

## DECLARATION

### **The signatory organizations condemn public opinion manipulation on NGOs activity, shown in the polls conducted by IMAS at the request of the Democratic Party**

*18 December 2017*

On 12 December 2017, [the results of a poll](#) conducted by the sociological company IMAS, at the request of the Democratic party of Moldova, were published. The poll contains, among others, several questions on the activity of the civil society organizations (NGOs).

One of the requirements for a questionnaire designed for sociological surveys is the impartial and non-leading nature of the questions. In the case of IMAS poll, several questions were designed in a biased way, with the view to negatively influence the respondents' opinion on the non-commercial sector activity and, implicitly, the results of the poll. Furthermore, some questions were leading to defamatory conclusions about the work of the associative sector. For instance, the question *"Some NGOs, with the support of CPRM, Platforma DA and Partidul Nostru, came up with the initiative to hold a referendum against the mixed vote? What do you think about it?"* Although this question allegedly intends to measure the attitude of the respondents toward the idea of organizing a referendum on annulment of the mixed vote system, its wording is premeditatedly distorted to lead to non-acceptance responses by adding *"with the support of CPRM, Platforma DA and Partidul Nostru"*, encouraging respondents who do not like these political formations to answer negatively. Additionally, this question distorts reality, because the decision of the NGOs to hold the referendum was not determined by the support of political parties.

If the order of the questions in the report showed their order in the questionnaire, we may conclude that it was also designed to lead to responses benefiting the client. For instance, asking questions about the failed referendum in Chisinau municipality before asking the question about the referendum on annulment of the mixed system could obviously influence the respondents to take a negative stand against the latter. Another example would be to place the question *"How much or little trust do you have in the civil society in the Republic of Moldova?"* after the questions about the initiative of the NGOs to hold a referendum, emphasizing the source of costs for the referendum, to which the negative attitude of the respondents is predictable.

Finally, such a poll would not be likely to represent the authentic opinion of the citizens and cannot serve as an appropriate means of assessing public opinion and subsequently of informing it. It is regrettable to note that IMAS used a similar methodology in a previous [poll](#) published in July 2017. The results of that poll were [used in press releases](#) and were [the subject of several talk shows](#), where the non-governmental sector's activity in the Republic of Moldova was presented from a negative perspective.

The signatory organizations condemn manipulatory actions of the polls' executor and client. It seems that these actions aim at grounding attacks against civil society organizations and create an unfavourable working environment for civil society organizations. Undermining the importance of civil society organizations is a clear signal of a threat to democracy.

The signatory organizations kindly invite the polls' executor to reconsider the methodology and the way to formulate questions to exclude any appearance of manipulation. The signatories call on the Democratic Party of Moldova to implement the declared commitments for the respect of freedom of association and to cease any actions of undermining the activity of civil society organizations in the Republic of Moldova.

#### **Signatories:**

1. Alliance INFONET
2. Human Rights Embassy
3. Amnesty International Moldova
4. Women's Association for the Environment Protection and Sustainable Development

5. ADR Habitat
6. Association of Young Artists "Oberliht"
7. BIOS
8. Center for Assistance and Information of Young Economists "Certitudine"
9. Centre of Urbanism
10. EuroPass Center for European Initiatives
11. Concordia
12. Pro-Trebujeni
13. Association of the People with Disabilities of the Republic of Moldova (ARIM)
14. Eco-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers
15. Association for Efficient and Responsible Governance (AGER)
16. Foreign Policy Association (APE)
17. "MOTIVAȚIE" Association
18. Association of Independent Press (API)
19. Regional Association of mothers with many children and women entrepreneurs of Gagauzia „Vesta”
20. Caroma Nord
21. Legal Assistance Center for Persons with Disabilities
22. "GENDERDOC-M" Information Centre
23. Journalistic Investigation Centre (CIJ)
24. Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (CRJM)
25. National Roma Center
26. National Environmental Center
27. Centre for Independent Journalism (CJI)
28. WatchDog.MD Community
29. National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM)
30. Balti University Legal Clinic
31. CPR Moldova
32. Doru Curoșu, "Leading to Change"
33. East Europe Foundation
34. Medical-social Philantropical Foundation "Angelus Moldova"
35. Foundation for Development
36. Soros Foundation-Moldova
37. Gutta-Club
38. Labour Institute
39. Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE)
40. International Centre for Protection and Promotion of Women's rights "La Strada"
41. Ecological Movement of Moldova
42. Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims "Memoria"
43. Terra-1530
44. Transparency-International Moldova
45. Union of Organizations for Disabled from Moldova

### **The signatories' list remains open**

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