

# Public audiovisual in danger due to censorship and political control

Being aware of the continuous decline undergone by freedom of expression and the media, in its vast majority.

Being concerned about the increasingly powerful actions aimed to use the most important broadcast and print media for xenophobic and antidemocratic propaganda purposes.

Establishing a lack of real and generally recognized progress in view of transforming the Teleradio-Moldova Company into an independent, professional and viable institution that would serve the public interest and the society as a whole,

We express our deep concern about the role played by the public audiovisual at this moment of political crisis in the Republic of Moldova, situating itself fully in the service of the only ruling party.

We thus find that, although a Broadcast Code has been adopted which was adapted to most European standards in the area, the National Public Broadcaster "Teleradio-Moldova" further produces daily news and programs which are subject to censorship, in accordance with the political preferences of the governance.

During the past years, the monitoring of the program content of this Company, especially of its news programs, conducted both by internal and external experts, has shown that it continues an old practice of covering public, social-economic and political life exclusively from the viewpoint of the governance, avoiding the most serious problems faced by the public and by the entire society.

By contrast, opposition parties not only did not have equal access to the programs broadcast by Teleradio-Moldova, but

they also were the target of intensive campaigns aimed at discrediting, denying and prejudicing their image. The monitoring conducted by our organizations in the post-electoral period (April 2009) confirms once again that the necessary changes, expected by the public, have not taken place at Teleradio-Moldova. Public stations do not provide services that would ensure the correct, impartial and fair information of the public, do not take into consideration the political convictions of various categories of the population, and do not ensure the political-social balance and pluralism nor the freedom of expression, as provided by the Broadcast Code.

Although there is no official censorship committee, Teleradio-Moldova continues to use marked practices of hidden censorship, expressed through the restricted access of undesired individuals to the public stations, screening and excluding critical topics about the authorities as well as through the self-censorship used by this public company's staff in covering public interest subjects. Such forms of censorship discredit the concept and public character of these TV and radio stations, being detrimental to the Moldovan society.

The situation becomes even more serious if we take into account the following:

A concentration of both print and broadcast media has been felt in Moldova in the last years, which clearly promote only one ideology – that of the ruling party, contrary to the constitutional provisions;

In the past years, the Broadcast Coordinating Board (BCB) has distributed frequencies during public contests to certain broadcasters (TV NIT, EuTV, Radio Antena C) and rejected the applications of other broadcasters (Radio "Vocea Basarabiei", ProTV), without transparently argued and reasoned decisions; Instead of representing the civil society (the taxpayers), the Observers Board of the National Public Broadcaster "Teleradio-

Moldova" joined forces with the Company's management, becoming its attorney;

There still is an impressive number of media outlets in Moldova at present that are directly or indirectly supported by the state, which creates conditions of disloyal competition for the private media;

The media outlets which attempt to practice a democratic journalism, provided for by the national and international legislation, are subject to discrimination (difficulties with the accreditation, limited access to public interest information etc.), harassment, intimidation, legal, physical and psychological coercion;

The extensive control of the media offers administrative and propagandistic resources to the ruling party which are comparable only to those of the soviet period.

Being aware of the present situation in this area, of the importance of the public broadcasters and of the media for the information and democratic education of citizens, we believe it is our duty to inform the public opinion about the following priorities:

– We call on the Moldovan authorities to publicly quit the current practices of interference in and control of the work of mass media, such interferences contravening both the national and the European legislation;

– We invite the BCB to supervise more rigorously and with more professionalism the activity of public and private broadcasters in accordance with the legislation in force and to ensure their observance of the Broadcaster Code;

– We draw the attention of the Observers Board of "Teleradio-Moldova" that it is time to undertake responsibility for the current situation in its area of competence, including towards the existence of biased and partisan editorial policies of the National Public Company's management to the ruling party;

– We call on the management of “Teleradio-Moldova” to ensure in full the observance of opinion pluralism principles, eliminating the existing impediments in the journalists’ activity, so that they are able to manifest freely their critical spirit in relation to the authorities;

– We invite the management of “Teleradio-Moldova” to ensure the observance of the provisions of the Broadcast Code, of the Broadcaster’s Conduct Code as well as of the national and international standards of professional deontology.

The signatories to the Declaration are firmly convinced that only in such situation a truly public radio and TV service can be established in Moldova and only in such situation the media can be adjudged public utility and social legitimacy.

In view of achieving these desiderata, the signatories to the declaration believe it is timely to hold broad public debates with the involvement of the said factors, which would identify the work procedures of a true public radio and TV service, able to contribute to the development of democracy in Moldova.

Broadcast Media Association of Moldova

Independent Journalism Center

Association of Independent Press

Institute for Development and Social Initiatives IDIS  
“Viitorul”

Investigative Journalism Center

Acces-Info Center

League for Defence of Human Rights of Moldova

The Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections – Coalition  
2009

Union of Journalists of Moldova

Promo-LEX Association

Business Consulting Institute