

The Promo-LEX mission established that there is a surge in cases involving hate speech and religious cults in campaigning and in cases of misuse of administrative resources, while electoral bodies do not observe fully the sanitary and epidemiological requirements



Promo-LEX reports increasingly more cases that can qualify as use of administrative resources, and a 2.6 times increase in cases involving hate speech and incitement to discrimination. During the monitoring period (30 September – 13 October), there has been an upsurge in electoral events, in cases where the restrictions imposed by the Extraordinary Territorial Commissions of Public Health were not observed, as well as first instances where religious denominations were involved in the election campaign of a candidate.

Legal uncertainties that give rise to unequal opportunities for election contenders

Promo-LEX Observation Mission draws attention to the uncertainties around the lawfulness of a political party supporting an independent candidate, including from the point of view of poor reporting of campaign financing, and around the lawfulness of involving in election campaigns political parties that do not participate in elections officially. It came to our attention that members and supporters of PSRM – a party that did not nominate a candidate – are taking part in the election campaign of Igor Dodon IC. We would also like to emphasize that the mechanism in place for suspending from office the President of the Republic of Moldova in relation to their participation in elections is not regulated sufficiently.

Like in the 2016 Presidential Elections, Promo-LEX OM is highlighting that there are some legal rules that affect contenders' opportunities to start the election campaigns at the same time.

The more active the election contenders, the more numerous the incidents

In the beginning of the election campaign, Promo-LEX OM established that the number of identified electoral events (595) increased almost five times compared to the previous

reporting period. Of these, 39% were carried out by Igor Dodon (IC), 22 % – by Renato Usatii, 19% – by Maia Sandu (PAS), according to observers.

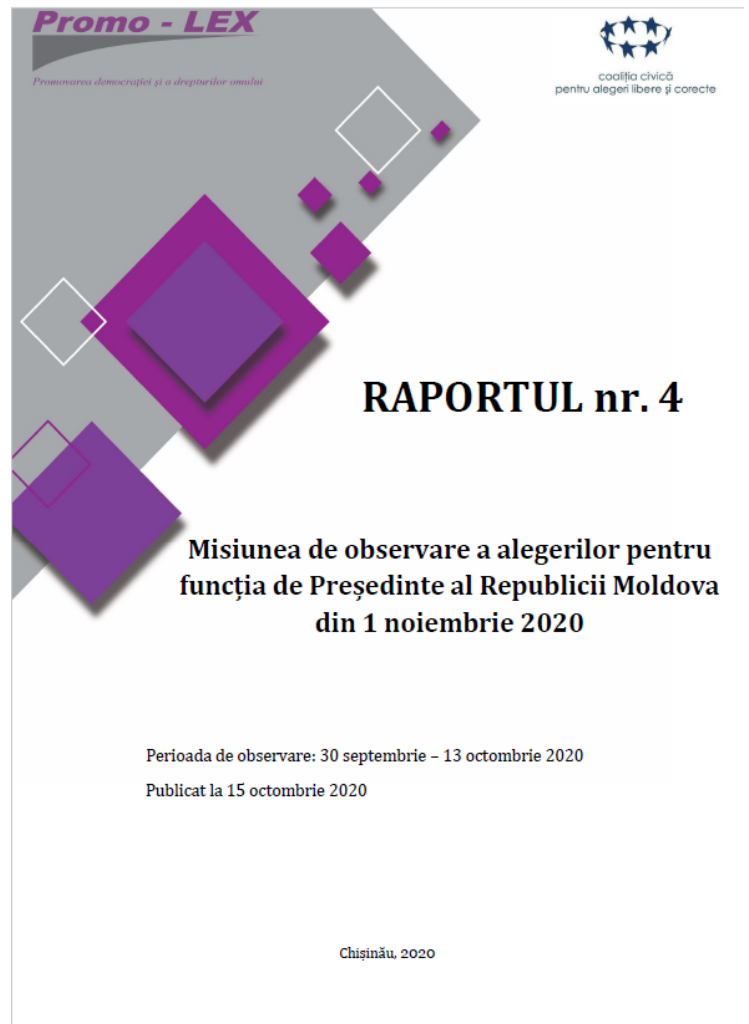
We would also like to draw attention to at least 6 cases that can qualify as violation of the public health rules established by the Extraordinary Territorial Commissions of Public Health with regards to meetings, concerning Igor Dodon (IC) – 3 cases; Maia Sandu (PAS) – 2 cases; and 1 case – Tudor Deliu (PLDM).

During the monitored period, Promo-LEX OM reported at least 18 cases that can be qualified as use of administrative resources: 14 – Igor Dodon (IC), Tudor Deliu (PLDM), Renato Usatii (PN), Andrei Nastase (PPPDA) and Violeta Ivanov (PPS) – once case each.

The number of cases that can qualify as using the image of foreign officials and images that represent government institutions/symbols is increasing, at least 7 such cases having been reported. Of these, Maia Sandu (PAS), Andrei Nastase (PPPDA) and Dorin Chirtoaca (BE Unirea) were concerned in two cases each, and in one case – Tudor Deliu (PLDM).

At least two cases involving representatives of religious denominations in the election campaign of the candidate Igor Dodon (IC) were also reported.

Expenses of at least MDL 809,477 were not reported by candidates



According to the data published on the official website of CEC – out of the 8 registered candidates, one (Octavian Ticu) submitted neither a report, nor a notification on not having incurred any expenses. The main source of income reported by election contenders for the first week of the election campaign was donations from individuals. The observation mission confirmed there was a transfer from the current account of a party to the ‘Electoral Fund’ account that was above the ceiling of MDL 95,436 set for legal entities in the CEC Circular Letter of 15 September 2020. However CEC did not respond to this yet.

We also found that 566 individuals donated MDL 7.68 million in cash, followed by donations in goods and services worth MDL 1,302,239. The observation mission emphasises that reporting in-kind donations is a positive practice for a transparent election campaign. However, reporting such donations outside

the 'Electoral Fund' account puts at risk the accuracy of reporting and might serve as a way to circumvent the rules on the basis of which the financial flows in the 'Electoral Fund' account are verified.

The observers have repeatedly given emphasis to the fact that none of the election contenders neither reported expenses for electioneers nor reported their services as in-kind donations. The estimates are that 6 election contenders failed to report in full their campaign expenses in the total amount of at least MDL 809,477: Igor Dodon (IC) – MDL 474,856; Andrei Nastase (PPPDA) – MDL 111,531; Violeta Ivanov (PPS) – MDL 105,236; Maia Sandu (PAS) – MDL 67,812; Renato Usatii – MDL 29,598; Tudor Deliu (PLDM) – MDL 20,444.

An election campaign riddled with more and more hate speech and discrimination

The surge in hate speech by candidates and politicians, opinion leaders, journalists and citizens is regretful. At least 63 new cases were identified in the reference period alone – by 39 more than in the previous monitoring period.

Of these, in 39 cases the hate speaker was the candidate Renato Usatii (PN); in two other cases – Andrei Nastase (PPPDA) and Octavian Ticu (PUN). Other 15 cases of hate speech and/or incitement to discrimination involved 5 of the 8 candidates registered in the electoral race. Igor Dodon was concerned in 4 cases, Maia Sandu – in 6 cases, Renato Usatii – in 2 cases, Octavian Ticu and Dorin Chirtoaca – in one case each.

The Promo-LEX Association puts emphasis on the fact that this type of discourse affects not only candidates, but also people who are part of different social groups (women, LGBT, people with disabilities, etc.). We also noticed that in none of the cases of hate speech or incitement to discrimination on television did the TV show hosts react.

The activity of the electoral bodies amidst the pandemic

According to Promo-LEX observers, not all DEC conform to the restrictions imposed on activity amidst the pandemic: 12 DECs (34%) do not have a register for monitoring the temperature of electoral officials; at least 18 DECs (50%) do not take the visitors' temperature; while in other 4 DECs (11%) the information on health protection rules amid pandemic is missing.

Regarding the activity of the electoral offices of polling stations (PEB), we established that in at least 48 PEB the requirement of being composed of an odd number of members was not complied with. Also, the open ballot procedure was not observed in three of the total of 116 PEB monitored in the reference period.

From a gender perspective, women make up the greatest share in PEB composition – 83%. There are no men among the members of 468 PEB.

PEB formed without the participation of local authorities

Although the law stipulates that three of the PEB members must be nominated by the local councils, Promo-LEX found that in at least 355 PEB (18%) there was no-one nominated by the LPAs. Note that none of the PEB established by DEC No 1 Chisinau has any members appointed by the LPA. According to Promo-LEX observers, in the absence of a municipal council's decision on this matter, the absolute majority of PEB members were appointed from the Register of Electoral Officials (REF), managed by CEC. In this context, the question arises as to whether those persons were really in the REF, or whether the procedure for appointing on the basis of this register is a formality only. Note that the non-transparent compilation of the REF by CEC was flagged by Promo-LEX back in the 2016 presidential election.



About 60 activities dedicated to information, voter education and apolitical mobilisation were carried out by Promo-LEX

Association and its partners

On the occasion of the presidential election of 1 November 2020, Promo-LEX Association and other three organisations that received sub-grants from the Association, carried out – during the reporting period – at least 59 activities of voter information, education and apolitical mobilisation. Because of the sanitary and epidemiological restrictions imposed amid the COVID-19 pandemic, all activities were carried out online and were advertised on social media networks.

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Find the full report [here.](#)

If there are any discrepancies between the text in Romanian and its translation, the provisions formulated in Romanian shall prevail.

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