

2020 Moldova

# Presidential election

Social media monitoring final report



This project was supported by

# CONTENT

Introduction	3
The role and impact of social media globally in the electoral context	4
The role of social media during elections	5
Findings	7
Presidential election in Moldova. Round I analysis	8
Presidential election in Moldova. Round II analysis	24
Examples of derogatory or false posts about the candidates	32
Recommendations	38
Methodology	39
About the authors	42

# Introduction

Between 1 September and 13 November 2020, Mediapoint (Moldova) and MEMO 98 (Slovakia) monitored how politicians and parties used social media in the context of the November 1 and 15, 2020 presidential election.

The main purpose of the monitoring was to determine the impact that social networks have on the electoral process and the extent to which they serve as a platform for providing important information to voters. We also aimed to analyze the way in which citizens interacted with the posts of politicians and political parties. While for most people, television remains the main source of information about politics, the rapid increase in the number of social media users inspired us to monitor the use of Facebook and Instagram during the elections in the Republic of Moldova. Other social media platforms, such as YouTube and TikTok, were also monitored.

The monitoring also focused on topics and issues discussed online, in the context of the elections, on Facebook and Instagram pages of political parties and politicians. In general, we wanted to assess the role of social media platforms in elections and their potential impact on electoral integrity, in particular, the level of public confidence in this process. In the run-off, we focused on the two candidates who polled the highest number of votes in the first round, Maia Sandu and Igor Dodon.

The monitoring was possible thanks to the support from the SlovakAid (Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation) and the National Endowment for Democracy.



# The role and impact of social media globally in the electoral context

**Author: Rasto Kužel, MEMO 98**

The growing importance of the internet and social media platforms provides new, more direct means for election contestants to communicate with voters. Moreover, politicians are now able to communicate directly with their supporters and potential voters without journalists and media houses as intermediaries. However, the initially very positive assessment of the role of social media networks during elections has changed, with a number of recent elections showing that Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms, could be used to undermine the integrity of elections, including to disseminate disinformation. This is why it is important to have an understanding of the impact of disinformation and propaganda on our democracies, freedom of expression, journalism, and civic space, as well as appropriate responses to these phenomena.

I believe that social media monitoring could provide a basis for responsive advocacy (such as intervention with firms) and long-term advocacy for better regulation. It also enables us to have a better understanding of the role of social media during the election and their impact on electoral integrity. The use of social media monitoring to address disinformation can be used for planning how to address threats as they emerge. Domestic observers and think tanks could team up with media and journalists to monitor online content, detect disinformation campaigns, and establish rapid-reaction mechanisms to limit the impact of hate speech, online propaganda, and disinformation.

My organization, MEMO 98, in cooperation with our partners, have conducted monitoring of social media platforms in a number of recent elections. The main purpose of our monitoring has been to determine the impact of social media on the electoral process and the extent to which social media serve as a platform to provide important information that voters need in their decision making. This final report should provide the basis for understanding the role social media played during the 2020 presidential election in Moldova. The level of negative online campaigning identified by MediaPoint and MEMO 98, including the dissemination of disinformation about candidates, particularly in the second round of the election, should motivate online platforms to step up the fight against illegal content in cooperation with national authorities and other relevant stakeholders. I hope that our monitoring could increase information exchange to deepen knowledge about emerging trends to establish appropriate oversight mechanisms to tackle such phenomena in future elections.



# The role of Social Media in elections

The growing importance of the Internet and social networks provides election candidates with direct means of communication and interaction with voters. According to the latest statistics, Facebook is the most popular social network in the Republic of Moldova, with over 1.3 million registered users, followed by Instagram and Odnoklassniki with 840 thousand and 410 thousand accounts, respectively. Also, there are new social networks emerging in the online environment of the Republic of Moldova, such as TikTok.

Pandemic-related restrictions and health concerns significantly impacted the conduct of the campaign. In its Needs Assessment Mission report, OSCE/ODIHR wrote that “restrictions on ‘in person’ campaigning raised the importance of television and gave an advantage to the political forces that control certain broadcast media<sup>1</sup>. These conditions forced contestants to focus on online rather than traditional campaigning methods, which include small-scale rallies, door-to-door campaigns, and distribution of printed materials”.



1.6  
millions

Facebook & Instagram  
active users

Facebook metadata showed that, compared to 2016, the total number of interactions generated by the posts of the two run-off candidates doubled in 2020. Social media platforms were used for campaigning purposes, to organize meetings with voters, and to present electoral platforms. Through social media platforms, diaspora citizens were informed about the organization of the electoral process abroad, the locations of polling stations, but also what measures voters had to take to comply with restrictions of different countries introduced due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

<sup>1</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. 2020. Needs Assessment Mission report (17-21 august 2020)

# The role of Social Media in elections

Similar to the 2016 presidential election, people in the diaspora were mobilized via Facebook groups to vote. A group of Maia Sandu's supporters that was created the next day after the first round reached a number of over 72 thousand registered members in just a few days. At the same time, registered candidates were invited to discussion programs live streamed via Facebook which were organized for the diaspora citizens so they could learn about candidates' platforms and could ask questions directly to candidates.

This election campaign was also notable for the use of innovative methods of online communication. For example, Maia Sandu posted several videos on TikTok, an application used mostly by teenagers and young people. In this way, her messages were conveyed to an audience that is an important segment of voters who were rather passive in the previous elections. Another innovation dictated by digital marketing trends was the participation of Maia Sandu in several interviews on Facebook, Youtube and Instagram profiles of influencers with a large number of followers.

At the same time, in addition to the role of communication channels, social media platforms were also used to spread false and derogatory information about candidates. The campaign became more aggressive closer to the run-off, and the presence of channels and pages that distributed false and manipulative information became gradually more visible. It is noteworthy that the introduction of new rules by Facebook on paid political advertising in 2020 saw reduction of false information which appeared to have migrated to YouTube where the monitoring team came across manipulative videos on some obscure Youtube channels.

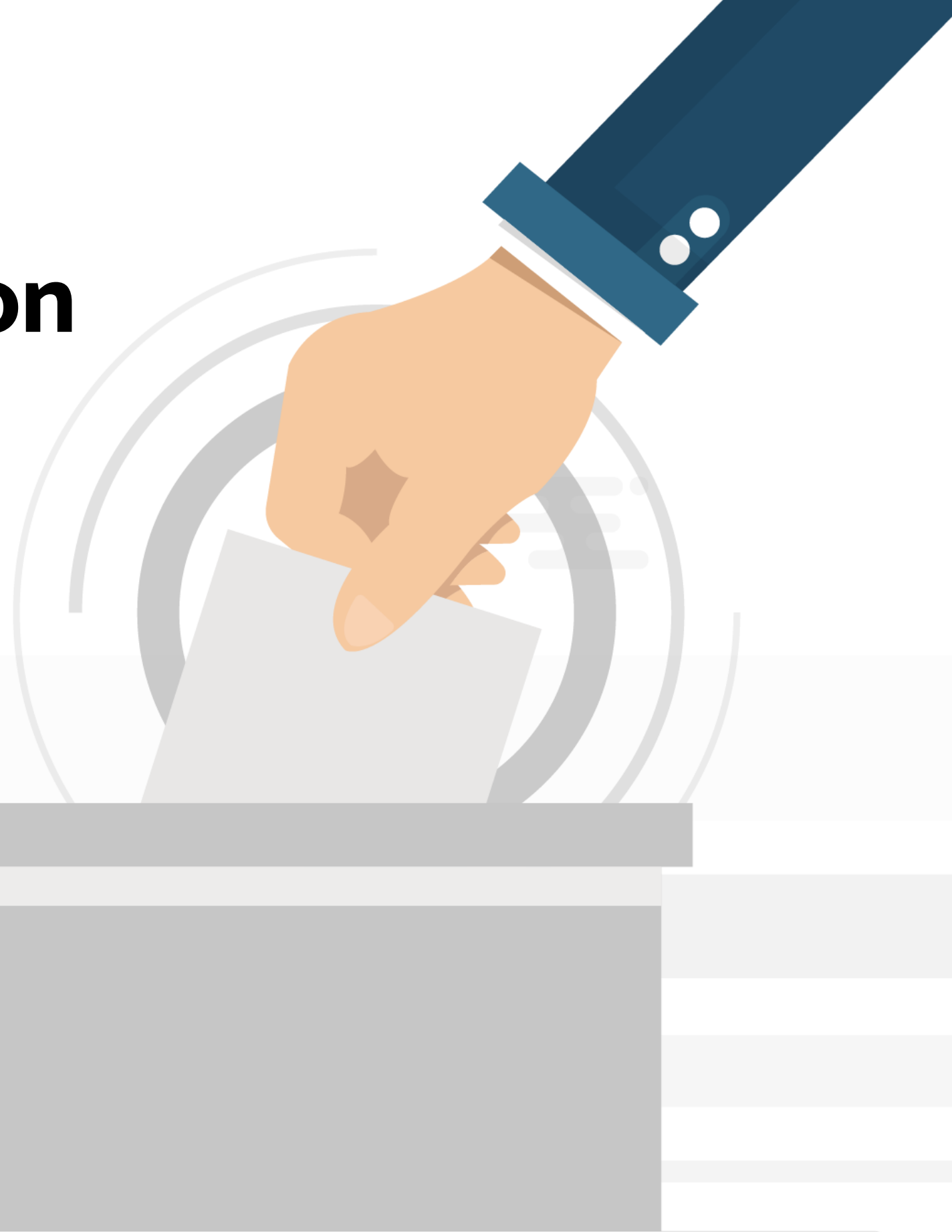


# Findings

- Candidates who participated in the first round of elections and monitored political parties posted 2,646 posts on Facebook and 290 on Instagram. These posts generated 2,535,669 interactions. Prior to the run-off, the two candidates posted 180 posts on both Facebook and Instagram, and these posts generated 640,696 interactions.
- In general, Facebook was more used by politicians and parties than Instagram. Only five presidential candidates used their Instagram account as a campaign tool, while no political party relied on this platform to actively promote its candidate. The number of interactions generated on Facebook was 12 times higher than on Instagram.
- Prior to the first round, the most active party on Facebook was Nostru Nostru, with 433 posts, and the most active candidate was Renato Usatii, with 353 posts. During the election campaign, the number of interactions on the pages of monitored candidates was about 8 times higher than on the pages of monitored parties.
- Renato Usatii was the most popular candidate on Facebook by the number of interactions, while the most popular party was the Action and Solidarity Party.
- The most frequently mentioned topics by number of posts were “Roads and infrastructure”, “Union with Romania”, “Salaries and Pensions”. The COVID-19 pandemic was only the fifth most focused topic. In this context, it is important to mention that this election campaign took place in the context of the alarming increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the Republic of Moldova.
- Posts about topics “Salaries and Pensions”, “Education” and “Corruption” generated the highest number of interactions on Facebook.
- Posts about the problems of the judiciary system, as well as those related to pensions and salaries were the most commented. Posts about the judiciary system generated the most negative emotions on Facebook.
- Prior to the first round, 71% of the total interactions generated on the monitored Facebook pages were accumulated by two candidates - Maia Sandu and Renato Usatii.
- In general, Youtube was not widely used as a campaign tool during the 2020 elections. Prior to the first rounds, only two out of eight candidates posted videos on their YouTube channels. Prior to the run-off, YouTube was used more intensively to spread false information.
- Registered candidates and parties spent about 40,616 euros for advertising on Facebook and Instagram between August 4 and October 29, 2020. Prior to the second round, Maia Sandu and Igor Dodon spent 11,896 euros on paid political advertising on Facebook.
- There were a total of 3,549 sponsored posts about social issues, elections or politics posted on Facebook and Instagram, with a total value of 63,590 euros or approximately 1.27 million lei, between August 4 and October 29.
- Prior to the first round, among presidential candidates, Renato Usatii spent the most money on advertising on social issues, elections and politics, starting from 4 August. At the same time, Dorin Chirtoaca was the only candidate who did not use a single euro for promotion on Facebook and Instagram, according to Facebook Ads Library.
- During the electoral campaign, Maia Sandu gathered 130 times more new fans on Facebook than Igor Dodon (38,684 vs. 298).
- Chisinau, Balti and Ungheni were the top three cities where most advertisements on social issues, elections or politics were targeted .
- Igor Dodon and Maia Sandu increased the impact of their posts on social networks in 2020. Igor Dodon managed to increase about 10 times the number of interactions with his posts, compared to the 2016 campaign. Maia Sandu's posts had 90,000 interactions more than in 2016.

# Presidential election in Moldova

Round 1 analysis





# Facebook: posts

Total number of posts by candidates (2-30 October 2020)



Renato Usatîi



Dorin Chirtoacă



Octavian Țicu



Igor Dodon



Violeta Ivanov



Andrei Năstase



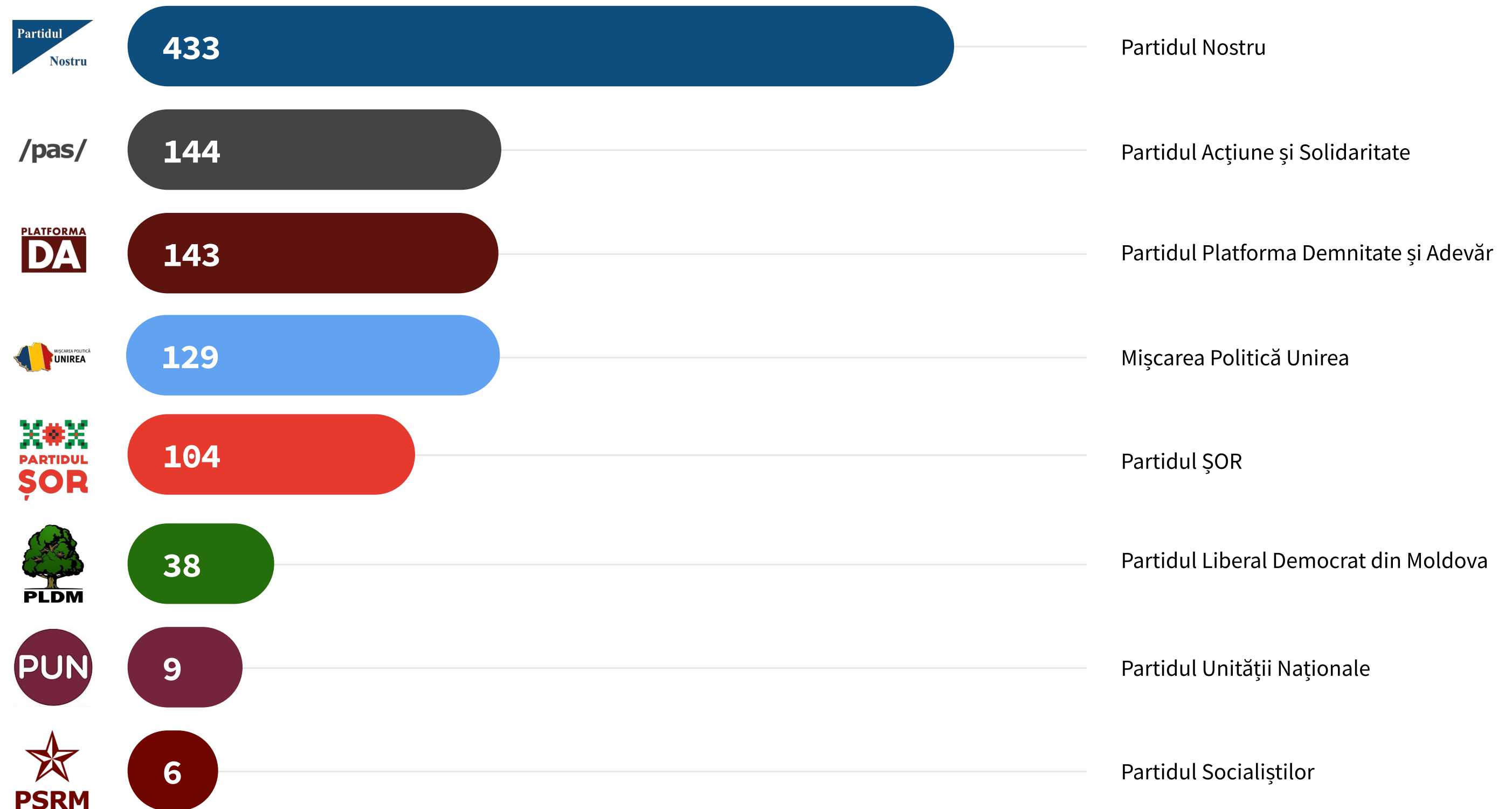
Maia Sandu



Tudor Deliu

# Facebook: posts

Total number of posts by parties (2–30 October 2020)

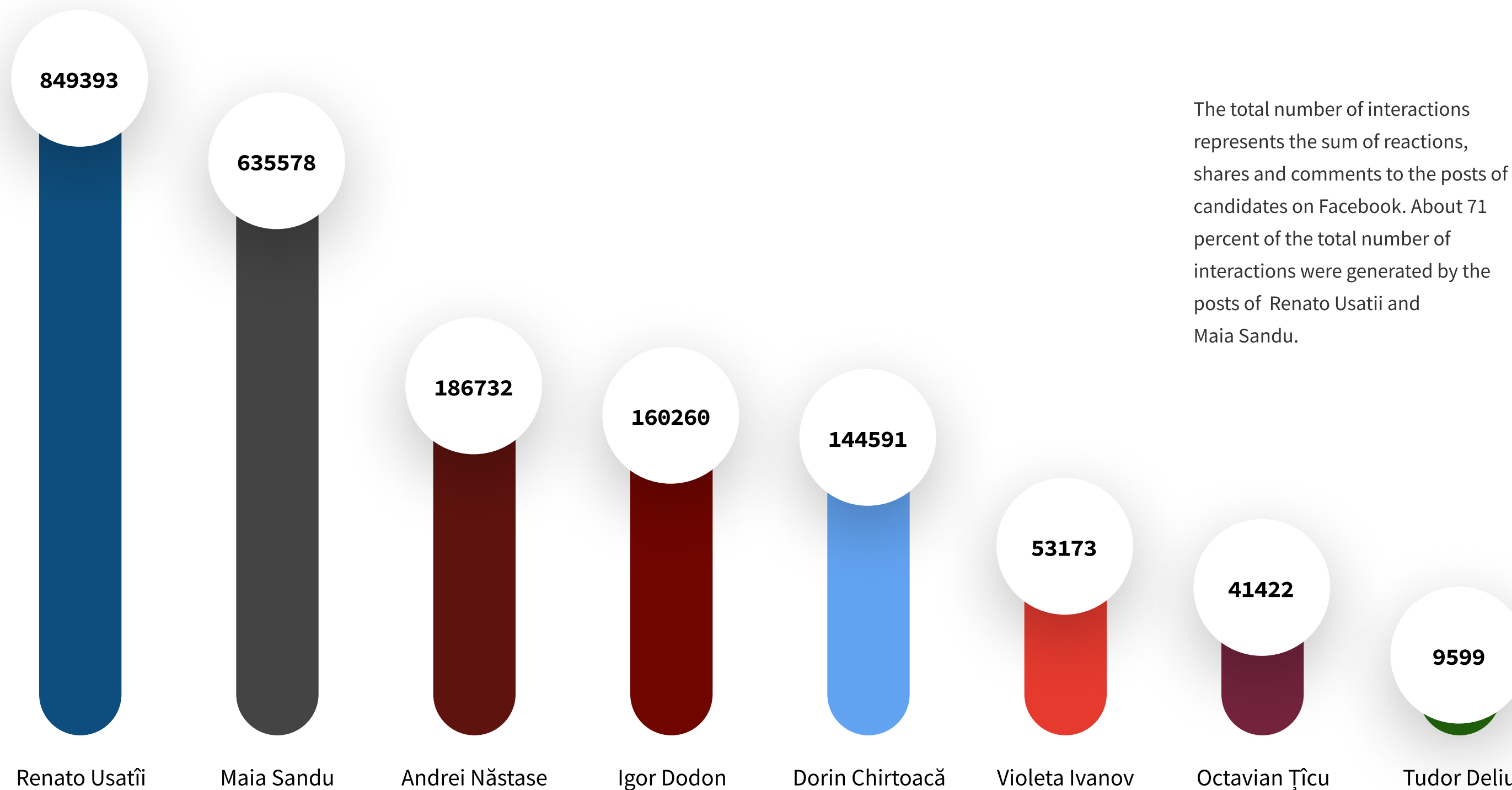


# Facebook: posts

Total number of interactions with posts of candidates (2–30 October 2020)

# 2.08

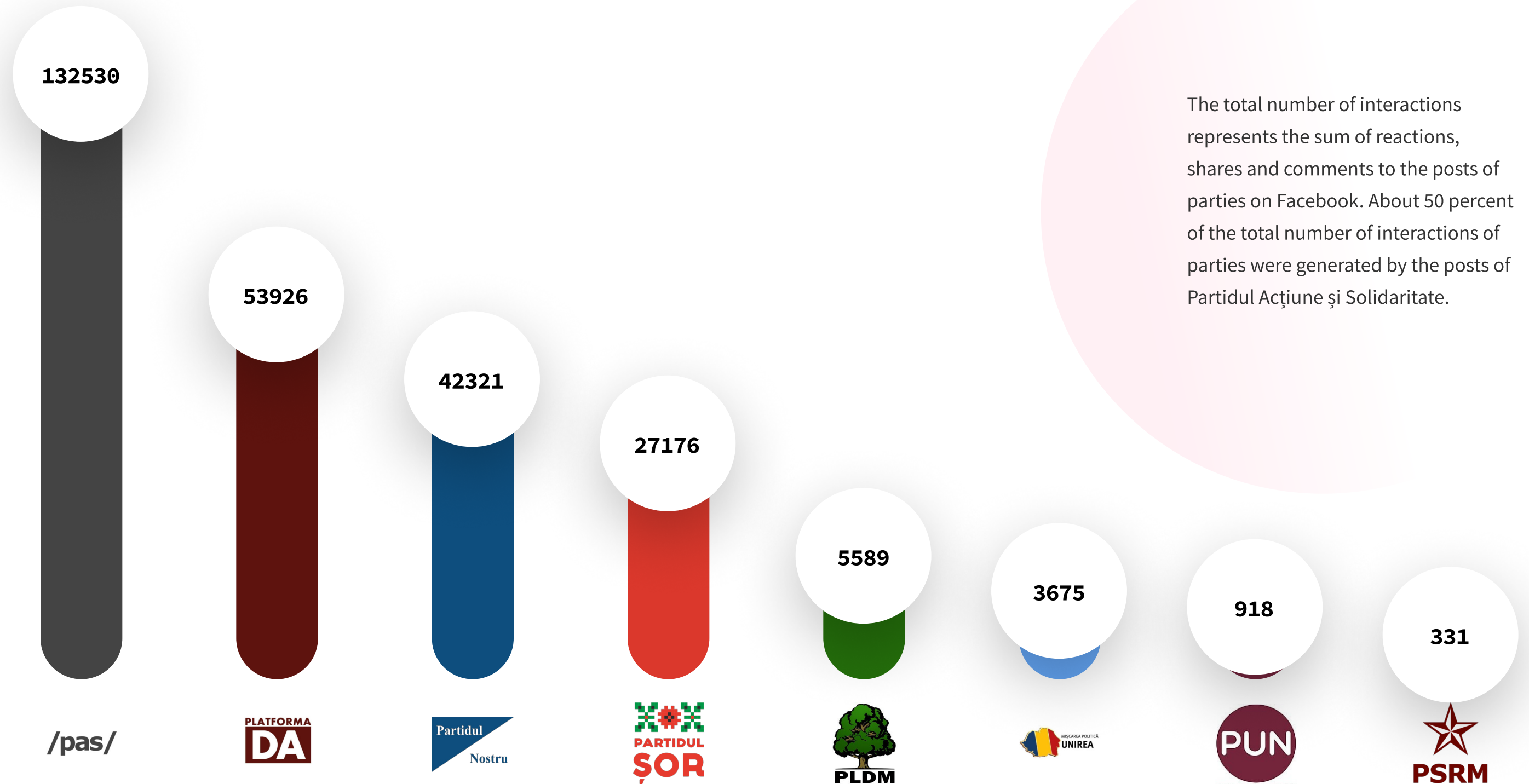
mln total interactions



The total number of interactions represents the sum of reactions, shares and comments to the posts of candidates on Facebook. About 71 percent of the total number of interactions were generated by the posts of Renato Usatii and Maia Sandu.

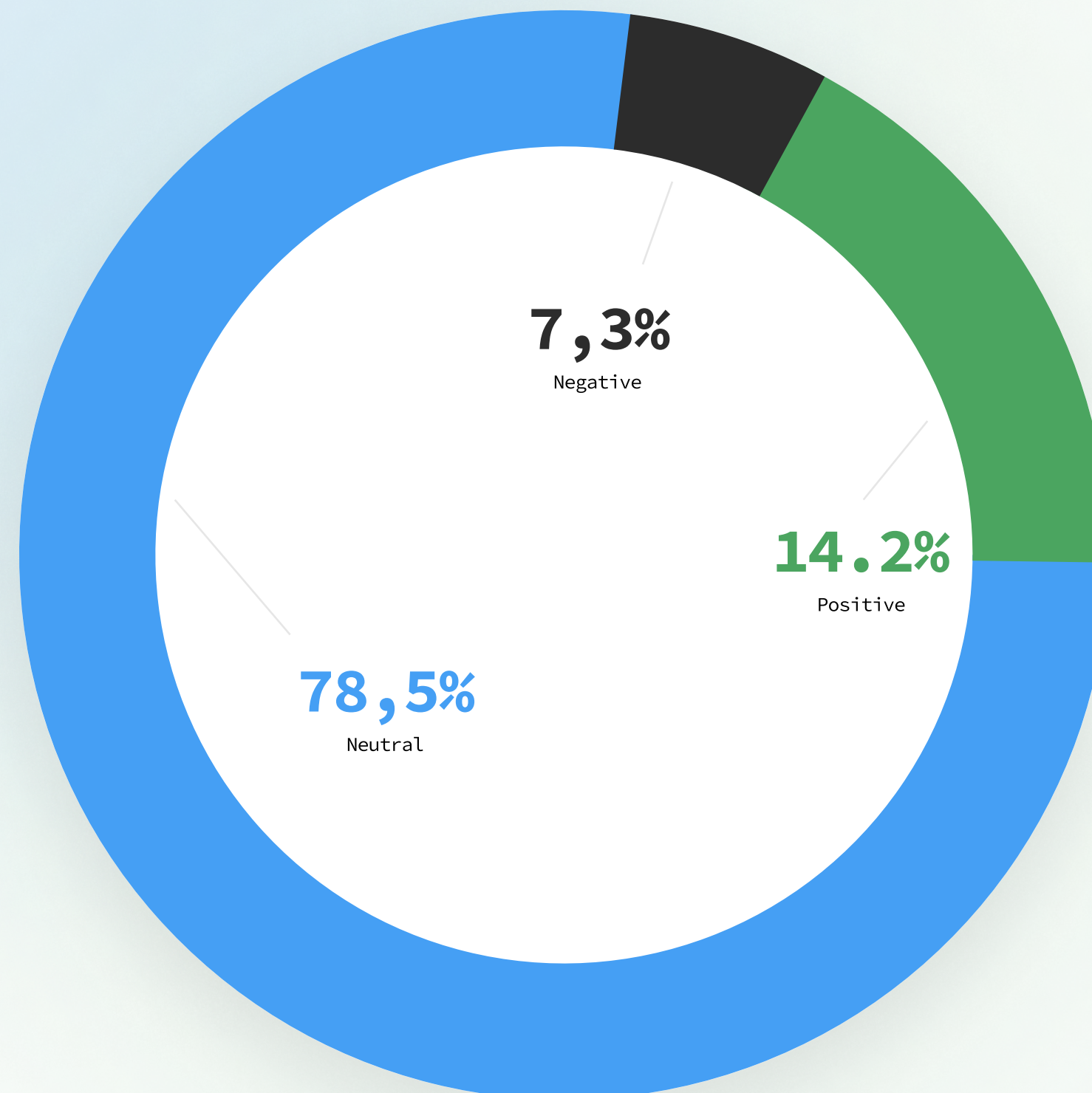
# Facebook: posts

Total number of interactions with posts of parties (2-30 October 2020)



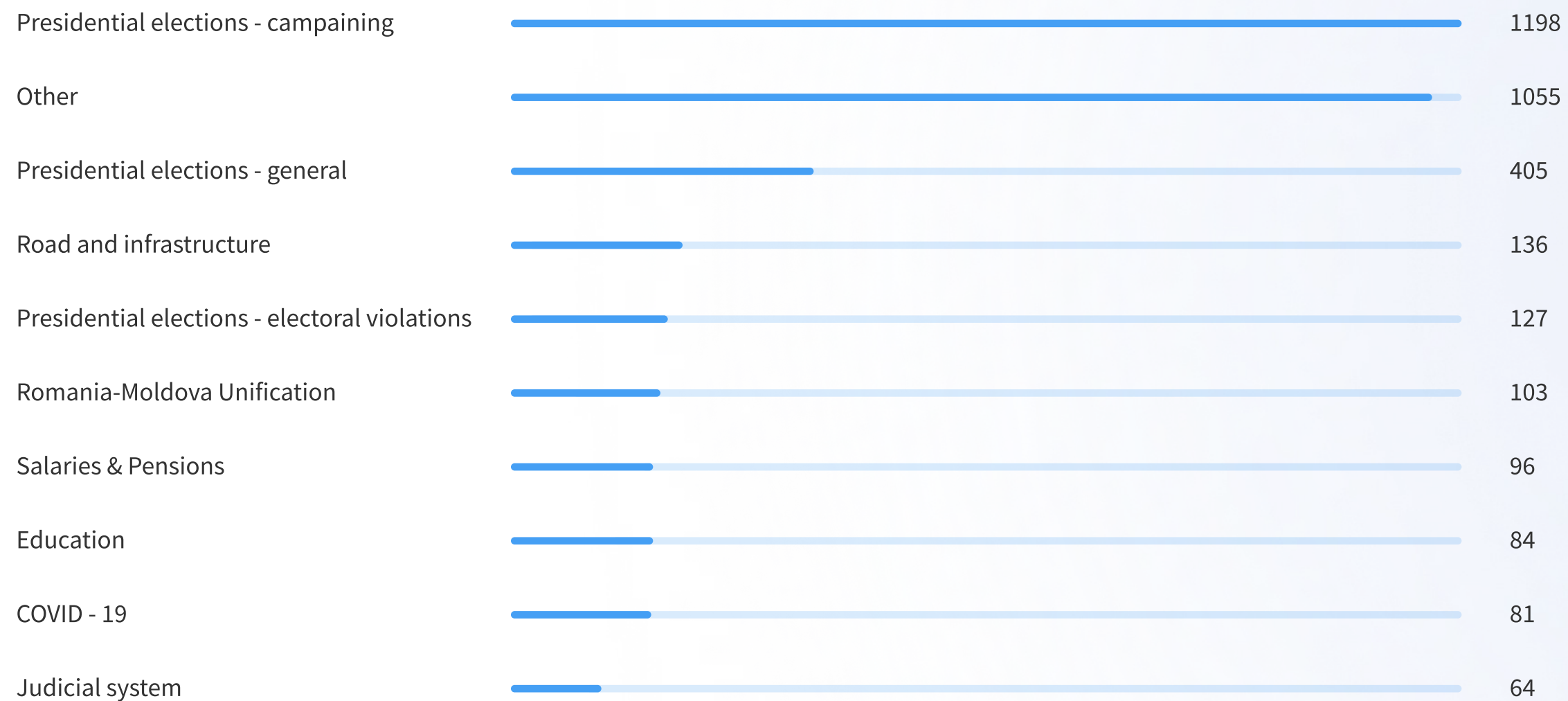
# Facebook posts' tone of voice

What was the tone of voice used by politicians and parties in their Facebook posts 2.10–30.10.2020



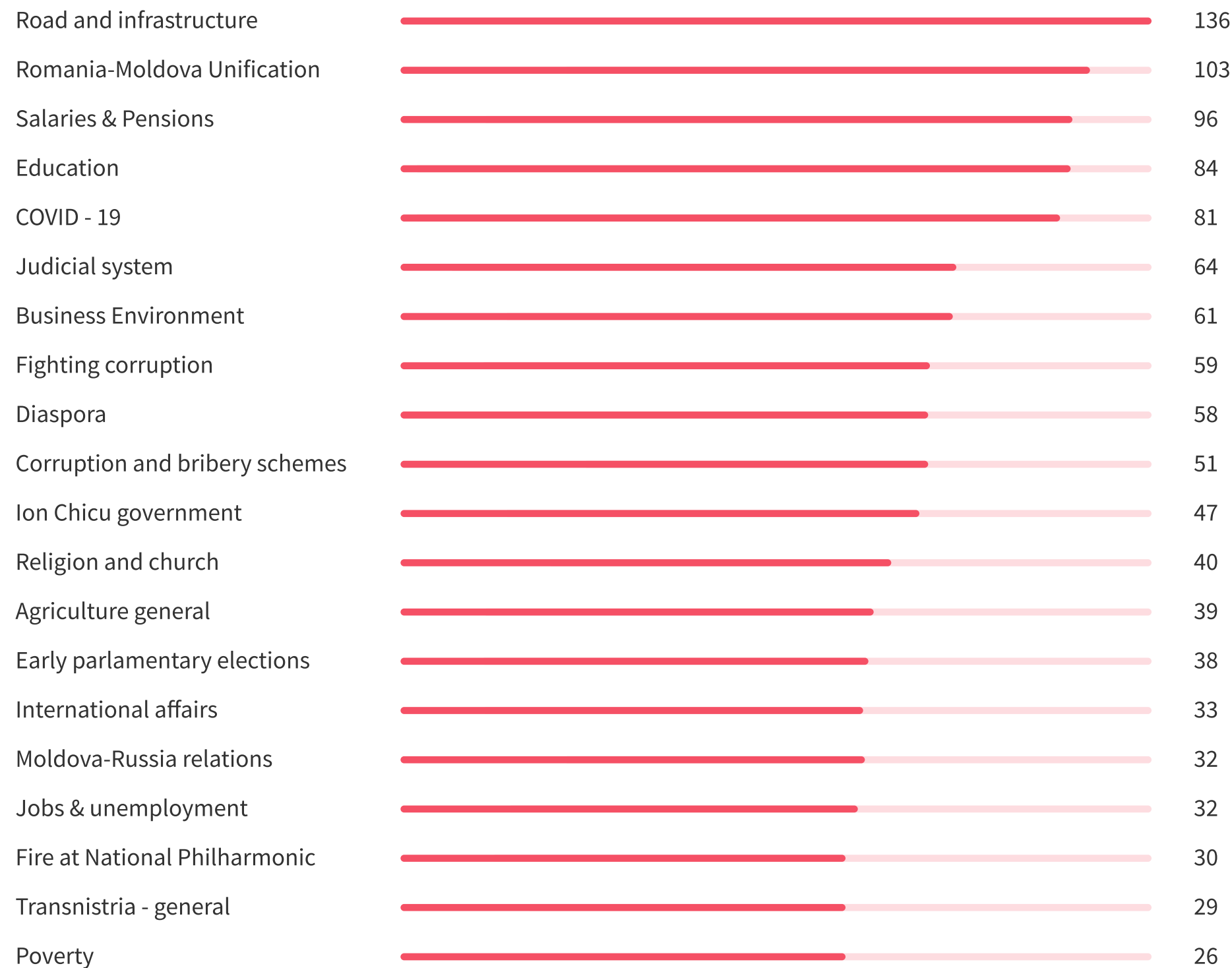
# Facebook: posts

Top 10 issues discussed by parties and politicians during (1.09 - 30.10.2020)



# Facebook: posts

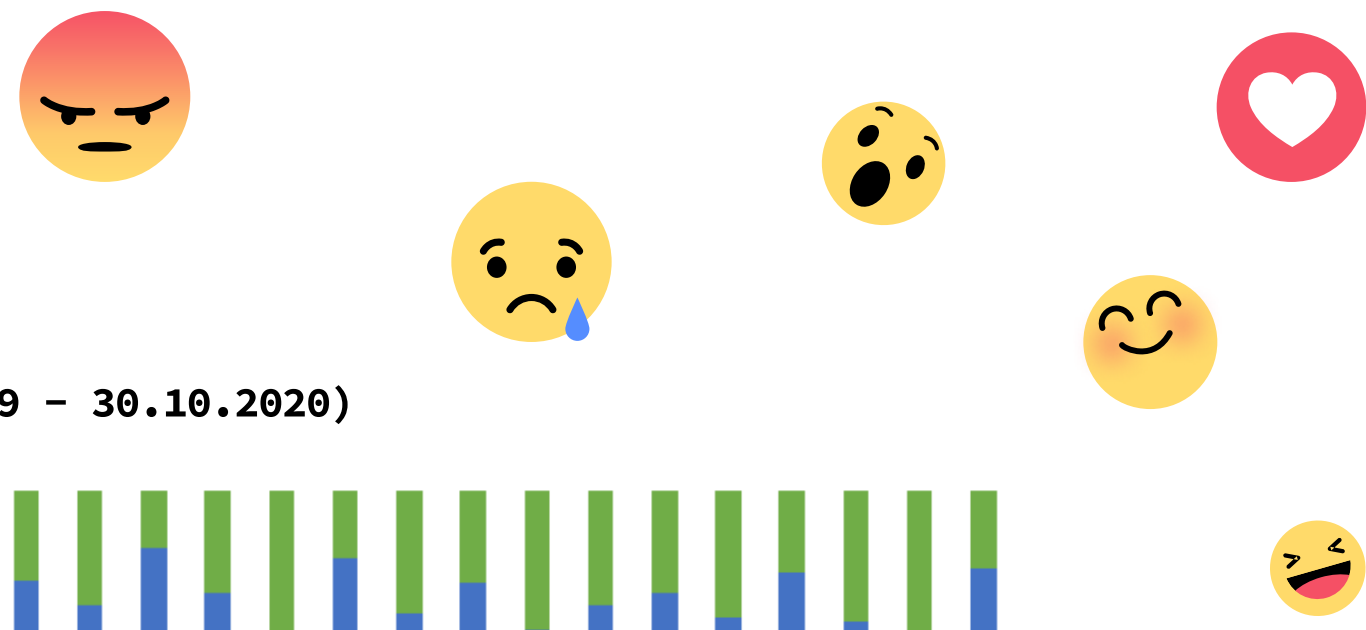
## Top 20 issues discussed by parties and politicians (1.09 – 30.10.2020)



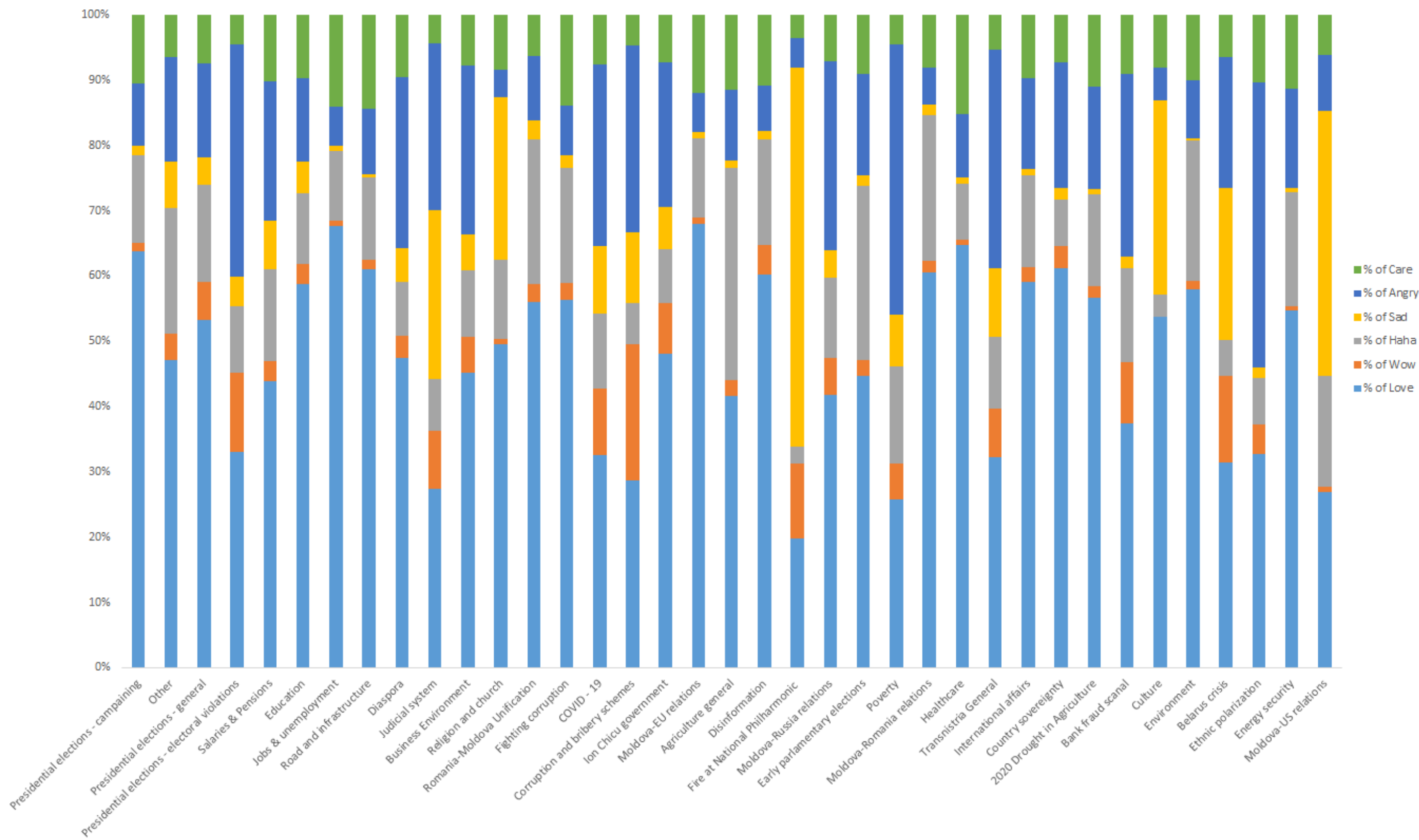
The graph includes issues that were discussed by politicians and parties in their posts on Facebook, excluding the “Other” and the election related categories.



# Facebook: posts



Citizens' emotions (excluding likes) to posts by top issues (1.09 - 30.10.2020)





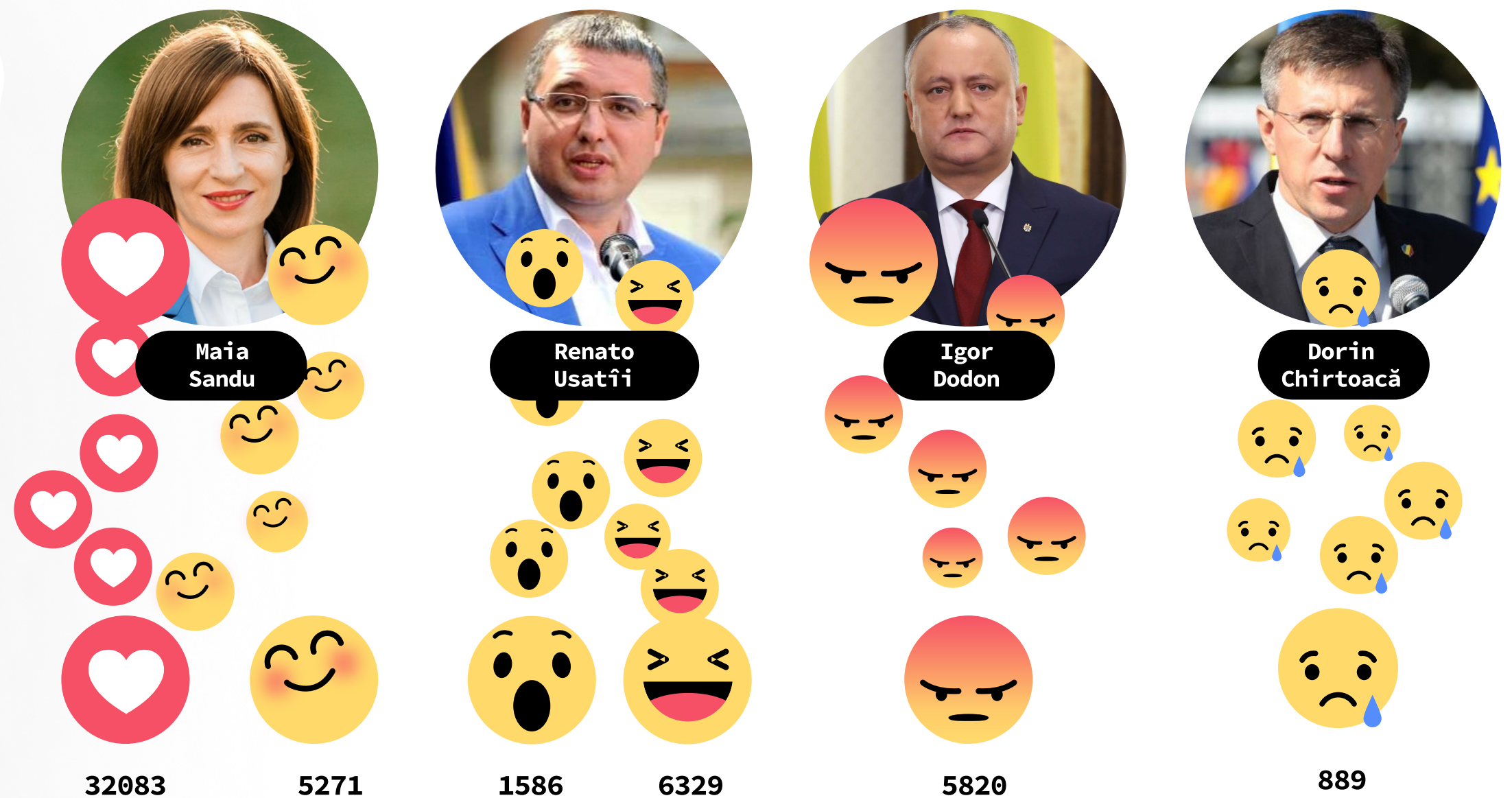
# Facebook: posts

Number of emotions that candidates received the most (2-30 October 2020)

On this page, the politicians who received the most emotions out of the 6 available on Facebook are presented.

Likes were not taken into account because they express general agreement with the post, while emotions express a wider range of feelings.

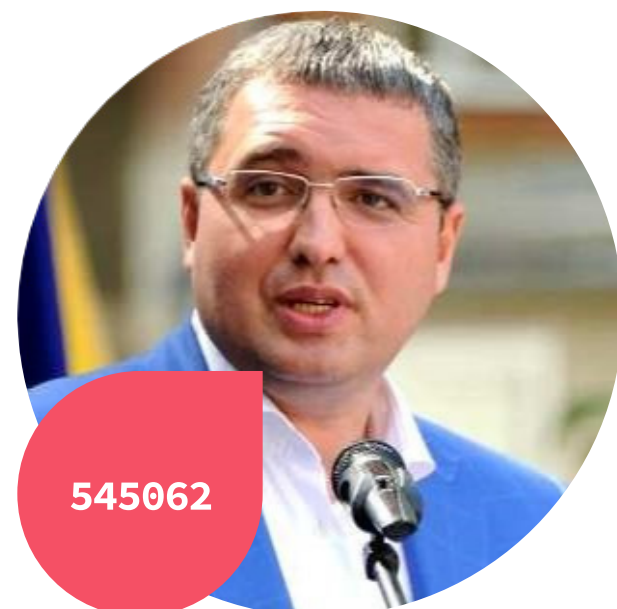
Compared to other candidates, Maia Sandu received the most of "Love" and "Care" reactions, Renato Usatii received the most reactions of "Wow" and "Haha", Igor Dodon received the most emotions of "Anger" and Dorin Chirtoaca received the most of "Sad" emotions.



# Facebook: posts

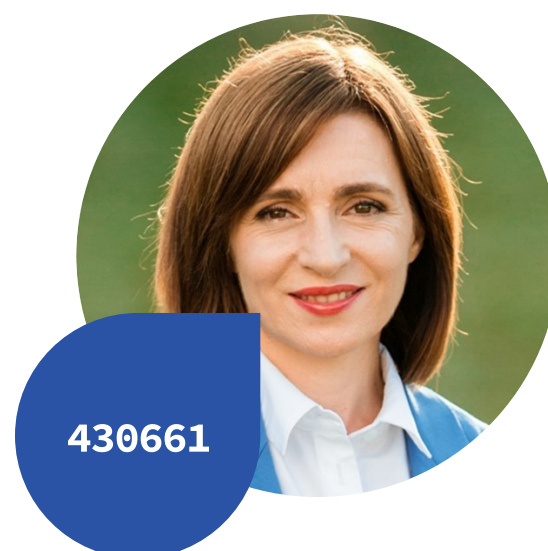


Most liked politicians on Facebook (2-30 October 2020)



545062

**Renato Usatîi**



430661

**Maia Sandu**



108454

**Andrei Năstase**



103698

**Igor Dodon**



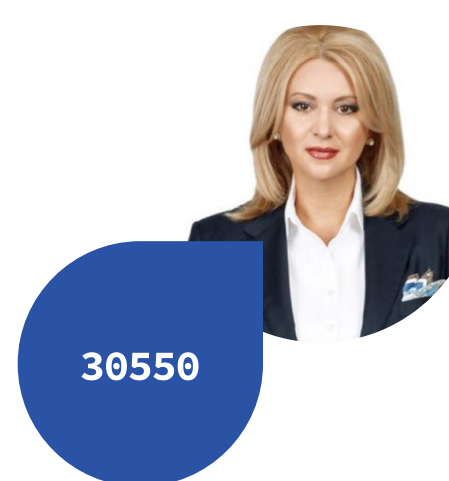
86691

**Dorin Chirtoacă**



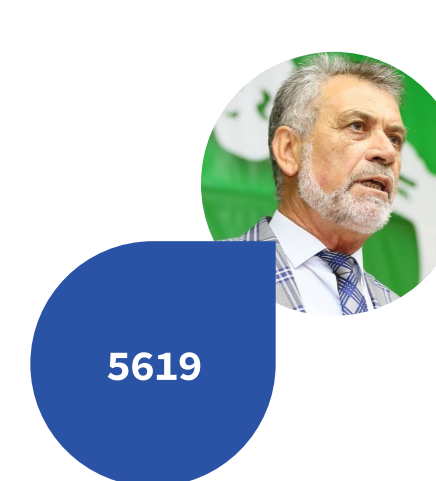
31782

**Octavian Țicu**



30550

**Violeta Ivanov**

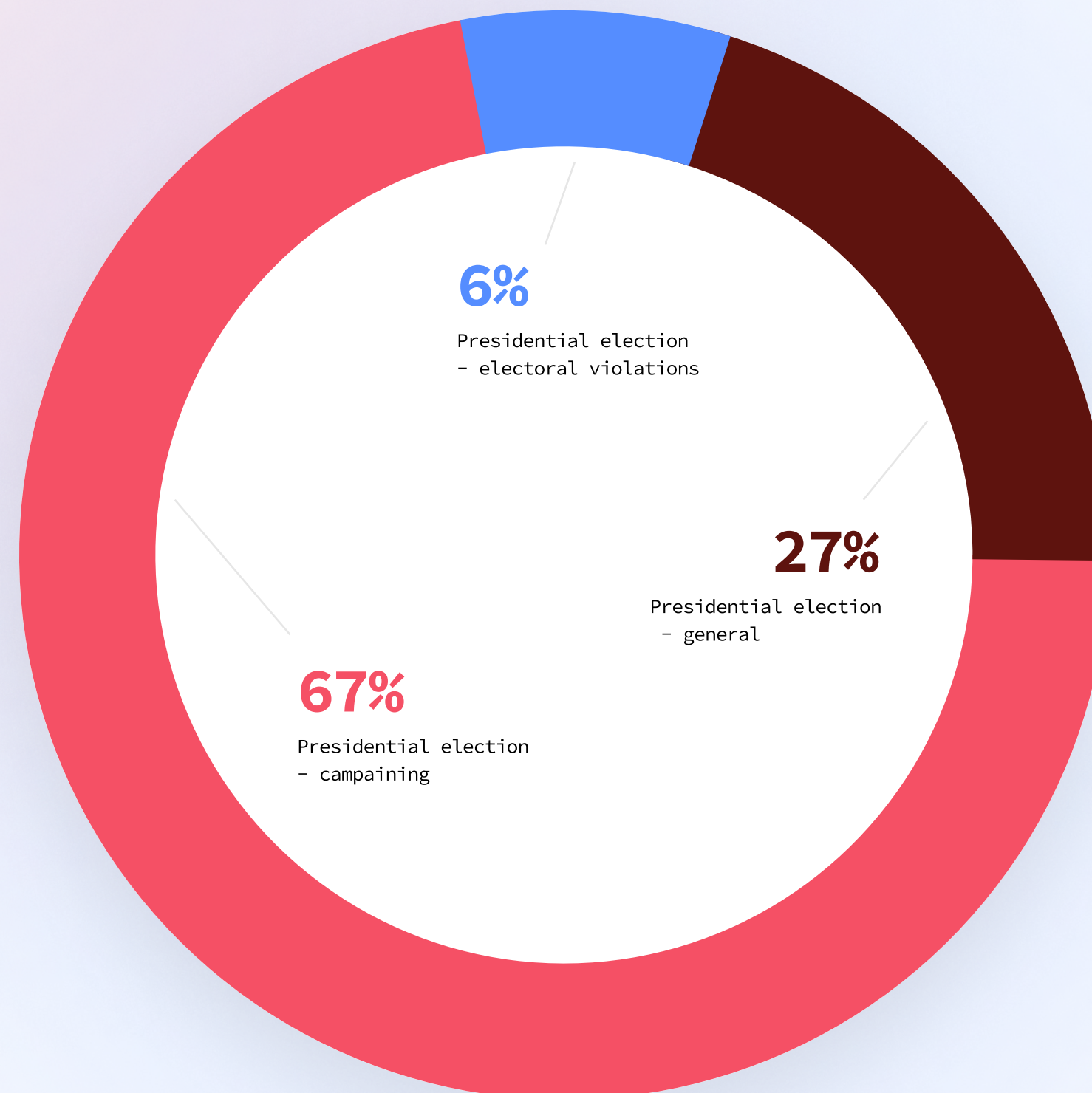


5619

**Tudor Deliu**

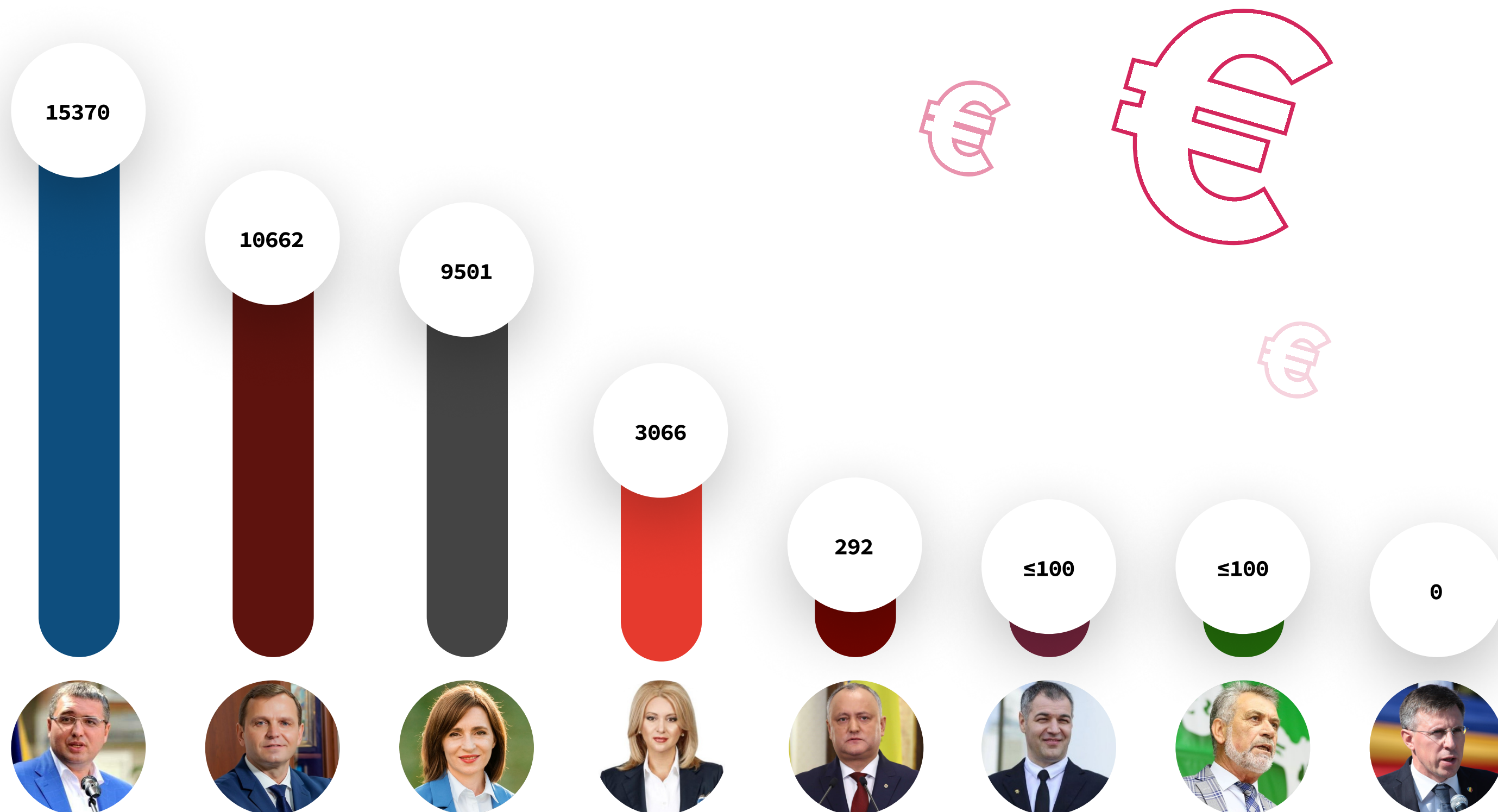
# Facebook: posts

How politicians and parties spoke about the presidential election (1.09 - 30.10.2020)



# Facebook Ads spendings

According to Facebook Ad Library (4 August – 27 October 2020)



# Facebook: Top posts made by politicians



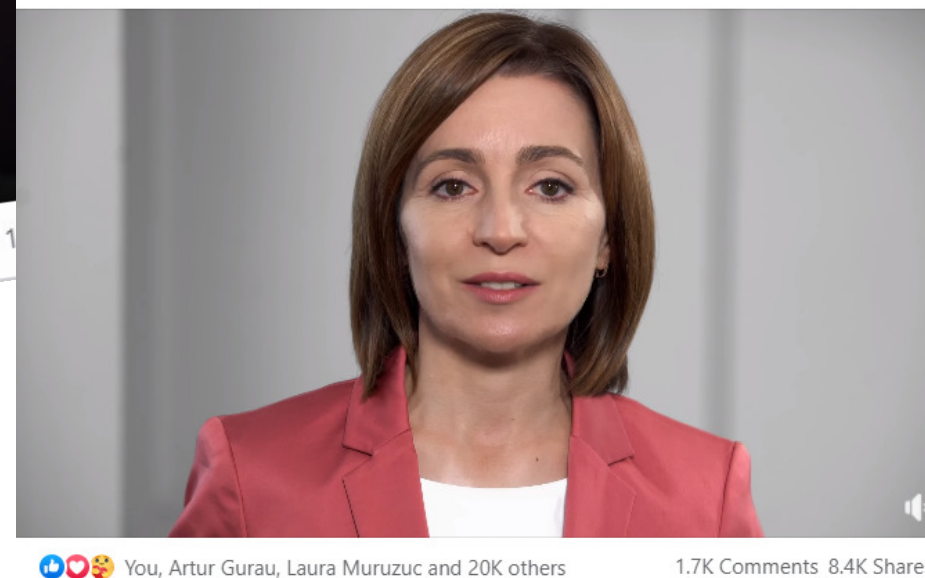
Maia Sandu ✓  
October 29 · 🌐

Dragi femei, vreau să vă spun un lucru pe care îl auziți prea rar, însă îl știți cu toată inima: VOI PUTEȚI!

Puteți deveni orice, puteți face orice.  
Noi, împreună, putem face ordine în Moldova. Eu vă promit că voi munci așa cum o faceți voi, zi de zi, cu dăruire, fără să mă plâng, cu răbdare și responsabilitate față de cei din jur. Dar nu pot face asta singură. Am nevoie de voi.

Dragi femei, noi putem conduce țara cu demnitate și o putem face bine.  
Pe 1 noiembrie ieșiți la vot!

#oamenibun



# Facebook: Top posts made by parties

**Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate** ✓  
October 30 · 🌐

Distribuie mai departe. Pe 1 noiembrie, votează Maia Sandu.

1	<b>USATĂ RENATO</b> PARTIDUL POLITIC „PARTIDUL NAȚIONALIST”	🗳️
DA	<b>NĂSTASE ANDREI</b> PARTIDUL POLITIC „ALTERNANȚA DEMOCRATICĂ ȘI JUSTĂ”	🗳️
PLC	<b>DELIU TUDOR</b> PARTIDUL LIBERAL DEMOCRAT DIN MOLDOVA	🗳️
PLC	<b>DODON IGOR</b> CANDIDAT INDIVIDUAL	🗳️
PLC	<b>IVANOV VIOLETA</b> PARTIDUL POLITIC „DA”	🗳️
<b>MAIA SANDU</b>	<b>SANDU MAIA</b> PARTIDUL POLITIC „PARTIDUL ACȚIUNE ȘI SOLIDARITATE”	<b>VOTAT</b>
PLC	<b>ȚUCU OCTAVIAN</b> PARTIDUL POLITIC „PARTIDUL UNIFICĂRII NAȚIONALE”	🗳️
PLC	<b>CHIRTOACĂ DORIN</b> MOLDOVA DEMOCRATICĂ EUROPEANĂ	🗳️

**Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate** ✓  
September 8 · 🌐

Maia Sandu, despre indiferența lui Dodon față de copiii din Moldova:  
„Îl interesau pe Igor Dodon copiii când a deportat profesorii turci? S-a gândit la copiii acelor oameni nevinovați? Toată perioada aceasta de 4 ani s-a gândit la copiii acestei țări, mulți dintre care nu au cu ce se îmbrăca pentru a merge la școală? S-a gândit doar la proprii copii, nu s-a gândit la sărăcia din țară. Eu am mers toată vara prin țară și sărăcia este o problemă majoră, toată lumea se plânge că nu știe dacă peste o lună, două va avea cu ce să-și întrețină familia. Ce a făcut Igor Dodon? În țară e haos, e dezordine. Nu știe să administreze absolut nimic. Toată lumea și-a dat seama că, pe lângă faptul că e corupt și mincinos, este și incompetent”.

Liliana Nicolaescu-Onofrei and 2.2K others · 447 Comments · 1.5K Shares

**Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate** ✓  
September 5 · 🌐

Maia Sandu, despre indexarea cu 1% a pensiilor: „Vreau să arăt cetățenilor ce înseamnă să fie mințiți. Vedeți aici promisiunea lui Igor Dodon de a majora pensiile. Dacă spunea în 2017 că vrea să majoreze pensiile cu 20%, iată acum ne-am pomenit cu o indexare de 1,07% ce înseamnă 19 lei.”

Alex Alex and 1.9K others · 362 Comments · 1.7K Shares

Valentin Balan, Baltag Stela and 3.2K others · 572 Comments · 1.3K Shares

# Facebook: Top mass-media posts

**TV8.MD** ✓  
October 16 · 🌐

O deputată a mâncat zeamă, a navigat pe internet și a vorbit nestingherit la telefon, chiar în timpul unei ședințe la Parlament. Este vorba despre socialista Alla Dolință, care a participat la ședința online a Comisiei juridice, numiri și imunități fiind într-un local. La un moment dat, aleasa poporului a servit zeamă chiar în fața camerei, sub privirile colegilor. Președintele Comisiei, Vasile Bolea, i-a dorit poftă bună, dar deputata și-a continuat prânzul. Astăzi, aceasta a refuzat să discute cu noi pentru comentariu.



Grigore Novac · Да · serghel.sirbu@parlament.md · EN

Evghenia Stupac and 7.5K others · 1.1K Comments · 3.2K Shares

**Ziarul de Gardă** ✓  
October 24 · 🌐

Deși în raportul său de activitate, prezentat la trei ani și jumătate de mandat, Igor Dodon ne asigura că a reușit să realizeze în proporție de 80-85% angajamentele asumate în programul său electoral din 2016, în realitate, o bună parte dintre promisiuni au rămas doar pe hârtie, iar altele s-au materializat parțial.

[Ziarul de Gardă](#) a analizat cum și-a onorat șeful statului promisiunile electorale din 2016 în cei patru ani de mandat prezidențial.


youtube.com  
26 august 2020



Ion Dabija, Nadia Cojocari and 6.1K others · 1.4K Comments · 2.6K Shares

**Jurnal.md**  
October 24 · 🌐

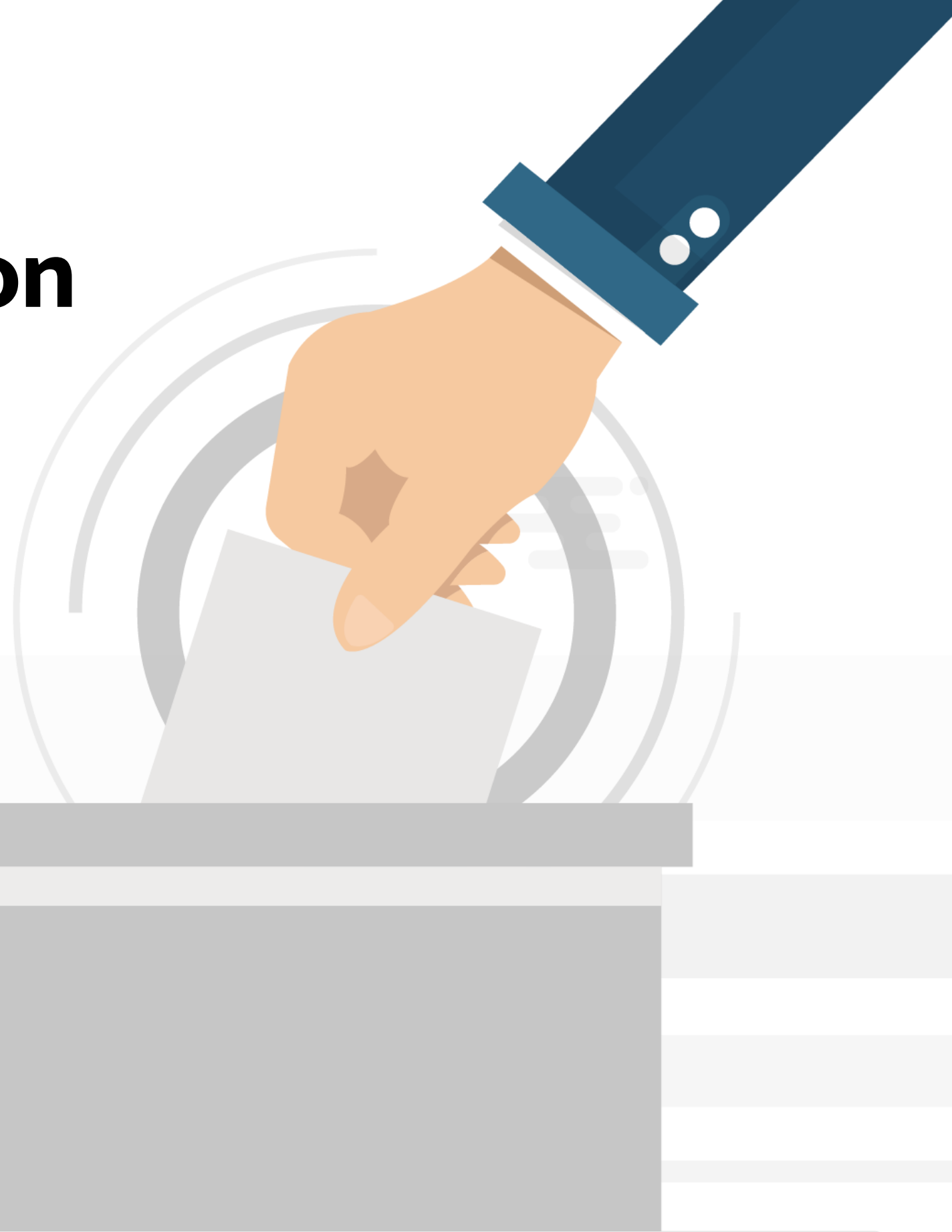
Un cetățean care a dorit să-i adreseze întrebări candidatului independent la alegerile prezidențiale, nu a fost lăsat de către paza acestuia.



Petru Turcanu and 3.6K others · 488 Comments · 2.6K Shares

# Presidential election in Moldova

Round II analysis





## Who won the second round of elections in Social Media?

02-13 November 2020



Maia Sandu



Igor Dodon

### Total number of interactions to posts on Facebook and Instagram



### Total number of reactions to posts on Facebook and Instagram



### Total number of posts on Facebook and Instagram



### Total number of comments to Facebook posts



### Total number of shares of Facebook posts



# Who won the second round of elections in social media?

02-13 November 2020



**Maia Sandu**



**1,266,100**



**59,575**



**Igor Dodon**



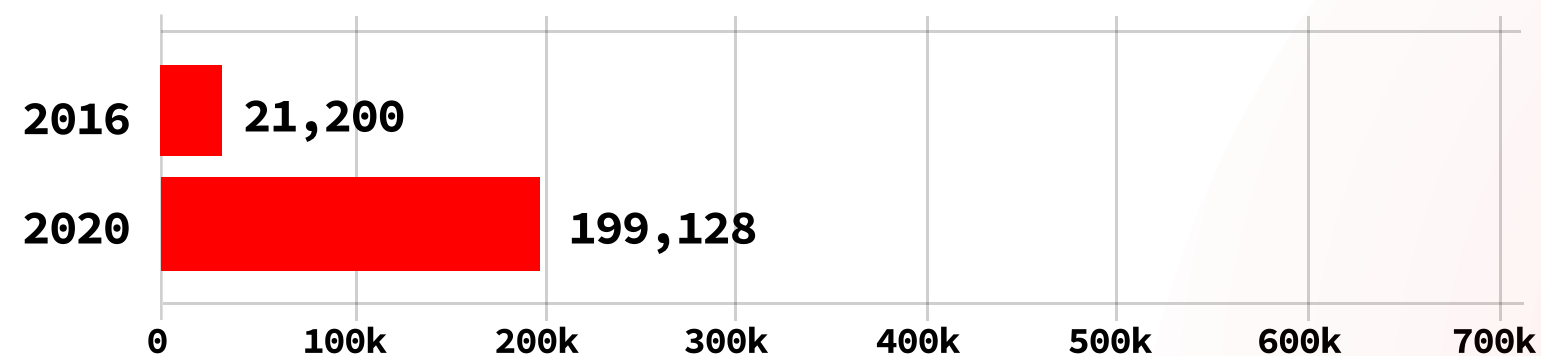
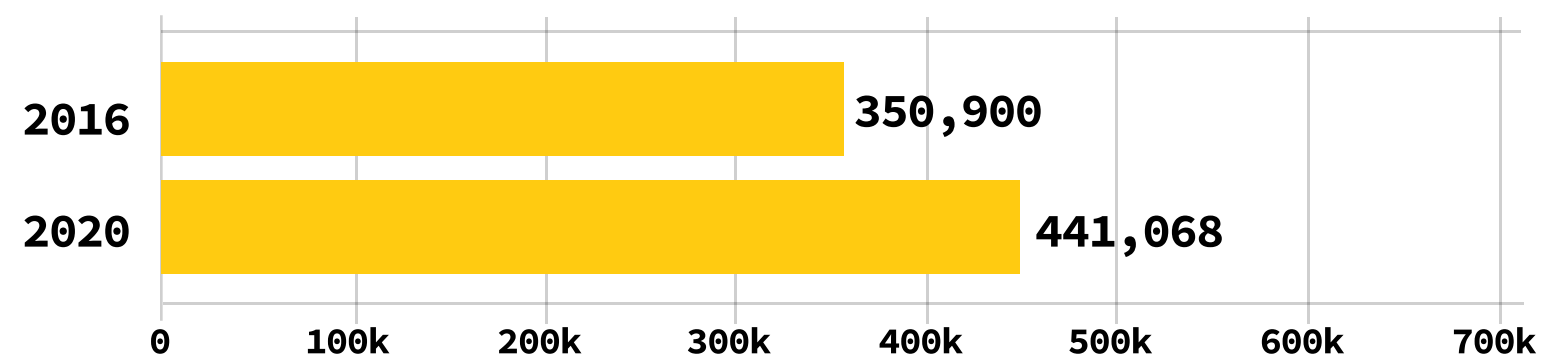
**0**



**1,327,561**

# Presidential election 2016 vs 2020

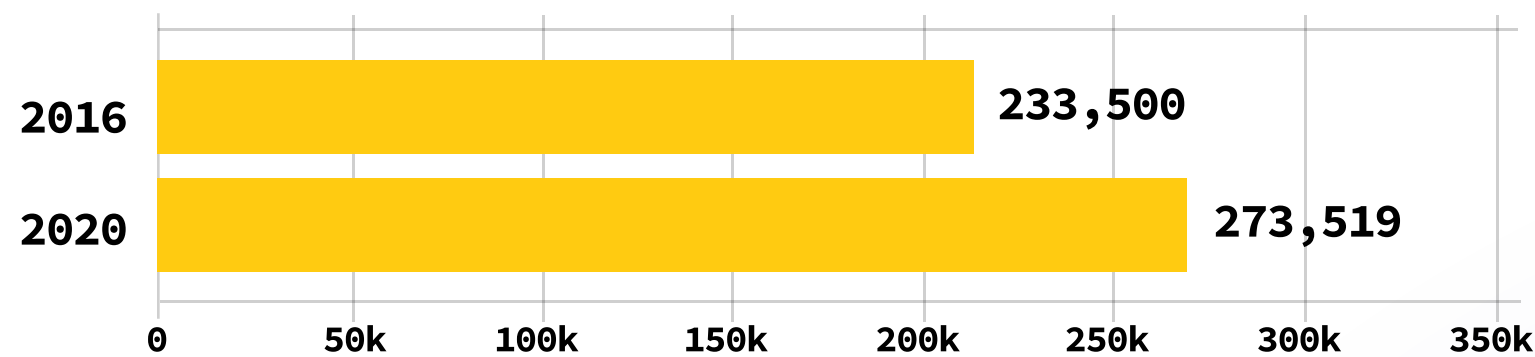
Comparison of the number of interactions on Facebook



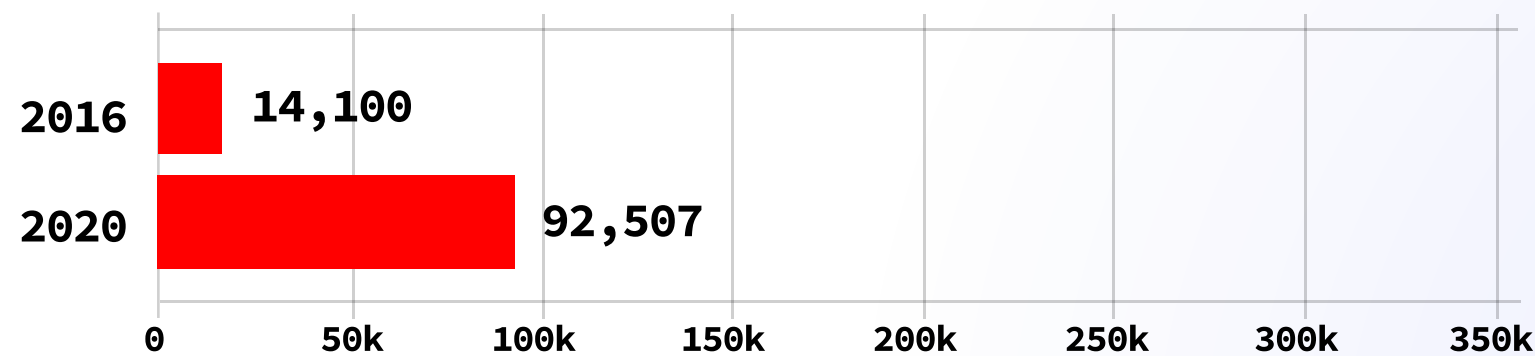
Both candidates increased the impact of their posts on social media in 2020. Igor Dodon managed to increase the number of interactions with his posts by about 10 times, compared to the 2016 campaign. Maia Sandu's posts had 90,000 more interactions than in 2016.

# Presidential election 2016 vs 2020

Comparison of the number of reactions on Facebook

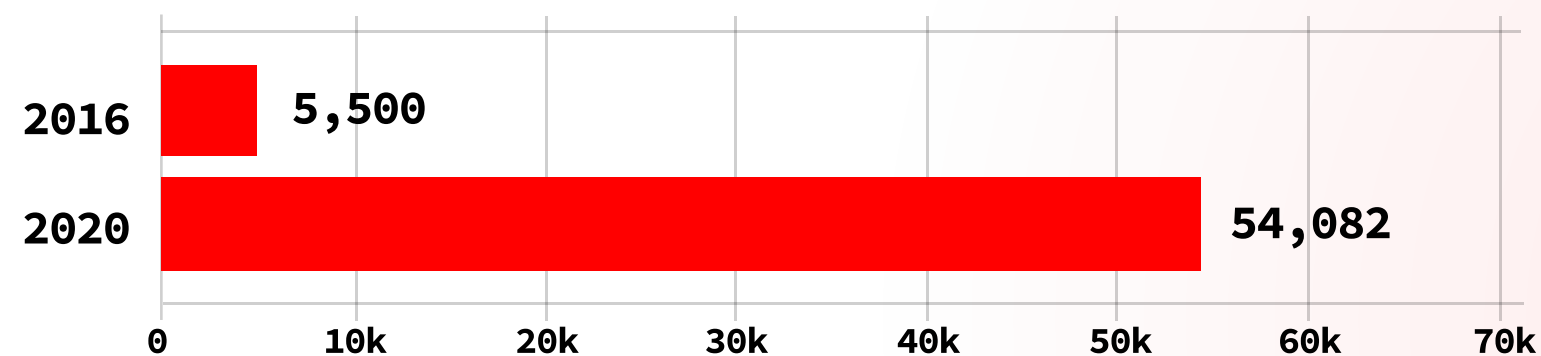
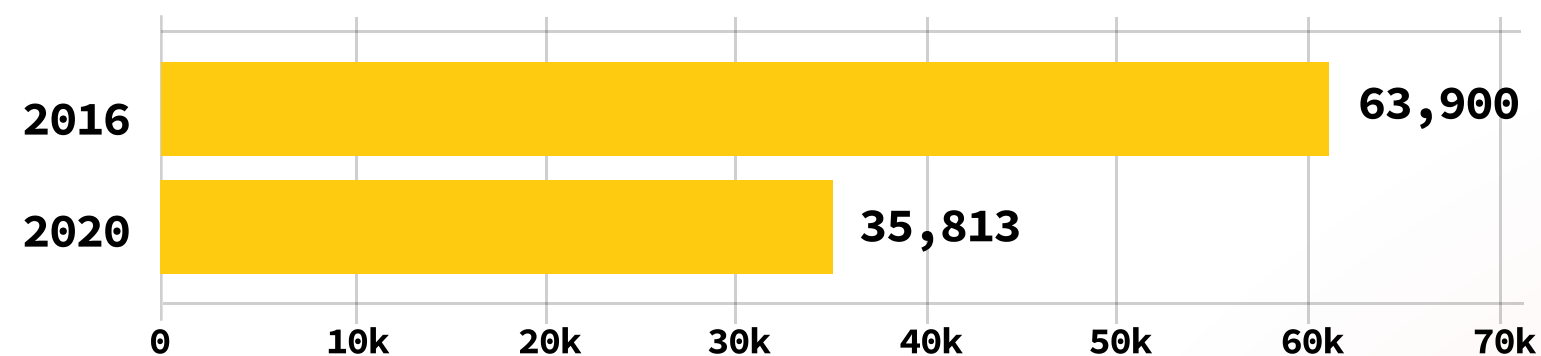


Igor Dodon's more active presence on social media made people appreciate his posts much more often than they did in 2016. Even so, Maia Sandu remains the leader in this regard with over 273,000 reactions from citizens to her posts.



# Presidential election 2016 vs 2020

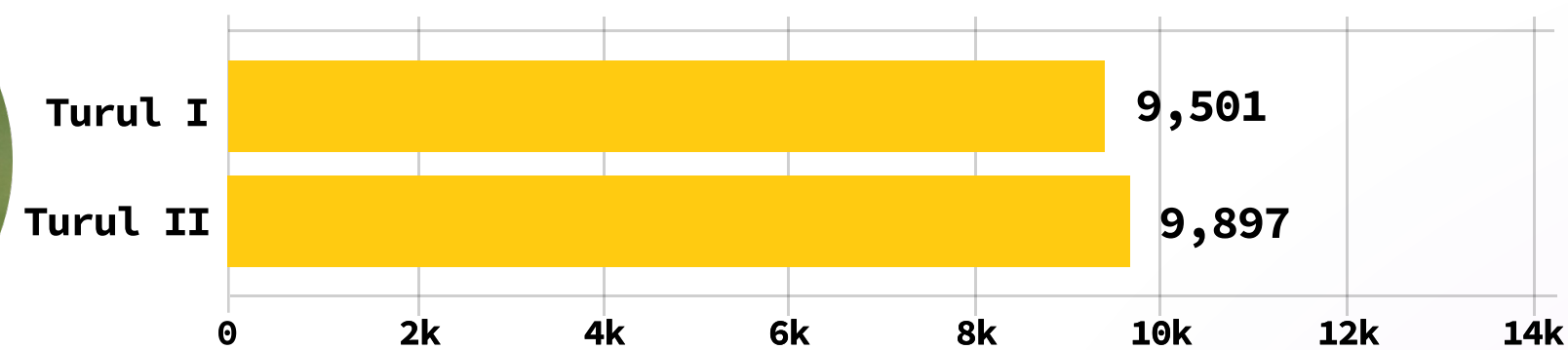
Comparison of the number of comments on Facebook



Compared to the 2016 election campaign, the number of comments on Maia Sandu's posts decreased about 2 times. At the same time, Igor Dodon's posts accumulated 10 times more comments than 4 years ago, over 54,000.

# Presidential election Round I vs Round II

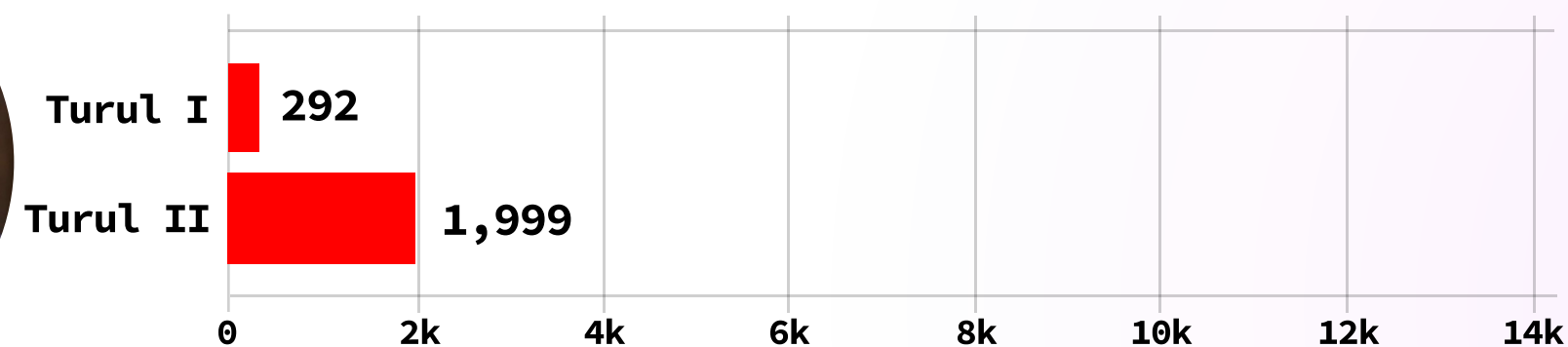
## Comparison of the Facebook Ads budget in Round I and Round II



The Facebook Ads advertising budget refers to the advertisements made by the candidates on the social networks Facebook and Instagram. Maia Sandu had much higher expenses than her opponent, both in Round I and Round II. In total, the two candidates spent at least 21,000 EURO on the two social networks in the two rounds.

Please note that the monitored periods are as follows:

Round I - 2-27 October 2020  
Round II - 2-13 November 2020



# Increase in the number of fans during the electoral campaigning



38,684



298

Throughout the electoral campaign, both candidates increased the number of page fans. While Igor Dodon gained 298 new fans on his Facebook page, Maia Sandu gained about 130 times more fans than his opponent. These data refer to the election campaign in both the first and second rounds.

# Cases of denigration of candidates through false or unverified information

Misleading and false information in the media are gradually dismantled by the organizations that monitor this phenomenon. On social networks, however, mis/disinformation or 'fake' news type of posts are more difficult to control and review. Manipulation practices used during this election period rely on the same old methods: fake information is being published on anonymous pages/channels and subsequently taken over by official publications. False profiles are the first to spread false information. Therefore, it becomes widespread by citizens and sometimes even by high-ranking politicians. In this electoral campaign, at least eleven Facebook pages which distributed derogatory information about the candidates were identified. Although the cumulative number of fans of these pages is around 370,000, the impact generated by them reached a far bigger number. Usually, it is impossible to identify who is behind these pages, instead we can see who they favor or disadvantage.

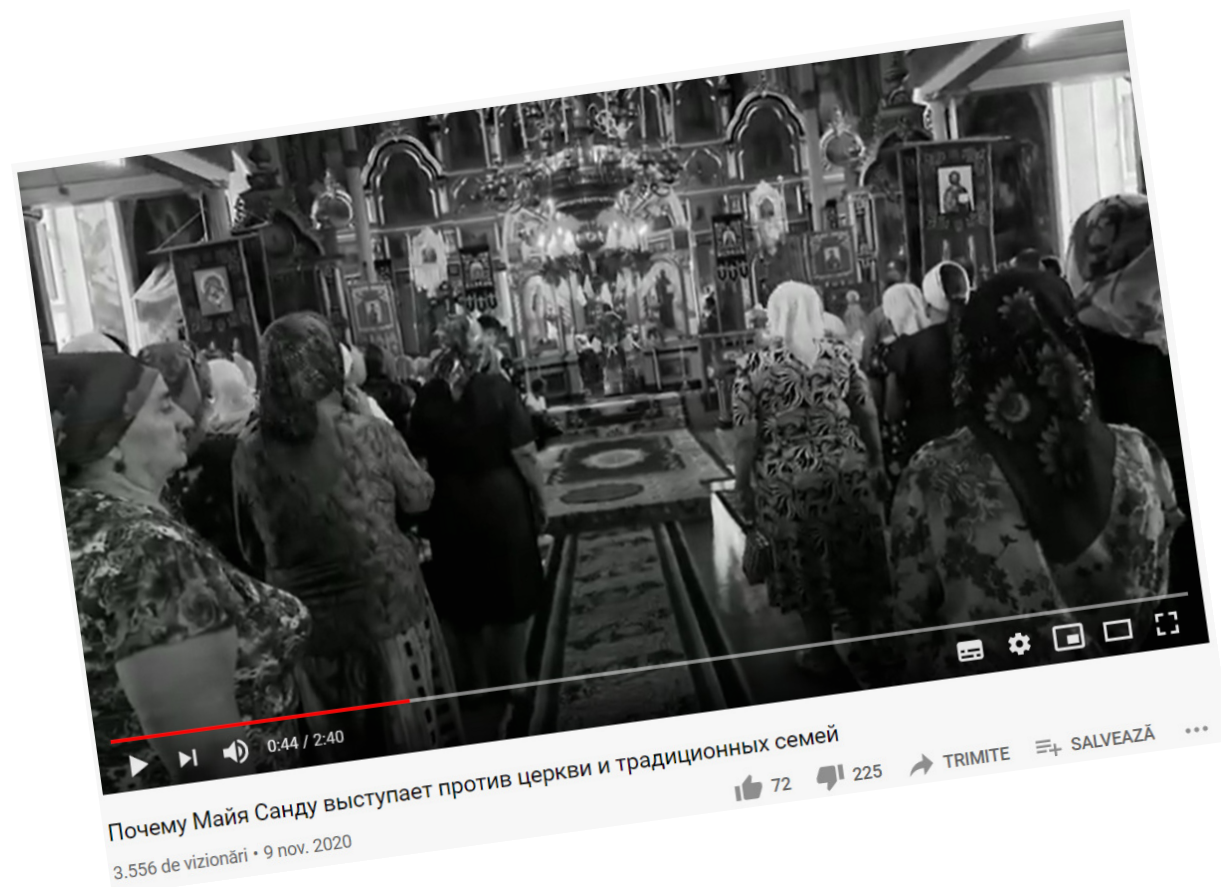
While most of these pages use a satirical language and a generally accepted critique, some of them spread false information. However, Moldovan citizens have the opportunity to report this information to Facebook in order to be deleted by the platform. To ensure that their fake news is not blocked, their authors resort to a combination of fake news accompanied by proven facts, presented in the form of jokes. Therefore, the visual content becomes more interesting for citizens and with a much greater potential to spread false news.

In the second round, as in the first round, the fake news focused on the favorites of the electoral campaign Maia Sandu and Igor Dodon. In the last week, anonymous YouTube channels that presented apocalyptic images and defamatory messages addressed to Maia Sandu appeared. At the same time, Igor Dodon was more criticized on Facebook.



## Case study #1

On November 9, a week before the second round of the presidential election, the Youtube channel "Secret" publishes 6 derogatory videos against Maia Sandu. In just a few days, the materials are viewed over 400,000 times, which indicates that they have either been promoted or shared intensively on different platforms. The channel was created on October 27, 2020 and after the elections did not publish any video, a sign that their purpose was to denigrate the election campaign. The videos say that Sandu will not stop until she closes the last Russian language schools in the country, that she is against the church, that she will legalize the use of light drugs and that she would have changed her sexual orientation, a statement taken out of context. Defamatory material published on this channel has been negatively appreciated by users.



## Case study #2

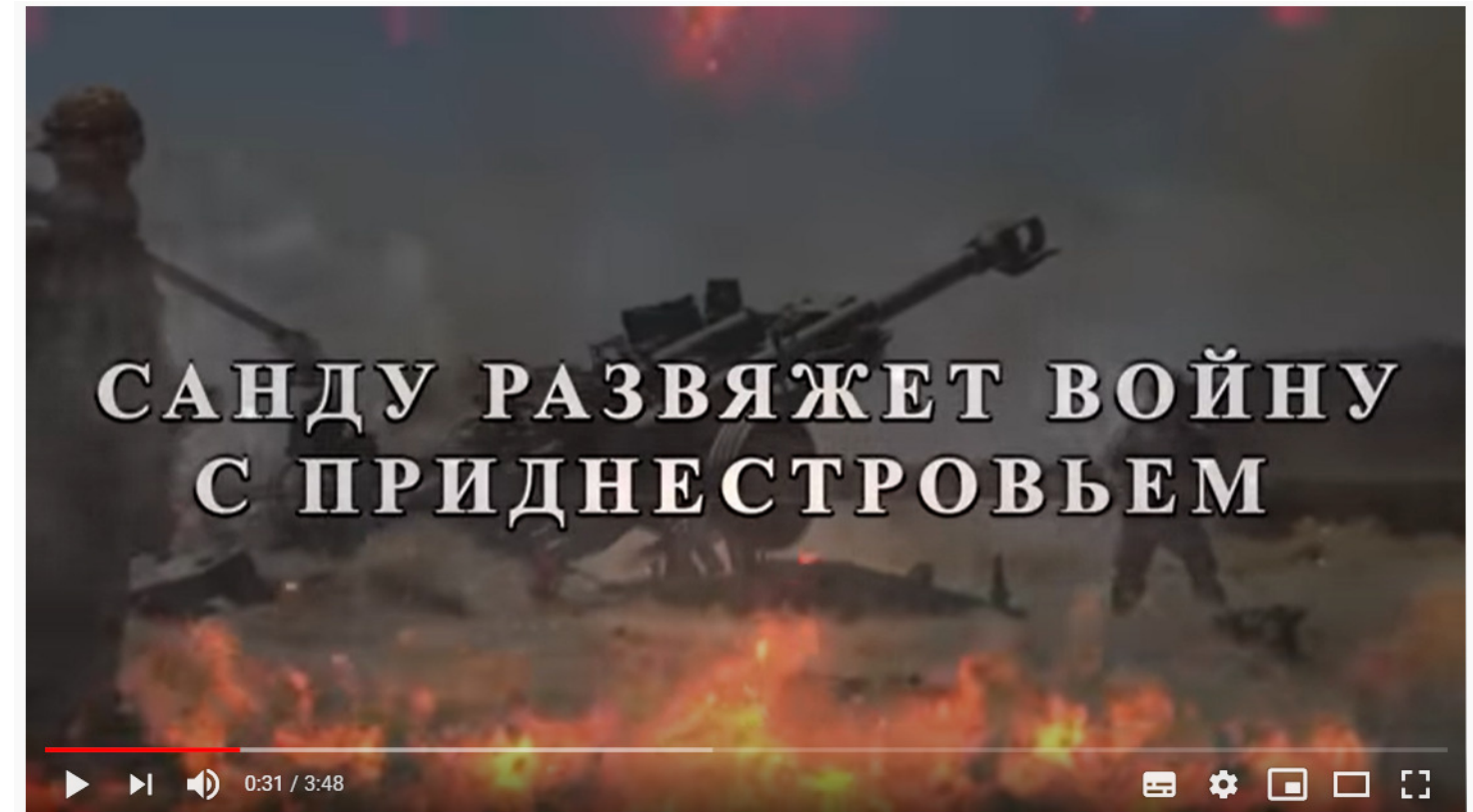
Another YouTube channel that spread false information about the candidate Maia Sandu is "Правда Молдова", created on November 10. With apocalyptic images, the authors explain what will happen if Maia Sandu is elected president. The closure of medical institutions and the dismissal of doctors would be one of the consequences of her election as President. As a result, the number of COVID cases as well as the number of deaths will increase. The video shows abandoned hospitals in other countries. Another video talks about the beginning of a war with the region on the left bank of the Dniester.



Что ждем Молдову с приходом Майя Санду к власти. 15 ноября! Выбор за тобой!

12.807 vizionări · 10 nov. 2020

👍 39 💬 211 ➔ TRIMITE ⚙️ SALVEAZĂ ...



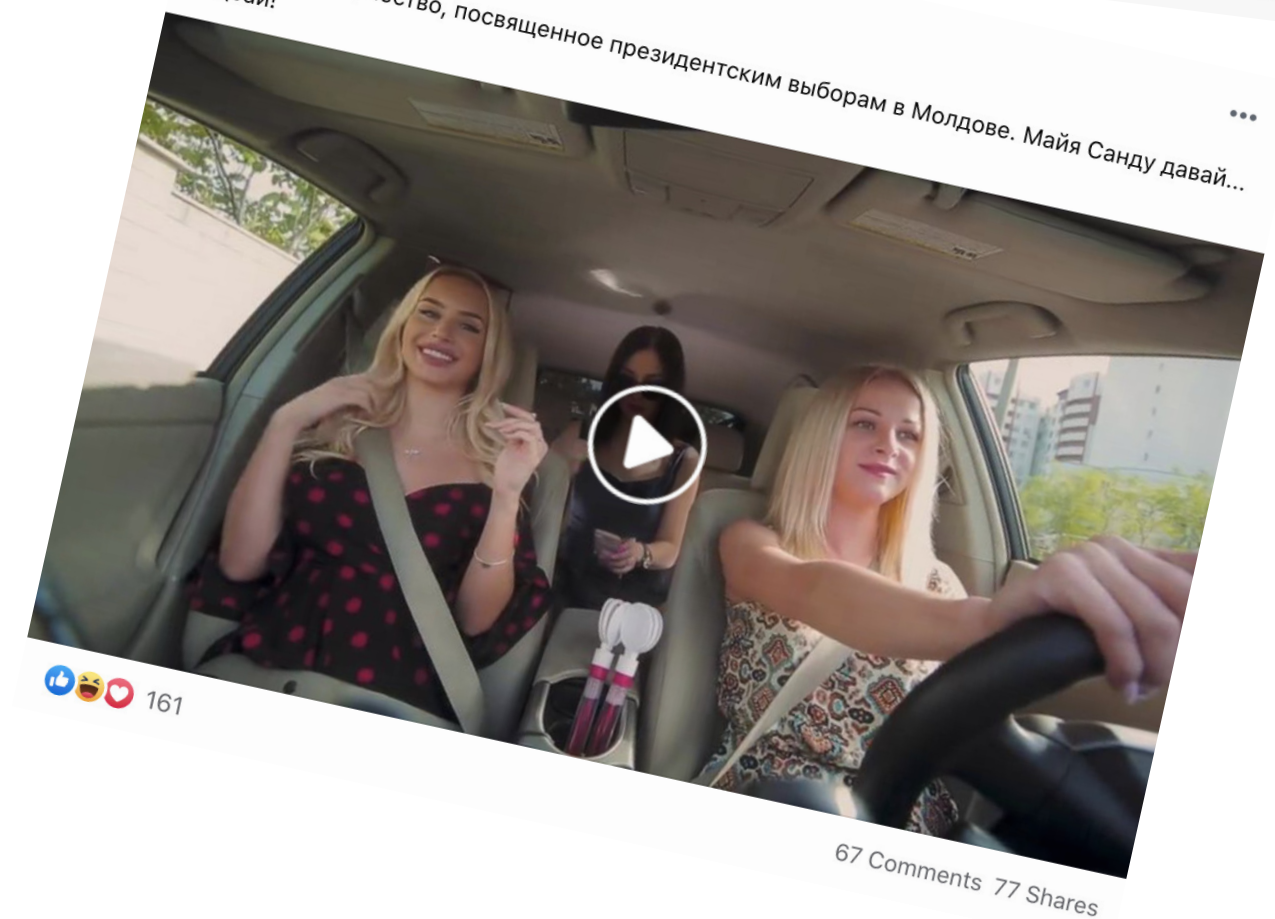
Майя Санду - Враг государства номер 1

6.362 de vizionări · 12 nov. 2020

👍 29 💬 74 ➔ TRIMITE ⚙️ SALVEAZĂ ...

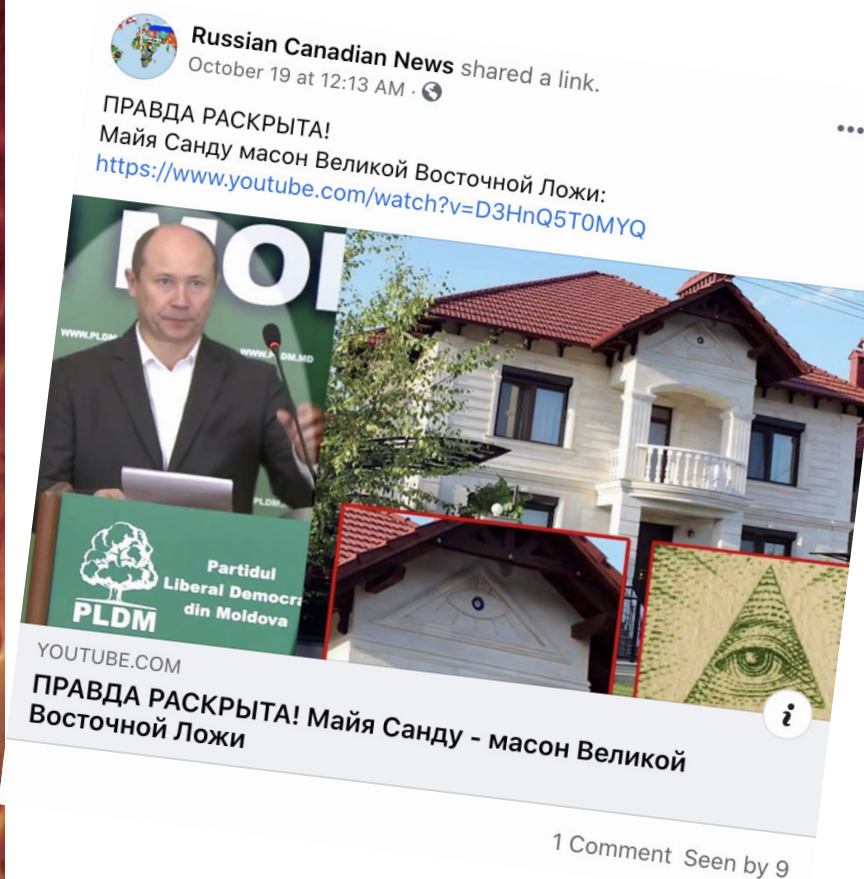
## Case study #3

The video with three girls dancing on the background of a well-known Russian song, was published on the YouTube channel "Mort in popsoi". The channel was created on 6 October and contains a single video published in which the presidential candidate, Maia Sandu is criticized. Although the video is placed on an anonymous page, it was republished by the Russian publication "Комсомольская правда в Молдове" ((Komsomolskaya Pravda in Moldova) as a video of the people. At the same time, the video was shared by a user in the group "Молдова должна быть с Россией!" (Moldova should be with Russia!) who talks about "lesbian Maia Sandu", a disinformation practice frequently used in the 2016 elections.



## Case study #4

"Russian Canadian News" is a page that distributes news and information about the Russian Federation, as well as other countries of the former Soviet Union. Although the Republic of Moldova is rarely found among these news, in the last two months the page has started to distribute false and derogatory information on several groups in Moldova, including the above-mentioned "Молдова должна быть с Россией!" (Moldova should be with Russia!) and "Русско-Молдавская Диаспора в Канаде" (Russian-Moldovan diaspora in Canada). The posts that have been shared on the page are spreading false information about the candidate Maia Sandu. The posts state that she would have closed half of the schools in the Republic of Moldova and that she would have been involved in the 1\$ billion banking fraud. Again, these practices were used in the 2016 elections as well.



Russian Canadian News shared a link.

October 26 at 8:08 PM · 🌐

Укравшая миллиард, закрывшая половину школ в Молдавии, а также являющейся русофобкой ненавидящая Россию, и мечтающей о присоединении к Румынии решила обратиться к русско-говорящим гражданам Молдавии... Видимо её дела очень плохи и чует что проиграет на выборах.



POINT.MD

Санду: Мы в Молдове говорим на разных языках, но грабят нас одинаково



1 Share Seen by 4

## Case study #5

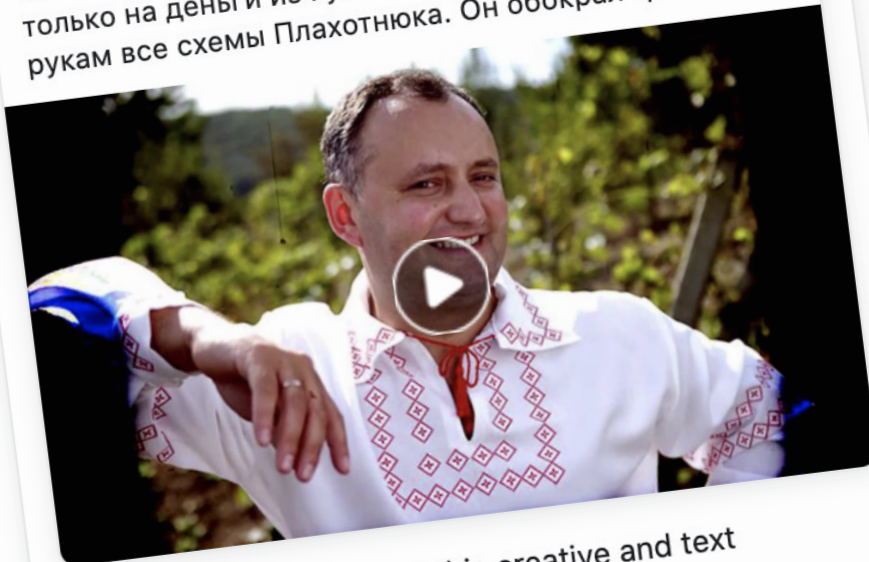
An anonymous page that shared more political information was the "Золотой Теленок" (Golden calf) page. Most of the published information distributed criticizes presidential candidate Igor Dodon. The page was created on 9 June, 2020 and targets Russian speakers. The page stood out by the fact that starting with 4 August, it made advertisements on social issues, elections or politics in the amount of €3261, of which € 2864 between 28 September and 27 October, according to the Facebook Ad Library.

Launched October 2020

Active  
Started running on Oct 29, 2020  
ID: 2175489802583542

**Золотой Теленок**  
Sponsored · Paid for by ZolotoyTelenok

Игорь Додон - крупнейший бандит в стране, его токсичное правительство выпустило из тюрьмы десятки преступников, вернув 90-е годы. Это самый лживый и коррумпированный политик, за все годы своего мандата он абсолютно ничего не сделал, живя только на деньги из кульков, и в итоге прибрал к рукам все схемы Плахотнюка. Он обокрал граждан...

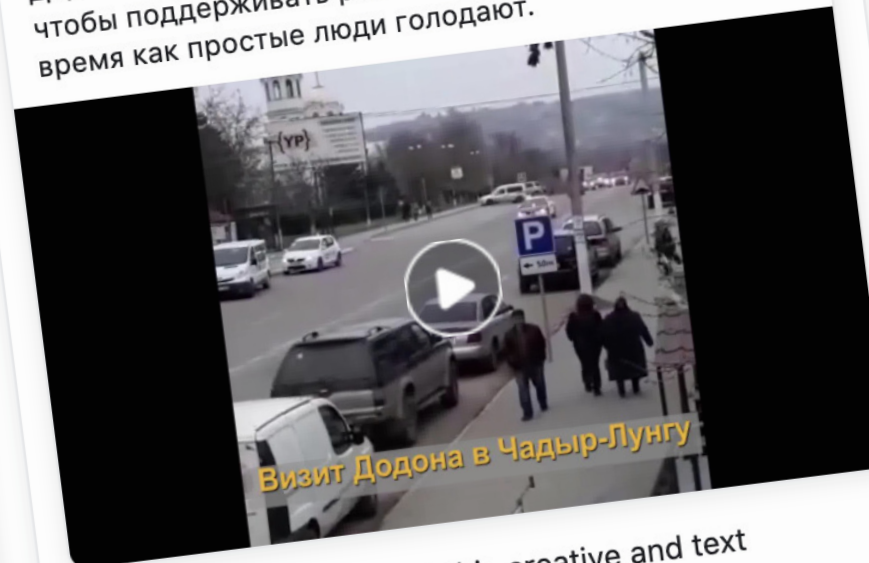


6 ads use this creative and text

Inactive  
Oct 22, 2020 - Oct 29, 2020  
ID: 705284553686061

**Золотой Теленок**  
Sponsored · Paid for by ZolotoyTelenok

Додон - обычный лжец, он тратит 100000 лей в день, чтобы поддерживать роскошь в Президентуре, в то время как простые люди голодают.



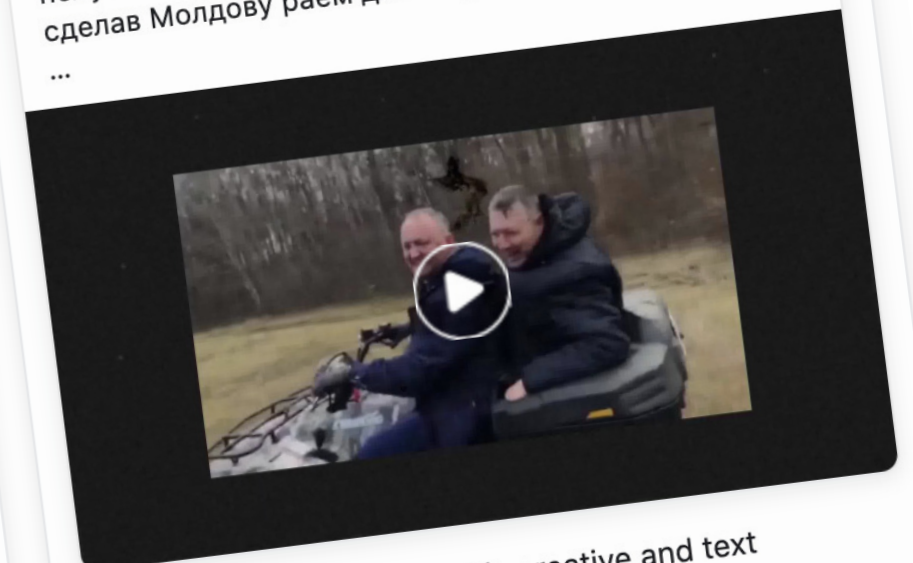
3 ads use this creative and text

See Summary Details

Inactive  
Oct 16, 2020 - Oct 29, 2020  
ID: 282073029521185

**Золотой Теленок**  
Sponsored · Paid for by ZolotoyTelenok

Игорь Додон - токсичный персонаж, которому наплевать на народ. Он украл миллионы, в то время как люди голодают. В 2016 году он много обещал, но ничего не сделал, и все это время жил из денег полученные в кульке и освобождал воров и бандитов, сделав Молдову раем для мафии.



4 ads use this creative and text

See Summary Details

# Recommendations

- 1** A negative and denigrating discourse towards the candidates was present in this election campaign, whether it came directly from the candidates or from their colleagues. To limit the impact of negative discourse on the integrity of elections, the Code on the conduct and reflection of the election campaign could contain a section dedicated to the use of social networks by signatories.
- 2** The new rules introduced by the Facebook platform on sponsored posts have helped reduce misinformation on this network. In the future, other digital platforms should also provide such a mechanism to reduce the placement of sponsored posts by unauthorized users.
- 3** Tech companies (such as Google, Youtube, Twitter) should also do their utmost to improve the transparency of online political advertising and to respond promptly to any content that violates their standards or relevant national legislation.
- 4** Development of partnerships between public authorities, civil society and IT experts who together would promote digital literacy and media programs in schools but also for the general population.
- 5** There is a need to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to monitor the use of online space during the electoral campaign. Also, a joint effort of local monitors would contribute to a deeper understanding of the social media impact on election integrity and provide a mechanism for responding to emerging threats.

# Methodology

The applied methodology consists of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the selected social media content.

For this report we analyzed Facebook and Instagram public pages. For the pre-electoral campaign (1 September - 2 October 2020) we analyzed a list of potential presidential candidates, as well as leaders of major parliamentary and extra-parliamentary parties (16) that are active on social media. The monitoring period coincided with the registration period for the elections, so eight of the politicians analyzed became officially registered candidates. We also monitored the Facebook pages of the parties that nominated a candidate or were led by politicians included in the monitoring list (15). For the campaign period (2 - 30 October 2020) we analyzed the social media pages of eight officially registered candidates and the pages of their parties. Between November 2-13, we monitored the two electoral candidates.

## The quantitative analysis

focuses on the amount of posts generated by political actors (parties as well as politicians) or other monitored entities. We looked at the engagement statistics such as the number of reactions (likes and other emoticons), shares and comments. This was done in order to determine how active are the politicians and their parties on social media and how are people engaging with their posts. The quantitative data concerning the posts were extracted every three days from 1 September to 24 October, so it might slightly differ from the current engagement data on posts.

## The qualitative analysis

means that we analysed the manner in which the actual messages were presented (positive, neutral, negative). We looked at their posts through a predefined list of issues that were addressed by politicians and parties in their posts. We also looked at the tone of the coverage in which selected topics and issues were presented. In case they were promoted they were assessed as positive; in case they were criticized, they were assessed as negative. In case these topics or issues were only introduced without stating any specific position, they were assessed as neutral.

One social media **post** served as a reference and unit of analysis. As such, in order to preserve the total number of posts, in instances with various issues contained in one post, these posts were divided by number of issues.

MEMO98 obtained the data analysed in this report via CrowdTangle.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> CrowdTangle (un instrument de analiză social media deținut de Facebook) „urmărește postările publice pe Facebook, Instagram și Reddit, realizate de conturi publice sau grupuri. Instrumentul nu urmărește fiecare cont public și nu urmărește profilurile sau grupurile private, astfel încât aceste date nu sunt reprezentative pentru performanța pe întreaga platformă. Numerele afișate reflectă interacțiunile publice (aprecieri, reacții, comentarii, distribuiri și vizualizări de trei secunde). Nu include reclame plătite decât dacă acele reclame au început ca postări organice, neplătite, care au fost ulterior promovate folosind instrumentele de publicitate Facebook. Deoarece sistemul nu distinge acest tip de conținut plătit, rețineți că este posibil ca unele conținuturi performante să fi fost distribuite cu plată. CrowdTangle nu urmărește, de asemenea, postările făcute vizibile doar pentru anumite grupuri de urmăritori.”

# 01. List of monitored parameters

## Political parties (15)

Partidul Socialiștilor din Republica Moldova  
 Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate  
 Partidul Democrat din Moldova  
 PRO Moldova  
 Partidul politic ȘOR  
 Partidul Liberal Democrat din Republica Moldova  
 Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr  
 Partidul Unității Naționale  
 Partidul Nostru  
 Partidul Democrația Acasă  
 Partidul Comuniștilor din Republica Moldova  
 Partidul Liberal  
 Partidul Muncii  
 Partidul Regiunilor  
 Mișcarea Politică Unirea

## Politicians (16)

Igor Dodon  
 Maia Sandu  
 Andrei Năstase  
 Octavian Țicu  
 Pavel Filip  
 Renato Usatîi  
 Andrian Candu  
 Dorin Chirtoacă  
 Vlad Filat  
 Valeriu Munteanu  
 Violeta Ivanov  
 Tudor Deliu  
 Constantin Oboroc  
 Serghei Toma  
 Alexandr Kalinin  
 Ilan Șor

## Media (37)

TV Moldova 1  
 Pro TV Chisinau  
 TVR Moldova  
 Primul in Moldova  
 Jurnal TV  
 Publika TV  
 Canal 3  
 TV 8  
 Diez.md  
 Independent.md  
 Stiri.md  
 Sputnik.md  
 Jurnal.md  
 Zdg.md  
 Anticoruptie.md  
 Point.md  
 Newsmaker.md  
 Kp.md  
 Noi.md Romanian  
 NTV Moldova  
 Accent TV  
 Orhei TV  
 Televiziunea Centrala  
 Unimedia.md  
 Agora.md  
 Timpul.md  
 Telegraph.md  
 Noi.md Russian  
 Bloknot-moldova.md  
 Ziarulnational.md  
 Radiochisinau.md  
 Tribuna.md  
 Cotidianul.md  
 Deschide.md  
 Realitatea.md  
 Radio Europa libera  
 Moldova24.md



## 02. List of monitored parameters

### Top issues (42)

World pandemic Covid-19

Covid-19 in MD (general)

Covid-19 in MD - adopted measures

Covid-19 in MD - failure to adopt measures

Covid-19 in MD - health, social implications

Moldova-Romania relations

Moldova-Russia relations

Moldova-EU relations

Moldova-US relations

International affairs

Belarus crisis

Transnistria - General

Presidential elections - campaigning

Presidential elections - electoral violations

Presidential elections - general

Bank fraud scandal

Judicial system

Fighting corruption

Corruption and bribery schemes

Ion Chicu government

Fire at National Philharmonic

Ethnic polarization

2020 Drought in Agriculture

Disinformation

Road and infrastructure

Business Environment

Salaries & Pensions

Poverty

LGBT

Religion and church

Country sovereignty

Early parliamentary elections

Education

Diaspora

Romania-Moldova Unification

Culture

Healthcare

Environment

Agriculture general

Energy security

Jobs & unemployment

Other

# About



Founded in 2009, Mediapoint's mission is to innovate the democratic process by involving citizens and unlocking the potential of technology. The organization has launched a series of innovative online projects and conducted over 150 workshops and events nationwide, including three Social Innovation Camps. The Mediapoint priorities for 2020-2030 are: Promoting citizen participation in democratic processes; Improving government transparency and increasing access to information; Facilitating interaction between authorities and citizens through developing digital platforms.

## Authors

Livia Ťurcanu, Mediapoint  
Andrei Fornea, Mediapoint  
Radu Lișița, Mediapoint  
Marek Mračka, MEMO 98

Rasťo Kužel, MEMO 98  
Braňo Kohn, MEMO 98  
Ivan Godársky, MEMO 98



An internationally recognized, independent, and non-profit specialist media institution with 22 year-long experience of conducting media monitoring and research and assisting civil society groups. Using tested and approved methodologies and tools, we provide media analysis and media monitoring with tangible results, in particular during election periods. Having participated in more than 120 election observation missions and about 150 media & election-related projects and training in more than 55 countries (in the Commonwealth of the Independent States and the Balkan countries, but also in Africa, Asia, South America, and Middle East), our experts provide assistance on media & electoral and other democratic arrangements.



This research was funded by SlovakAid and the National Endowment for Democracy. Mediapoint and MEMO 98 assume no responsibility for facts or opinions expressed in this publication or their subsequent use. Sole responsibility lies with the authors of this publication.