative initiatives to ensure transparency of NGOs' funding, and preserving and strengthening the statehood of our countries. Our Hungarian counterparts' approach to NGOs' funding from abroad is very interesting and I think we could also implement it in Moldova”</i> .
<b>29 May 2017</b>	<b>The news portal Deschide.md</b> published an <a href="#">article</a> authored by the <b>journalist Svetlana MAFTEI</b> , in which she claimed that the EU ambassador to Moldova <a href="#">Pirkka TAPIOLA</a> supported NGOs' involvement in politics: <i>“Pirkka Tapiola ‘blessed’ NGOs’ involvement in any activities ... including politics! ... This happened five days after the public statement by which 22 NGOs – many of whom were present at the LRCM’s event – had vehemently denied their political affiliation and condemned Adrian Candu for his accusations.”</i>  The author presented the discussions of the event in a misleading and biased way. The article appeared after a <a href="#">round table</a> organized by the Legal Resources Center of Moldova

	<p>(LRCM) and the European Center for Not-for-profit Law (ECNL) from Budapest, Hungary, on 24 May 2017, on the involvement of civil society organizations in public affairs: politics and public policy. Discussions involved representatives of Moldovan CSOs, national authorities, and development partners.</p>
<p><b>19 June 2017</b></p>	<p>The <b>blogger Eugen LUCHIANIUC</b> published an <a href="#">open letter</a> to the community of donors and representatives of European institutions, calling on them to "halt" the funding for media outlets and NGOs and saying: "[referring to the Independent Press Association, Newsmaker, Agora and TV8] I am loath to believe that you got lured and joined this appalling dishonest game. I just cannot believe it. Rest assured, when the year 2018 comes and you need them, they will "ditch" you. This Russian word is the best to define your state".</p>
<p><b>29 June 2017</b></p>	<p><b>The National Coordination Board for National Programs for the Prevention and Monitoring of HIV / AIDS, Sexually Transmitted and Tuberculosis Infections (CNC TB / SIDA), led by Ruxanda GLAVAN, then health minister,</b> decided to exclude the Center for Health Policies and Studies (PAS Center) from the implementation and administration of the financing offered by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. On 4 July 2017, six members of the CNC TB / SIDA from civil society <a href="#">requested</a> the annulment of the 29 July 2017 decision to exclude the PAS Center.</p> <p>The PAS Center <a href="#">declared</a> that this decision was "political, technically groundless, inconsistent with the earlier commitment, passed with procedural violations and without the necessary number of votes". The PAS Center also noted that "during the application for a grant, the PAS Center had experienced much pressure from the National HIV Program Coordination Unit (UCPNHIV) (compared to the application for a grant and the talks with the National TB Program Coordination Unit), including intimidation and attempts to exclude the secondary receiver "Soros Foundation – Moldova" from negotiations, to impose a specific approach, to ignore the opinion of civil society actors, and to favor an actor, lack of transparency in communication and circulation of detailed documents, and lack of transparency about the technical principles used by UCPNHIV to make decisions. All of these taken together have not been seen in the history of HIV grants from the Global Fund since 2003".</p>
<p><b>7 July – 12 September 2017</b></p> <p><b>An attempt to limit the foreign funding for NGOs' "political activity" without defining this term</b></p>	<p>The <b>vice president of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) Vladimir CEBOTARI, then justice minister,</b> unilaterally introduced a chapter of three articles (28 – 30), titled "Special Provisions", into a <a href="#">draft law on non-commercial organizations</a> (NCO), whose development had lasted over a year. These articles set out restrictions on the foreign funding for NGOs' "political activity," including additional financial reporting and other obligations for any NGO receiving direct or indirect foreign funds, or state funds, and sanctions for non-compliance. The draft law did not contain a definition of "political activity," which initially was meant to include the provision of feedback on draft legislation. Later this meaning was excluded.</p> <p>Most members of the group that had worked on the draft NCO law for more than a year disagreed with those changes. In the informative note to the draft law, the Justice Ministry did not explain the reasons for introducing those restrictions. On 11 July 2017, <b>approximately 160 NGOs</b> released a <a href="#">public declaration</a> requesting the Ministry of Justice to withdraw the controversial provisions on the foreign funding for NGOs, and noting that</p>

	<p>they were contrary to international standards and threatened the entire community sector and democracy in the Republic of Moldova.</p> <p>The same day, the Justice Ministry released the draft law for public consultations and accepted the comments on it by 11 August 2017. 24 NGOs submitted <a href="#">comments</a> requesting the Ministry to abandon these provisions and any other initiatives aimed at limiting the work of NGOs. On 17 July 2017, the Justice Ministry extended the work on the draft and <a href="#">publicly invited</a> other NGOs to join the working group.</p> <p>On 12 September 2017, the <b>DPM's president Vladimir PLAHOTNIUC</b> announced at a <a href="#">press conference</a> (timing: 9:20) that, given the public speculation over the draft law, he and his colleagues in DPM asked the Justice minister to stop further work on the bill. The same day, the Justice minister dissolved the group tasked with drafting the Law on non-commercial organizations and withdrew the draft.</p>
<b>10 July 2017</b>	<p>The <b>General Prosecutor's Office</b> invited Amnesty International Moldova to a <a href="#">joint meeting</a>, which was broadcast live, on the pretext of a possible proposal to strengthen their cooperation relations. At the meeting, the prosecution office's representatives recommended the organization to agree its reports with their institution before publishing them.</p> <p>Amnesty International Moldova <a href="#">qualified those actions of the Prosecutor General's Office's as intimidation</a> and an attempt to discredit the expertise of the organization. The organization strongly condemned the action of the General Prosecutor's Office and denounced it as part of the governmental attacks against NGOs.</p>
<b>13 July 2017</b>	<p>The <b>chairman of the Superior Council of Magistracy (CSM) Victor MICU</b> declared in an <a href="#">interview for Newsmaker.md</a> that some NGOs engage in criticism to get funding from donors: <i>"I suspect that some NGOs are critical only to get more funds. [...] I am not inclined to trust the surveys published by nongovernmental organizations engaged in populism, pursuing their own interests"</i>.</p>
<b>15 July 2017</b>	<p><b>MP Bogdan ȚÎRDEA, member of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM)</b>, published an episode dedicated to <a href="#">"the union of the West and the oligarchs"</a> in his authorial program. Țîrdea declared that <i>"the West, the civil society barons and the oligarchs removed the Communists from power on 7 April 2009, by a coup d'etat,"</i> after which civil society representatives captured key positions in the government.</p>
<b>17 – 19 July 2017</b>	<p>On 17 July 2017, the <b>Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM)</b> published a press release on its website, which invited the journalist Mariana RAȚĂ and the Legal Resources Center of Moldova (CRJM) to meet with the SCM on 18 July 2017 to discuss two media articles (<a href="#">"The Stolen Billion Judges"</a> and <a href="#">"Justice in Moldova Is in the Hands of Flunker Judges"</a>). The SCM also posted the press release on <a href="#">its Facebook page</a> under the tag Anticorupție.md and LRCM, but did not send it to the invitees. The author of the second media article was not even invited to the SCM meeting.</p> <p>At the meeting of 18 July 2017, the SCM noted that Mariana RAȚĂ had committed an inaccuracy in her article <a href="#">"The Stolen Billion Judges"</a> by wrongly indicating the name of the judge who had issued the ordinance referred to in the article. The journalist acknowledged</p>

	<p>the mistake and promised to correct it immediately, explaining that the error could have been avoided if she had received an answer to her enquiries for access to the documents published on the National Courts Web Portal, and if access to court judgments on the Portal had not been limited by preventing the search by parties' names. SCM members accused the journalist of disinformation.</p> <p>The second article, <a href="#">“Justice in Moldova Is in the Hands of Flunker Judges,”</a> appeared on the news portal Moldnova.eu. It drew on a <a href="#">study by LRCM regarding the selection and promotion of judges in Moldova</a>, according to which many judges whom the Selection Board scores lower than their fellow judges, get appointed and promoted to the higher courts. <b>Teodor CÂRNAȚ, then member of the SCM</b>, accused LRCM of disinformation that resulted in the publication of misleading media articles. LRCM invoked the statistical data published on the SCM's website. <b>Victor MICU, the SCM's chair</b>, derided the notion of “statistical data”.</p> <p>On 19 July 2017, several media NGOs published a <a href="#">statement</a> condemning the SCM's public and collective admonition of the journalist Mariana RAȚĂ and qualifying it as intimidation of journalists. NGOs noted that restricting journalists' access to public information, such as court judgments, and restrictions on the search of court judgments published on the National Courts' Web Portal can result in journalists making mistakes. NGOs expressed bafflement as to why the SCM paid attention to an error that is so insignificant compared to the systemic violations committed by judges in relation to the theft of one billion, which were described in that journalistic investigation.</p>
<p><b>18 July 2017</b></p>	<p>The <b>social research company IMAS</b> published the survey <a href="#">“Socio-political Barometer”</a> commissioned by the <b>Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)</b>. The survey contained questions about civil society. The survey's questions and response options were formulated in such a way that they negatively influenced the attitude toward the nonprofit sector. For example, the question <i>“People have different views on the civil society organizations (public associations / organizations / NGOs) working in the Republic of Moldova. How much do you agree with the following statements?”</i> had ten response options. The first six of them were negative (<i>people know very little about their work; their work is influenced by political forces; they are money-laundering organizations; their work supports certain political forces; they spend the money of international organizations inefficiently; and their work has little impact</i>), and only the last four were positive or neutral (<i>their work can save lives; they stimulate the social growth; they solve problems that governments cannot; and they are closer to people's expectations</i>). All negative answers went first and the positive ones went last, which <a href="#">could give the respondents a negative perception</a> of NGOs as they went through the options.</p> <p>The questions about the level of trust in civil society went after the questions <i>“Several parties and NGOs chose to protest against the proposed introduction of mixed voting. What do you think about these protests?”</i> and <i>“If the Moldovan Parliament adopts the mixed electoral system, will you participate in protests, demonstrations, marches?”</i>. The sequencing of the questions could lead to answers unfavorable to civil society, given that protests organized by NGOs were associated with the parties, which do not enjoy a very good reputation in the society.</p>

	<p>Publika TV published the survey results in a show about the level of trust in civil society (see below).</p>
<p><b>18 July 2017</b></p>	<p><b>Publika TV, affiliated to the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)</b> discussed the results of <a href="#">IMAS's survey</a> of 18 July 2017, on the trust in the civil society in the talk show Fabrika with the topic <a href="#">“People do not trust the civil society”</a>.</p> <p>The <b>report prepared for the talk show</b> mentioned: <i>“74% of the survey participants say they do not trust the Moldovan civil society, while 17% say the opposite. The study also shows that Moldovan population knows little about the work of nongovernmental organizations. 69% say that NGOs are politically influenced and 63% think they serve money-laundering purposes. 57% of survey respondents believe that NGOs use international funds inefficiently, and 55% said that public associations met people's expectations”</i> (timing: 26:20). During the report, the background featured the inscription: <i>“NGOs do not inspire trust”</i>.</p> <p>Half of the entire talk show, while the guests were discussing civil society, the background contained the inscriptions <i>“People do not trust civil society”</i> and <i>“Civil society is politicized”</i>.</p> <p>During the talk show, the <b>moderator Vitalie LUNGU</b> made the following statements: <i>“According to the [IMAS's] study, most respondents do not trust representatives of the civil society, which, in their perception, is politicized and does not represent citizens' interests”</i> (timing: 25:50); <i>“How capable is this civil society to gather Moldovans to rally – and with what message?”</i> (timing: 40:45); <i>“Some should consult public data on NGOs or civil society, specifically on how they received financing from some captured governmental ministries and the money they received, amounting not to mere 100 or 200 lei, but to tens of thousands of lei”</i> (timing: 48:40); <i>“Moldovan people are masters at compromising notions and we could even give a master-class on how to do it... Now we managed to compromise the notion of civil society, too”</i> (timing: 55:10).</p> <p>The <b>DPM spokesperson Vitalie GĂMURARI</b> declared: <i>“Citizens do not blame only politicians when they say they do not trust politicians. Now it is clear that people no longer trust a part of civil society, too”</i> (timing: 12:30).</p> <p><b>Cristian TABĂRĂ, media analyst at Publika TV</b>, said: <i>“Perhaps, the survey refers to that part of the civil society that wants to be involved in, or at least tangentially related to, the political environment, because this survey covers rather political and economic areas. I do not think that its findings can be extended to, say charities or social sector in general. Instead, the figures seem very close to reality, if not the reality itself, when it comes to this so vocal civil society that always intervenes in a very, very subjective, and partisan way, pretending either to represent the people or to be expert in a certain field. There are NGOs monitoring political life, others – the media, others – the business environment, others – human rights and justice, etc. It is good that they exist, but in the Republic of Moldova, their work is very unprofessional. This tendency existed in all post-Soviet or post-communist countries, if you like, where, knowing the Westerners' need for contact points to propagate democracy in post-communist countries, certain internal actors quickly grabbed various sectors of expertise, dazzled the Western donors with all sorts of pseudo-studies, pseudo-activities, and other smoke and mirrors, and tried to impose their monopoly on those sectors of expertise. So did certain political parties, so did certain NGOs, and so did certain civic, political, and other advocates... And people finally started to realize this fact... Sooner or</i></p>

	<p>later, these NGOs, the so-called civil society, give themselves away, proving to be fake instead of gold. You hear them pretending to fight for the people, and then you realize that in fact things are the other way around” (timing: 27:20). “These NGOs also create opportunities for certain media outlets that... become prosecutors of the press” (timing: 33:40).</p> <p>The <b>journalist Valeriu RENIȚĂ</b> said: “The survey concerns so-called most important nongovernmental organizations. The perception of being most important was forged by these organizations themselves, aided by certain media outlets that are just another tool to propagate this opinion that they are the most important. For example, there are five or six media outlets that deal with the protection of journalists' rights, and occasionally come with statements, sometimes out of place, referring to the subject they might be dealing with, signed by media outlets that arrogated to themselves the status of most important media. In fact, the most important CSOs are those who now have most money from different projects... These people are very well paid. Of course, it is very difficult for them to give up the scenarios we have talked about and the things they invented about the European Union, and its influence in our country, and about the commitments that everybody supposedly has toward the scenarios they promote. That's why they have the rating we see in the survey... A lot of people understand what these people are doing” (timing: 30:30).</p> <p>The <b>analyst Victor GURĂU</b> said: “Since Mr. Tabără voiced the question of who is behind TV8 and how they play this card, let me remind you of the draft decision announced by MEP Mureșan on the allocation of 3 million euros for – note it! – combating Russian propaganda on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. For that end, they set up a so-called media foundation, named Alternativa Media, which was there before. And it immediately drew dinosaurs, including from the independent press, as we call it. This civil society drew attention to the political sector, that we do not have good politicians, that we got interest groups, got castes. Take a closer look at the groups formed within these important NGOs and the so-called independent press. Who are they formed of? The dinosaurs that have been around since the 1990s and are in control of... not just projects. What they pitch is the expertise we've talked about, and about which the government has learned the lesson. It's based on the expertise of the experts' community, but it also takes into account the people's will. And so, they are left behind, because the people is always wiser than the experts. And the second important point: the press. Media outlets come and go. But there we always see the same people, gentlemen, those who emerged in the early 1990s. And I can give you examples of each NGO, with few exceptions” (timing: 37:00).</p>
<p><b>18 July 2017</b></p>	<p>The <b>blogger Eugen LUCHIANIUC</b> published an <a href="#">article</a> on the results of IMAS's survey of 18 July 2017, in which he denigrated civil society and claimed that “most Moldovan NGOs do politics instead of policies”.</p>
<p><b>10 August 2017</b></p>	<p><b>Accent TV, a channel affiliated to the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM), published a <a href="#">report</a> with false information that several nongovernmental organizations and information portals from Moldova were funded by a US foundation to fight Russian propaganda and left-wing parties in Moldova. The report referred to a <a href="#">Facebook post</a> by <b>President Igor DODON</b>, with similar content, and mentioned: “Money laundering – the brand of the civil society, and independent media. Those who always talk about the allegedly negative influence from the Russian Federation receive direct payments</b></p>

	<p><i>from the United States' International Democracy Fund. The president of the country denounced dozens of informational portals and nongovernmental organizations active in the Republic of Moldova, that claim to be independent and to wage a heroic war against the Eastern enemy on huge grants from US".</i></p> <p>The report featured <b>PSRM's MP Bogdan ȚÎRDEA</b> saying: <i>"In fact, all these NGOs and media are busy criticizing left-wing parties, the Orthodox Church, and the president, and some of them took part in the 2016 election campaign by directly promoting a candidate, namely Maia SANDU".</i></p> <p><b>Valeriu OSTALEP, NGO representative and CEO of the Institute for Diplomatic, Political and Security Studies</b>, said: <i>"In Moldova, we have never heard reactions of the so-called pro-Western structures, which should normally strive to be objective in denouncing all violations of the law and of European standards. I accuse these organizations of political partisanship. I can prove that most of these structures lack even the slightest resemblance to objective structures".</i></p> <p>The media publication <a href="#">KP.md</a> affiliated to PSRM carried over the content of the report in its article.</p>
<b>17 August 2017</b>	The <b>blogger Eugen LUCHIANIUC</b> published a defamatory <a href="#">article</a> about salaries paid to the employees of the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM), legally registered as a public association.
<b>25 August 2017</b>	<b>MP Grigore NOVAC, member of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM)</b> , responded to the journalist Ana GHERCIU, editor-in-chief at Moldova.org, who <a href="#">urged</a> President Igor DODON to stop attacking NGOs and to distinguish between propaganda and access to information, by <a href="#">saying</a> : <i>"The saddest thing is that for these pseudo-journalists the foreign funding of a website is not just open propaganda in the interest of the financing states, but also a well-established business. The 'journalist' who has admitted to working under the umbrella of a foreign-funded NGO (read: under the 'krysha' [protection] that generates tons of money) is annoyed – even angered – by nothing but the financial side. Yet journalism is something totally different".</i>
<b>8 September 2017</b>	<b>Accent TV, a media outlet affiliated to the Party of Socialists of Moldova (PSRM)</b> , published an insinuating article titled " <a href="#">Moldovan Civil Society Serves the Oligarchs</a> " about civil society organizations, based on a program with the participation of the <b>analyst Corneliu CIUREA</b> and <b>PSRM's MP Bogdan ȚÎRDEA</b> .
<b>11 September 2017</b>	<b>UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid RA'AD Al Hussein</b> <a href="#">said</a> in his opening speech at the 36 <sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council: <i>"In the Republic of Moldova, I am concerned by reported cases of prosecution and harassment of lawyers representing opposition figures, human rights defenders and journalists. Reprisals against NGOs, removal of a judge and cases of arrests of public officials on allegedly fabricated charges also raise concerns. Some of the proposed amendments to the law on NGOs would significantly obstruct the activities of civil society groups receiving funds from abroad. I encourage the Government to fully uphold the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, assembly, and association in the course of any such reforms, and to urgently strengthen the country's human rights machinery, and to call on the expertise and assistance of my Office.</i>

	<i>Any legislative changes should aim to widen the space for a strong, free and independent civil society and should be preceded by transparent and inclusive consultations with civil society organizations".</i>
<b>12 September 2017</b>	At a meeting of OSCE's member states in Warsaw, Poland, <b>13 Civil Society Organizations</b> released a <a href="#">statement</a> on the deterioration of the working environment of civil society in the Republic of Moldova. The organizations asked representatives of public authorities, political parties, and media outlets in Moldova to refrain from attacks on active, independent civil society organizations that are critical about governmental initiatives. They called for an open dialogue with all civil society organizations to promote the rule of law and the reforms that are necessary in the society.
<b>20 September 2017</b>	<b>MP Sergiu SÎRBU, member of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM),</b> <a href="#">commented negatively</a> on the <a href="#">monitoring report</a> released by Promo-LEX on the impact of the law introducing the mixed voting system: <i>"We regret the intensification of disinformation and lying from such a reputable organization as Promo-Lex. Such misleading interpretation of the law may be the result of either utter incompetence or ill intent"</i> .
<b>20 September 2017</b>	The <b>media outlet AIF.md</b> published an article titled <a href="#">"The Hires from the "Civil Society" Have Been Working for the Government and Oligarchs for Long"</a> , containing an interview by <b>MP Bogdan ȚÎRDEA, member of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM)</b> . Mr. Țîrdea made insinuating remarks about civil society organizations, accusing, among other things, the leaders of an association of the involvement in politics.
<b>26 September 2017</b>	<b>Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova Pavel FILIP</b> <a href="#">declared</a> in a press briefing of the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM): <i>"Too many nongovernmental organizations get lured into politics, or rather engage in politics. I believe that nongovernmental organizations should rather engage in the monitoring, evaluation, and research of the policies developed by government institutions"</i> (timing: 05:40). <i>Filip also said he had proposed colleagues from DPM to allocate a special budget for government institutions that would be used to manage relations with NGOs and select the NGOs to work with when preparing and monitoring public policies"</i> (timing: 07:30).  This can result in the selection of only the NGOs supporting the government, which will allow the government to claim that it has consulted with the civil society.
<b>2 October 2017</b>	Six days after Prime Minister Pavel FILIP announced the initiative to create budget funds for engaging NGOs in developing and monitoring public policies, <b>DPM</b> <a href="#">announced the establishment of the Foundation for a Modern Democracy</a> . According to DPM, the foundation will "promote European and social-democratic values that society needs".  Considering the DPM representative's argument regarding the non-involvement of NGOs in politics, it is hard to understand why they set up foundations while also being members of the governing party that play politics every day.
<b>10 October 2017</b>	Representatives of the media and NGOs organized a protest in front of the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) to voice their disagreement with some provisions of the Regulations on the publication of court judgments on the National Courts' Web Portal, which the SCM was to approve. On that occasion <b>Anatolie ȚURCAN, then member of the SCM,</b> <a href="#">said</a> : "I

	<p><i>don't understand, what civil society? If you talk to people, to parties in a lawsuit, then... It is not NGOs that should film and interview me on camera. It isn't they who represent civil society. Civil society is much wider. Civil society is not a couple of godfathers from an NGO".</i></p> <p>The other members of the SCM did not stop him or express another opinion.</p>
<p><b>25 October 2017</b></p>	<p>At the <a href="#">9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum</a>, the <b>president of the parliamentary faction of the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM) Marian LUPU stressed</b> that civil society should remain outside of politics. European experts contradicted Lupu, invoking the importance of NGOs in democratizing societies, and saying that, while it is true that NGOs should not act as political partisans, in dictatorial states civil society also works with political opposition on actions and plans for the democratization of society.</p> <p>In fact, Lupu's statement contradicts the actions of his own party. On 2 October 2017, PDM representatives <a href="#">announced the launch of the Foundation for a Modern Democracy</a>, whose role according to them would be "to promote European and social-democratic values that society needs".</p>
<p><b>12 December 2017</b></p>	<p>The <b>social research company IMAS</b> published the survey <a href="#">"Socio-political Barometer"</a> commissioned by the <b>Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM)</b>. Some survey questions can lead to defamatory conclusions about the community sector. For example, the question <i>„Some NGOs, supported by PCRM, Platforma DA, and Partidul Nostru, came up with the initiative to hold a referendum to cancel the mixed voting system. What do you think about it?"</i> distorts reality, because the decision of NGOs to hold the referendum was not determined by the support of political parties. Although this question is supposed to identify the respondents' feelings about a potential referendum to cancel the mixed voting system, the wording was deliberately chosen to induce non-acceptance responses using the phrase "supported by PCRM, Platforma DA, and Partidul Nostru", which determines the respondents who dislike these political formations to give negative answers.</p> <p>The order of the survey questions could induce responses unfavorable to civil society. For example, putting the questions about the failed referendum in Chisinau before the question about the referendum to cancel the mixed voting system could obviously induce the respondents to take a negative stand against the latter referendum. Another example is placing the question <i>"How much do you trust the civil society in the Republic of Moldova?"</i> after the questions about the initiative of the NGOs to hold a referendum, which emphasizes the referendum's funding source, about which the respondents are likely to have negative feelings.</p> <p>On 18 December 2017, <b>45 NGOs</b> published a <a href="#">joint statement</a> condemning the manipulative actions of IMAS and PDM and qualifying them as an attack against CSOs. Two days before the statement, IMAS published a <a href="#">press release</a> complaining about <i>"guerrilla actions, based on blackmailing and threatening with mails, denigrating [imas] activity"</i>. IMAS described criticism from civil society as an attempt to enforce censorship and threatened to conduct a national qualitative survey on citizens' perception of civil society in Moldova. Signatory NGOs qualified IMAS's press release as an attempt to prevent the release of the joint statement, whose draft was consulted among NGOs at that moment.</p>

<p><b>14 December 2017</b></p>	<p>On a <a href="#">TV show</a>, <b>Parliament Speaker Andrian CANDU, member of the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)</b>, said that the <a href="#">Public Opinion Barometer</a> (POB) commissioned by the Institute for Public Policy (IPP) was questionable because its initiators were leaders of political parties and its team was politically engaged. Candu mentioned that IPP’s Executive Director Arcadie BARBĂROȘIE “was present at all protests and party support [...] Mr. Boțan – Platforma DA” [...] Mr. Cibotaru – PLDM” (timing: 10:00). Later in the same talk show, Candu said that he did not see a problem in the fact that Mr. Boțan, as a member of Platforma DA before its registration as a political party, had participated in the protests organized by it (timing: 01:05:20). As a reminder, Mr. Barbăroșie and Mr. Boțan were not members of political parties.</p> <p>Candu also said that the team that prepared the POB was affiliated with the political parties PAS, PLDM and PPDA: <i>“Is Cibotaru involved in the POB, too? Is not he the leader of PLDM?”</i> (timing: 01:05:50). In a <a href="#">Facebook post</a>, the president of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM) Viorel CIBOTARU said that he had never been a member of the POB panel. He had been the director of the program that had managed that project, but he had quit two years before.</p> <p>Some <b>media outlets affiliated to the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and political analysts at Publika and Canal 3</b> mediatized Candu's distrust in the credibility of the POB, expressed during the 14 December 2017 talk show.</p> <p>Referring to the referendum initiated by some NGOs to cancel the mixed voting system, Candu commented: <i>“Civil society should try to stay away from anything that could be considered political element, or it will lose its credibility because even some opinion polls show that they are starting to overtax the patience even of some institutions. [...] It will be a shame to have spent sixty million from the State Budget with zero outcome”</i> (timing: 24:50). Candu did not specify what institutions he referred to.</p> <p>Candu also spoke about the NGOs who <a href="#">opposed</a> the adoption of the draft law on the criminalization of economic crimes, pushed by the Justice Ministry, noting that these NGOs <i>“stand on political platforms and protest alongside the opposition”</i> (timing: 01:04:30). Candu challenged the moderator's argument that NGOs have the right to opinion and may participate in protests, and said that NGOs may not participate in “political protests” (timing: 01:04:50), noting: <i>“If the Democratic Party organizes a protest and a part of the civil society participates in this protest against other parties, that civil society is no longer... impartial and objective, because it took the sides with a party against another party. This is a political confrontation.</i> (timing: 01:05:00).</p> <p>As a reminder, NGOs did not participate in protests organized by a party against another party. Between 5 and 14 May 2017, several NGOs organized protests against the change of the electoral system, which was joined by some political parties. Those protests are consistent with the right to freedom of opinion and assembly, enjoyed by both individuals and legal entities, which include NGOs.</p>
<p><b>18 December 2017</b></p>	<p>During the <a href="#">debates of 18 December 2017</a> on the draft law on the decriminalization of economic crimes, promoted by the Justice Ministry and <a href="#">criticized by several independent NGOs</a>, <b>Vladimir CEBOTARI, then Justice minister</b>, <a href="#">asked</a> the representatives of those NGOs present at the debates who did they represent and invoking that the draft was supported</p>

	<p>by the private sector representing “hundreds of employees”. The <a href="#">ex-minister’s remark</a> (timing: 01:31:47 – 01:32:05) suggests that NGOs that do not represent a certain group are not representative and their involvement in public policies is not very important, unlike businesses or business associations that supported the draft. Such an approach implies excluding or limiting NGOs acting in the public interest from important public policy processes, which is contrary to the rules of an open democracy and society.</p>
<p><b>21 December 2017</b></p>	<p>In December 2017, the Journalistic Investigations Center (CIJ) published an <a href="#">investigation into parties’ donors in 2016</a>, which stated that many NGO members, including members of the Legal Resources Center of Moldova (LRCM) and the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), had made donations to political parties. Later on the same day, at least <b>8 media portals affiliated to the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)</b>, namely <a href="#">Moldova24.md</a>, <a href="#">Hotnews.md</a>, <a href="#">Democracy.md</a>, <a href="#">24h.md</a>, <a href="#">Evenimentul.md</a>, <a href="#">Stiridinmoldova.com</a>, <a href="#">Publika.md</a> and <a href="#">Timpul.md</a>, published almost identical articles claiming that NGOs financed opposition parties. The articles stated that NGOs had made donations to opposition parties, although the CIJ’s investigation showed that donations came from individual members of NGOs and not from NGOs, and their amounts were modest. These publications mentioned nothing about CIJ’s investigations on Democratic Party’s funding issues. The articles concluded that NGOs were politically affiliated and referred to the results of IMAS’s survey published in December 2017. The articles mentioned only members of the LRCM, without mentioning the members of other NGOs who also donated to government parties at that time.</p> <p>According to Article 26 of the <a href="#">Law on Political Parties</a> and international best practices, any individual, including members of NGOs, can make donations to political parties from personal income, having paid taxes to the state. Moreover, the transparent financial support of a political party is a prerequisite of democracy and contributes to the accountability of the parties. Besides, funding a party by private individuals from the civil society sector does not mean supporting that party by the entire organization.</p>

## SIGNATORIES:



**Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (LRCM)** is a think tank with extensive expertise in analyzing the activity and reforming the justice sector, promoting human rights and reforms for an enabling environment for civil society organizations. More information is available at [www.crjm.org](http://www.crjm.org).



**Amnesty International Moldova** is part of the international movement for Human Rights Amnesty International. The organization’s work is based on the decisions voted by its members at its General Assembly. AIM participates in global and local campaigns, and currently carries out “Education for Human Rights” campaign in schools and among legal professionals. More information is available at [www.amnesty.md](http://www.amnesty.md).



**Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE)** is an independent think tank aimed at accelerating the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova by monitoring and promoting public policies supporting systemic reforms, increasing participatory democracy, and strengthening the citizenry's role in national and local decision-making. More information is available at [www.ipre.md](http://www.ipre.md).



**CPR Moldova** – „Reforms should be seen in real life, not on paper or television”. More information is available at [www.cpr.md](http://www.cpr.md).



**Center for Health Policies and Studies (PAS Center)** is an independent, nonprofit, apolitical Moldovan organization. The mission of the PAS Center is to build a democratic society by improving and developing the health and social sector, promoting and assessing policies, strengthening capacities and supporting reforms. More information is available at [www.pas.md](http://www.pas.md).



**Association for Participatory Democracy “ADEPT”** is an independent think tank focused on the decision-making, policy-making, electoral and socio-economic processes in the Republic of Moldova and the region. ADEPT's mission is to promote democratic values and to support the active participation of citizens in public life. More information is available at [www.adept.md](http://www.adept.md).



**Independent Press Association (API)** is one of the most important media organizations in the Republic of Moldova that promotes and helps independent media and apolitical journalists. API promotes the principles of free press and contributes to the development of open society in the Republic of Moldova. More information is available at [www.api.md](http://www.api.md).



**Promo-LEX Association** is a nongovernmental organization that promotes democracy in the Republic of Moldova, including in the Transnistrian region, by human rights advocacy, monitoring of democratic processes and strengthening of civil society. More information is available at [www.promolex.md](http://www.promolex.md).



**WatchDog.md** is a young think tank from the Republic of Moldova. The community brings together experts from various areas of major importance, qualified to develop and evaluate sectoral public policies. The organization's goals include increasing the role of civil society in decision-making and providing the public and stakeholders with accurate and comprehensive information on the real situation in the Republic of Moldova in major areas, such as economy, public finance, democracy, electoral processes, human rights. More information is available at [www.watchdog.md](http://www.watchdog.md).



**Transparency International-Moldova (TI-Moldova)** registered as a national subsidiary of the global anti-corruption organization Transparency International on 14 June 2000. TI-Moldova's mission is to promote

transparency, integrity, and accountability as the main ways to prevent corruption and improve governance. More information is available at [www.transparency.md](http://www.transparency.md).



**Institute for Public Policy (IPP)** is an apolitical nonprofit organization. Its purpose is to contribute to the development of the Republic of Moldova in the spirit of an open, participative, and pluralistic society committed to democratic values. More information is available at [www.ipp.md](http://www.ipp.md).



**IDIS "Viitorul" (IDIS)** is an independent research and advocacy think tank. IDIS successfully combines social, political, and economic research with solid advocacy components. It carries out field research in political science, economic analysis, governance, and law, keeping several social networks on social policy analysis, decentralization, EU and Russia policies, frozen conflicts, and trade. More information is available at [www.viitorul.org](http://www.viitorul.org).



**Association for Efficient and Responsible Governance (AGER)** is a public association whose main purpose is promoting good governance through consultancy and political reform in the public administration. More information is available at [www.ager.md](http://www.ager.md).



**Foreign Policy Association (FPA)** is one of the main Moldovan think tanks in the field of foreign policy, that aims to support the process of Europeanization, EU integration, and settlement of the Transnistrian problem. More information is available at [www.ape.md](http://www.ape.md).



**International Center "La Strada"** is an organization focused on building a society that respects human rights, is sensible to women's and children's issues, and creates enabling conditions for the protection of those at difficulty. More information is available at [www.lastrada.md](http://www.lastrada.md).



The **Center for Independent Journalism (CJI)** is one of the first media non-governmental organization in the Republic of Moldova. Founded in 1994, CJI has the mission to contribute to the consolidation of a free press and viable media assistance and independent journalists through the training in journalism and public relations, media campaigns, advocacy, research and media education. More information can be found at [www.media-azi.md](http://www.media-azi.md).



The **BIOS Public Association (AO BIOS)** is an independent, nonprofit, non-political organization from Moldova. AO BIOS mission is to improve the environment and people's living conditions based on the principles of sustainable development. More information can be found at [www.bios.org.md](http://www.bios.org.md).