



Resolution
of 2023 Media Forum of the Republic of Moldova
(Chişinău, 4–5 December 2023)

The participants in the 2023 Media Forum approve the following resolution:

1. Reiterating our firm belief that guaranteeing a free, independent and pluralistic media is vital for the development of a resilient and democracy in the Republic of Moldova;
2. Sharing the European Union's concerns about press freedom, which is currently under threat in most parts of the world;
3. Being aware that the protection of freedom of expression as a universal mission must remain a key priority for both the media and the authorities;
4. Reconfirming the commitment of the profession and industry associations to strengthen journalism based on ethical principles, as a response to hybrid threats, but also as a conclusive proof of serving the public interest;
5. Being aware of the importance of supporting the economic development of independent media;

The Media Forum finds:

- For the first time, most of the recommendations of the 2022 Media Forum Resolution have been met or are being met;
- The Republic of Moldova's approximation to the European Union, as well as this year's general local elections, have increased hostile foreign interference in the domestic media space, prompting the authorities to systematically address national security in general and information security in particular;
- Authorities are identifying mechanisms to prevent and counter hybrid threats, a process that needs to be deepened and accelerated;
- Efforts to sanitize the national media space of subversive narratives have been more determined than in previous years, but they have had little effect and have sometimes disoriented public opinion;
- Progress is being made in completing and improving media and related legislation, but much of their proper transposition into actual practice is stagnating;
- Attempts at deoligarchization in the broadcasting segment have met with fierce resistance and repeated and partially successful attempts to reconfigure media holdings with the involvement of politically affiliated TV stations, and the blocking of web portals distributing disinformation has had minimal effect;
- Under new election legislation, some media outlets, including audiovisual service providers, have continued the vicious practice of playing in the hands of political bosses to the detriment of fully and accurately informing voters;
- The Audiovisual Council has continued its work on effective implementation of legislation, including election legislation, effectively monitoring the coverage of elections by all media service providers and, for the first time, has not attracted harsh criticism from national and international election observation missions;
- The economic situation of the media has been deteriorating and print media are in danger of disappearing due to high newsprint costs and unprecedented increases in distribution rates;

- The Supervisory and Development Council of the national public media service provider has failed to take a proactive stance in communicating with the public again in 2023 or to make its opinion heard in cases when the work of “Teleradio-Moldova” became the subject of public disputes;
- The ever-evolving artificial intelligence tools used to generate media content remain outside regulation and self-regulation;
- Some public institutions at central and local levels continue to restrict media contributors' access to information of public interest;
- Journalists' access to the Transnistrian region is still restricted, with cases of unlawful obstruction of journalistic activity by so-called peacekeeping forces being recorded;
- Journalistic activity is not sufficiently protected from attacks, physical threats, intimidation, harassment in the online space, including from politicians and their sympathisers.

The Media Forum requests the Moldovan authorities to:

- Speed up efforts to complete media and related legislation and bring it into line with EU standards, ensuring effective implementation;
- Ensure effective implementation of the new Law on Access to Information of Public Interest, to enter into force in January 2024;
- Central and local authorities to continue their efforts to improve communication with the media in order to help inform the public adequately and effectively about current affairs, including European integration actions;
- The Government to identify and implement an effective and sustainable mechanism to support independent print media in the face of an unprecedented increase in distribution tariffs by the State Company “Poșta Moldovei” (Post of Moldova);
- Ensure transparent operation of the Centre for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation;
- The Ministry of Culture, as the entity responsible for public policy in the media field, to consistently implement the National Media Development Program approved by the Parliament on 7 July 2023;
- The Audiovisual Council, in the actual implementation of the legislation, to extend its concerns to other problematic segments of the field, such as video content sharing platforms, phased mandatory quota of content purchased from independent producers or support for media literacy actions;
- The Parliament, the Central Election Commission, and the Audiovisual Council to analyze the first experience of implementation of the new election legislation and, depending on the results, to make the necessary changes/adjustments to the corresponding regulatory framework in due time;
- The Supervisory and Development Board of the national public media service provider to ensure the transparency of its operation and to certify its usefulness in the reform process of "Teleradio-Moldova" Company;
- Training institutions to continue and expand the training of necessary specialists according to the real demands of the media market;
- To follow and take up best practice in regulating artificial intelligence in advanced democratic countries;
- Develop and implement legal and administrative solutions to effectively protect the journalistic profession from threats and intimidation.

The Media Forum urges journalists and media outlets to:

- Adjust their editorial policies in such a way as to maintain a constant focus on the actions of the authorities and society as a whole, aimed at ensuring the country's irreversible European course;

- Honour their ethical obligation to inform the public accurately, especially in the face of brutal hybrid threats;
- Analyze current trends in media operation in order to take up appropriate practices to strengthen professional capacities and economic sustainability;
- Denounce and reject any attempt by any interest group to involve them in activities outside the social mission of the media;
- The Press Council to continue discussions on the ethics of using artificial intelligence in the creation of media content and, if necessary, to initiate completion of the Code of Ethics with appropriate rules;
- Not admit and publicly report cases of unauthorized copying of media content (copy/paste) and copyright infringement.

**5 December 2023,
Chişinău**