

# Moldova: Profile of Media Ownership and Potential Foreign Influence Channels

Emily Dumont, Jonathan Solis, and Lincoln Zaleski

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Russian Media Footprints.....	2
Top Media Outlets.....	3
Media Ownership.....	5
Results.....	7
Television.....	7
Print.....	9
Radio.....	10
Online.....	11
Conclusion.....	12

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge Vera Choo, Samantha Custer, and Rodney Knight for their advice and assistance in the research and compilation of this profile. We additionally want to acknowledge AidData’s team of student Research Assistants who collected data for this project, including Diane Frangulea, Maggie Herndon, Daniel Highland, Katherine Hughes, Sonia Kelly, Morgan King, Deb Kornblut, Amelia

Larson, Abby Maher, Daniella Marx, Harper Ortlieb, Caroline Prout, Andrew Tanner,  
Emmeline Walker, Sophia Zaman, and Noa Zielinski.

# Introduction

What are the entry points for foreign actors to shape and influence the narrative in the Moldovan media market? This profile seeks to address some of the entry points related to media ownership and Russian state-owned media. AidData recognizes that malign influence may affect narrative creation in other ways, including through the republishing of foreign content in domestic media outlets, interactions on social media, and journalist biases. However, this project focuses solely on direct and indirect ownership of traditional domestic media outlets to identify potential entry points for Russian influence through elites and media owners. By better understanding Moldova's domestic media ownership environment, including what media outlets citizens consume and who the owners of those outlets are, we can anticipate entry points where malign actors may try to influence domestic narratives.

Despite laws that require transparency, there are both foreign and domestic media outlets operating in Moldova with opaque ownership information. Since owners of top media houses have the potential to influence the content and tone of topics covered by journalists in their employ, understanding who owns the media is crucial to identifying avenues for influence and potential bias in reporting. In this profile, we begin to close this gap with an in-depth look at domestic media ownership in Moldova.

This media ownership profile and the supporting data were prepared by AidData, a research lab at William & Mary's Global Research Institute.<sup>1</sup> The data for this profile was collected manually by AidData staff and student research assistants. We began by conducting web searches to identify a list of media in Moldova, and then identified a list of the top-ranked outlets in terms of overall consumption. We then used this information to gather ownership data. We used cross-country sources when available (e.g., Zenith, Alexa<sup>2</sup>), Molodvan business registries and government databases (e.g.,

---

<sup>1</sup> This profile is part of a collaboration with the USAID E&E Bureau made possible through a buy-in to a Higher Education Solutions Network cooperative agreement (AID-A-12-00096) in place between USAID/LAB/HESN, AidData, and William & Mary.

<sup>2</sup> Zenith is a media intelligence database that provides insights into media, including television viewership and newspaper circulation, in several dozen countries around the world. Alexa is an online analysis tool. AidData Staff used Alexa's API to gauge website traffic. <https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo>.

IDNO.md, Audiovisual Council Moldova), survey data, media watchdog sources, and other open source data. This profile includes data for Moldova proper and does not separate out any information that may differ in breakaway regions such as Transnistria.

In the following sections, we provide summary data on the presence of Russian state-owned media, top outlets, and media ownership in Moldova as of 2021. This profile focuses on the ownership of traditional broadcast, print, and online media outlets. Social media is not included in this analysis. By mapping out the ownership and influence of traditional forms of media, these profiles lend insights into potential channels for foreign influence in the top consumed outlets.

## Russian Media Footprints

The most direct form of Kremlin influence in Moldova's media landscape is via Russian state-owned media (see Table 1). Four of the eleven Russian state-owned media outlets we tracked have a physical presence in Moldova, which provides the Kremlin with a limited channel to directly communicate with, and ultimately influence, Moldovan citizens. Physical presence includes physical infrastructure, such as cable packages, physical office space or local bureaus, and radio broadcasters, but excludes satellite broadcasting and online or streaming availability. Table 1 provides a footprint of Russian state-owned media presence in Moldova, but does not speak to how well-consumed each outlet is by Moldovan citizens.

Table 1: Russian state-owned media in Moldova, 2021

Television		Print		Radio		News Agency	
Russia I	✗	Rossiyskaya Gazeta	✗	Sputnik	✓	TASS	✓
Russia 24	✗					Sputnik	✓
Russia K	✗						
RTR-Planeta	✗						
TV Centre	✗						
Channel One	✓						
RT	✗						

Other indirect forms of Russian influence are possible, including domestic outlets republishing narratives and pro-Russian journalists in-country. In this profile, AidData has captured direct Russian channels of influence through state-owned media infrastructure.

## Top Media Outlets

Table 2 identifies the top five most-consumed media outlets in Moldova by medium (television, print, radio, and online) based on cross-sectional indicators such as viewership share and circulation. Television is the most consumed medium in Moldova.<sup>3</sup> While we cannot know the exact influence of each individual outlet, we can assume that outlets that reach higher numbers of consumers have greater potential to influence more citizens. While none of the state-owned outlets in Table 1 above appear here, partner publications and other Russian media outlets such as RTR Moldova,

<sup>3</sup> Internews in Moldova, "Perceptions of the Population of the Republic of Moldova on Mass Media," November 2018, [https://internews.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/2019-02/03\\_INTERNEWS\\_Final%20report\\_25.10.18\\_EN-web.pdf](https://internews.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/2019-02/03_INTERNEWS_Final%20report_25.10.18_EN-web.pdf).

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldova, and Argumenti i Fakty are among the top outlets in Moldova.

AidData used a weighted average of media consumption survey rankings from 2017 to 2021 to determine the top media outlets in Moldova. This strategy offers a more long-term perspective of top media outlets, rather than a snapshot of the top media outlets right now. As such, the top outlets may not exactly reflect the current order of most consumed outlets but do show a solid picture of the media landscape over the past five years. Recent rankings are weighted more heavily to adjust for new changes.<sup>4</sup>

Table 2: Top Moldovan media outlets ranked by overall consumption

Rank	Television	Print	Radio	Online
1	Prime	Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove	Radio Moldova	Jurnal.md
2	Moldova 1	Makler	Radio Noroc	Protv.md
3	Jurnal TV	Jurnal de Chisinau	Radio Plai	Stiri.md
4	RTR Moldova	Argumenti i Fakty	Hit FM	Point.md
5	NTV Moldova	Ziarul de Garda	Jurnal FM	Publika.md

According to findings from an AidData survey of regional and local media experts in 2021, the majority of top Moldovan outlets mirror the results of open-source data collection by AidData researchers. However, additional outlets excluded from this top outlet list but ranked highly by local experts include television stations Channel One and TV8, print sources Sputnik Moldova and Timpul, the radio stations Kiss FM and Radio Chisinau, and online outlets Zdg.md, Unimedia.info, and Diez.md.

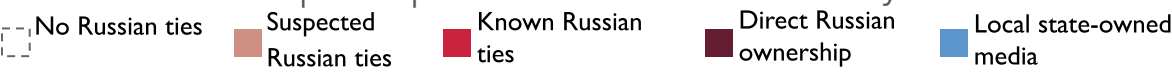
<sup>4</sup> Television, Print and Radio: Television, radio and print rankings were calculated using multiple publicly available surveys and circulation data, including an AidData survey of country and regional experts conducted in summer 2021. Additional survey data came from: Magenta Consulting’s “National Media Audience Survey” (2018 and 2021), International Republican Institute’s “Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova” (2019), IREX’s Media Sustainability Index (2019), Internews’ “Perceptions of the Population of the Republic of Moldova on Mass Media” (2018), and Zenith (2018).  
Online: Alexa, April 2021

# Media Ownership

Table 3 lists the ownership information of top Moldovan media outlets by medium (television, newspaper, radio, and online). In 2015, Moldova mandated that television and radio company ownership become transparent. As a result, the owners of these television and radio outlets are listed in a register released by the Audiovisual Council of the Republic of Moldova. Nonetheless, even with this transparency law, several outlets have owners with either foreign ties to Russia or murky ties to Moldova’s own political elite that create opportunities for hidden influence. This dynamic could be further exacerbated by the number of media outlets that have a single controlling owner, thus concentrating decision-making authority regarding content curation. This could conceivably make it easier for malign influencers to co-opt these outlets. Further examples of ownership ties and relationships are discussed in the following section.

In order to highlight which outlets may be more susceptible to Russian influence, AidData staff have devised a four-point scale to indicate levels of Russian ownership. This scale is color-coded shades of red in the table below to indicate 1) Direct Russian ownership, 2) Known Russian ties, 3) Suspected Russian ties, and 4) No Russian ties. Additionally, Moldovan state-owned media is color-coded blue. In Moldova, twenty owners had suspected or known ties to the Russian government, and one outlet had direct Russian ownership. As such, this profile has twenty red color-codes and two designations of state-owned media.

Table 3: Ownership of top Moldovan media outlets by share



Medium	Rank	Outlet	Owner, Company	Owner, Individuals	Owner (%)
Television	1	Prime	General Media Group Corp LLC	Vladimir Plahotniuc	100
	2	Moldova 1	Teleradio-Moldova Company		100
	3	Jurnal TV	Reforma Art LLC	Victor Topa	100
	4	RTR Moldova	Rosmediakom	Sberbank	Unknown

			Vneshekonombank	Unknown
			VGTRK	Unknown
		Valentina Stetco	Valentina Stetco	25
		SB Grup Media S.R.L.	Galina Sirbu	20
			Oxana Borsevici	5
	5 NTV Moldova	Exclusiv Media	Corneliu Furculita	100
	1 Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove	Exclusiv Media	Corneliu Furculita	100
	2 Makler	Makler LLC	Olga Sviridova	50
			Valeriu Zelinski	50
Newspaper	3 Jurnal de Chisinau	Reforma Art LLC	Victor Topa	100
	4 Arugmenti i Fakty	Exclusiv Media	Corneliu Furculita	100
	5 Ziarul de Garda	Publicatia Periodica Ziaruli de Garda SRL	Aneta Grosu	50
			Alina Radu	50
	1 Radio Moldova	Teleradio-Moldova Company		100
	2 Radio Noroc	Noroc Media SRL	Doinita Topala	100
	3 Radio Plai	Radio Plai SRL	Maria Covalenco	100
Radio	4 Hit FM	Radio Hit SRL	Jana Lozovan	75
			Pavel Lozovan	25
	5 Jurnal FM	Reforma Art LLC	Victor Topa	100
	1 Jurnal.md	Reforma Art LLC	Victor Topa	100
			Petr Kellner Family	98.93
Online	2 Protv.md	PPF Group	Ladislav Bartonicek	0.535
			Jean-Pascal Duvieusart	0.535
	3 Stiri.md	Simpals LLC	Dmitri Volosin	90
			Roman Stirbu	10
	4 Point.md	Simpals LLC	Dmitri Volosin	90



		Roman Stirbu	10
5 Publika.md	General Media Group Corp LLC	Vladimir Plahotniuc	100

## Results

### Television

Moldova's top television outlets are heavily influenced by actors with ties to the Kremlin and the Moldovan political elite. This was true during our study period, despite a controversial 2018 anti-propaganda broadcasting law that prohibited broadcasting of Russian television channels in Moldova.<sup>5</sup> This law, however, has failed to stop Russian influence and rebroadcasting of news on other channels.

The most consumed television outlet, Prime, is owned by General Media Group, whose sole owner is Vladimir Plahotniuc. Plahotniuc is an oligarch and the former leader of the Democratic Party of Moldova who was accused of siphoning over a billion dollars from Moldovan banks. After a criminal investigation in 2019, Plahotniuc fled Moldova and Prime was seized.<sup>6</sup> Prime frequently re-publishes Russian content, and there are frequent allegations of Plahotniuc's business deals with Russia.<sup>7</sup> Despite this, Plahotniuc has been known to also profess pro-Western viewpoints.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Megan Reiss, "Moldova Bans Russian News Broadcasts," *Lawfare*, 14 February 2018, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/moldova-bans-russian-news-broadcasts>.

<sup>6</sup> Radio Free Europe / Radio Free Liberty's Moldovan Service, "Moldova Charges Plahotniuc in \$1 Billion Fraud, Will Seek U.S. Extradition," 19 May 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-charges-plahotniuc-in-1-billion-fraud-will-seek-us-extradition/30621161.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Schwartz, "Opinion: Moldovan crisis a test case for Russia-US cooperation," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 June 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-moldovan-crisis-a-test-case-for-russia-us-cooperation/a-49166310>.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Schwartz, "Opinion: Moldovan crisis a test case for Russia-US cooperation," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 June 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-moldovan-crisis-a-test-case-for-russia-us-cooperation/a-49166310>.

The second most popular television outlet is Moldova 1, which is run by the government of Moldova through Teleradio Moldova (TRM). TRM also operates the country's most popular radio station, Moldova 1.

The third most consumed television channel in Moldova is Jurnal TV, which is owned by Moldovan businessman Victor Topa.<sup>9</sup> Topa fled to Germany about a decade ago, after he was convicted of blackmail in Moldova, in a case he claims was staged by Prime owner and former politician Plahotniuc. Consequently, Jurnal TV is known for being a critic of the Democratic Party of Moldova.<sup>10</sup> The Jurnal franchise is quite popular across the various mediums, and a Jurnal outlet appears among each of the top outlets in the remaining mediums below.

The fourth most popular outlet is RTR Moldova, a news and entertainment channel owned by TV-Comunicații Grup. Ownership is then split between Valentina Stetco (25%), SB Grup Media (25%), and Rosmediakom (50%). Rosmediakom is owned by Sberbank, Vneshekonombank, and VGTRK; all three of these are Russian state-run companies, with the first two being Russian state banks and the last a Russian state media company. Sberbank's shareholders include the Russian Ministry of Finance, and Vneshekonombank is owned by the Russian Federation. RTR Moldova is ultimately an offshoot channel of RTR Rossiya, and mainly republishes pro-Kremlin content.<sup>11</sup> RTR Moldova's broadcasting license in Moldova was obtained by registering ownership to the Moldovan SB Grup and Valentina Stetco. Not much is known about these owners, although Stetco's sister is allegedly close with Russian President Vladimir Putin.<sup>12</sup>

NTV is owned by Corneliu Furculita through his Exclusiv Media Company. A member of the Socialist Party in Parliament, Furculita is known to maintain close ties to the family of former President Igor Dodon. The Dodon family are viewed as the real owners of

---

<sup>9</sup> Jurnal TV, "Statement of Ownership," Audiovisual Council of Moldova, <https://www.rise.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/JURNAL-TV-Declaratie-la-CCA.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, "The Moldovan Information Environment, Hostile Narratives, and their Ramifications," July 2017, [https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/moldova\\_report\\_public\\_2nd\\_edition\\_17-07.pdf](https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/moldova_report_public_2nd_edition_17-07.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, "The Moldovan Information Environment."

<sup>12</sup> Hendrik Sittig and Darija Pabijanac, "Russian Dominance on Moldovan Media Market Prevails," *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, March 2020, <https://www.kas.de/documents/281902/281951/Russian+Dominance+on+Moldovan+Media+Market+previews.pdf/550e9151-5a3e-25cf-6d49-481c2b549000?version=1.1&t=1584633537034>.

Exclusiv Media and allegedly use the media group as a conduit for money laundering.<sup>13</sup> NTV is a twin publication of the Russian NTV station run by Gazprom.<sup>14</sup> Furculita also owns the Moldovan versions of Russian newspapers Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove and Argumenti i Fakty.

The top outlets in Moldova are heavy with linkages to Russia, the political elite, and allegations of corruption. Despite the law on transparency in ownership, the true controller of these outlets is in a few cases obscured. Additionally, with the exception of Moldova 1, the controlling owners of most top outlets appear to be outside of Moldova at present.

## Print

The most popular print outlet in Moldova, Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove (KP in Moldova), is owned by Corneliu Furculita through Exclusiv Media. Furculita also owns the fourth most popular print outlet, Argumenti i Fakty (Arguments and Facts). Both the KP in Moldova outlet and the Moldovan Argumenti i Fakty outlet are twin publications of their Russian counterparts.

The second most popular newspaper outlet in Moldova is Makler, which is controlled by Makler LLC and owned by Olga Sviridova (50%) and Valeriu Zelinski (50%). Little additional information was found about either owner of the outlet. Makler is also a widely used platform for selling items and services.

Jurnal de Chisinau, the third most consumed print outlet, is owned by media mogul Victor Topa. Topa owns one top outlet in each of the mediums we tracked, including Jurnal TV, Jurnal FM, and Jurnal.md.

Rounding out the print sector is Ziarul de Garda. Co-owned by journalists Alina Radu and Aneta Grosu, the outlet focuses their reporting on corruption of public officials and

---

<sup>13</sup> "Documents: Galina Dodon and the family business 'Exclusiv Media' SRL: 33 million lei 'washed' through the Bahamas," Timpul.md, 30 April 2020, <https://www.timpul.md/articol/documente---galina-dodon-i-afacerea-familiala-exclusiv-media-srl---33-milioane-de-lei-spalai-prin-bahamas-155863.html>.

<sup>14</sup> RISE Moldova, "Exclusive Media SRL," <https://profiles.rise.md/connection.php?id=190128160902>.

politicians. They also frequently publish information to promote the transparency of their own outlet and encourage other organizations in Moldova to do the same. Ziarul de Garda's online outlet, Zdg.md, is also fairly popular.

Print outlets in Moldova do not have the same transparency laws as television and radio outlets, which means there is no registry to refer to as a starting point for outlet owners. Despite this, we see some newspaper outlets, such as Ziarul de Garda, push for transparency. This conflicts with outlets like Makler about which little is known and owners like Furculita who appear to conceal control of their outlets.

## Radio

Two owners of radio outlets have appeared earlier in our analysis. The first is Moldova's state-owned TRM, which runs the most consumed radio channel Radio Moldova. The second is Victor Topa, who owns the fifth most consumed radio station, Jurnal FM.

The second most popular radio station is Radio Noroc. Radio Noroc is controlled by Noroc Media SRL, which was bought in early 2020 by Doinița Topala. Topala is the daughter of the director of Moldova's national railway. Topala is also a part-owner of a skating rink and a transportation company.<sup>15</sup>

The third most popular radio station is Radio Plai. Radio Plai is owned by Maria Covalenco.<sup>16</sup> We were unable to find much public information on Covalenco.

Hit FM is the fourth most popular radio station in Moldova. Hit FM claims it is primarily focused on media and entertainment. While the station reports their owners as being Jana and Pavel Lozovan,<sup>17</sup> the station is likely controlled by family member Dan Lozovan. Dan Lozovan previously owned a share of this station but faced criticism for

---

<sup>15</sup> "Iurie Topala's daughter became the new owner of Noroc TV and Radio Noroc," *Media Azi*, 5 February 2020, <http://media-azi.md/ro/stiri/fiica-lui-iurie-topal%C4%83-devenit-noua-proprietar%C4%83-noroc-tv-%C8%99i-radio-noroc>.

<sup>16</sup> Radio Plai, Audiovisual Council of Moldova, 13 March 2020, [http://www.audiovizual.md/files/Radio%20Plai\\_3.pdf](http://www.audiovizual.md/files/Radio%20Plai_3.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Hit FM, "Statement on the editorial policy regarding the coverage of the early parliamentary elections in July 2021," Audiovisual Council of Moldova, 17 May 2021, [http://www.audiovizual.md/files/HIT%20FM\\_6.pdf](http://www.audiovizual.md/files/HIT%20FM_6.pdf).

owning multiple television and radio outlets; he may have therefore signed over ownership to remove his name from this outlet. Lozovan had previously been accused of being involved in a monopoly of ownership of Moldovan media when he was a business associate of Vladimir Plahotniuc.<sup>18</sup> Lozovan had also been instrumental in bringing Russian broadcasting agreements into Moldova prior to the 2018 anti-propaganda law.<sup>19</sup> Hit FM shares a name with a Russian radio station.

While owners of radio outlets are easily found due to Moldova's transparency law, control of radio outlets is still obscured, such as the case with Hit FM. Owners Lozovan and Topala have ties to the Moldovan political elite, and the top outlet is controlled by the government. Additionally, each of the top radio outlets is owned by a single owner (if the family of Dan Lozovan is considered a single owner), meaning that decision making around control of content is centralized and could be a potential avenue for bias or malign influence.

## Online

The most popular online outlet is Jurnal.md, part of the larger Jurnal franchise owned by Victor Topa through Reforma Art LLC. While a Jurnal outlet appears in the top outlets of each medium, the online version is the only instance where it appears as the top outlet.

Protv.md is the second most popular online outlet. Protv.md is owned by Central European Media Enterprises, which was bought by Czech billionaire Petr Kellner's PPF Group in 2019.<sup>20</sup> Kellner died in 2021 during a helicopter accident in Alaska, and

---

<sup>18</sup> "The monopolists of the press, supported by justice; the Centru court rejected the request of the Competition Council to sue, which protects the businessmen Plahotniuc and Lozovan," *Jurnal.md*, 6 July 2016, <https://www.jurnal.md/ro/justitie/2016/7/6/monopolistii-presei-sustinuti-de-justitie-judecatoria-centru-a-r-espins-cererea-de-chemare-in-instanta-a-consiliului-concurentei-care-ii-protejeaza-pe-afaceristii-plahotniu-c-si-lozovan/>.

<sup>19</sup> "CTC Media Announces Expansion Into Moldova," IPN Press Agency, 4 October 2008, [https://www.ipn.md/en/-7967\\_971890.html](https://www.ipn.md/en/-7967_971890.html).

<sup>20</sup> "Central European Media Enterprises to be Acquired by PPF," BusinessWire, 27 October 2019, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20191027005041/en/Central-European-Media-Enterprises-to-Be-Acquired-by-PPF>.

inheritance proceedings are still ongoing among his family.<sup>21</sup> A television outlet of the same name also broadcasts in Moldova.

The third and fourth most consumed online outlets, Stiri.md and Point.md, are owned by Simpals LLC. Point.md was developed for Russian-speaking Moldovans, and Stiri.md was developed for Romanian speakers in response to the popularity of Point.md to have an outlet that shared the viewpoint of Russian-speakers in Moldova.<sup>22</sup> Simpals is a company that specializes in online services and is the largest animation studio in Moldova. Majority owned by Ukrainian immigrant to Moldova Dmitri Volosin and minority owned by Roman Stirbu, Simpals has had well-known business dealings with Russian companies.<sup>23</sup>

Last on this list is Publika.md. Publika.md is owned by oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc who owns a television and radio outlet of the same name, along with the Prime TV channel mentioned above.

The top online outlets are notable for their controllers being located outside of Moldova. Protv.md is owned by a Czech company, and the owners of Jurnal.md and Publika.md have both fled Moldova (to Germany and the US, respectively). Additionally, the focus of Point.md was to appeal to Russian-speakers in Moldova. Given these factors, the top online outlets in Moldova are susceptible to substantial foreign influence.

## Conclusion

On the surface, Moldova looks uniquely poised to set itself apart as a country with strong media laws that is resilient to foreign influence. Both its anti-propaganda and ownership transparency laws are abided by on paper. However, informally, the control

---

<sup>21</sup> "Shareholders," PPF, accessed 2 March 2022,

<https://www.ppf.eu/en/about-the-ppf-group/people-and-statutory-bodies/shareholders>.

<sup>22</sup> Igor Fomin, "Moldnet and the 2019 Parliamentary Elections: Navigating Moldova's Russian-Language Digital Media Landscape," Media Forward, February 2019, [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/9-Moldnet-2019-Parliamentary-Elections\\_ENGLISH.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/9-Moldnet-2019-Parliamentary-Elections_ENGLISH.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> "First Moldovan 3D cartoon will be ready in 2014," IPN Press Agency, 9 September 2016, <https://www.ipn.md/en/societate/33348>.

and ties of these outlets can be opaque and the law disregarded. We outline here four issues that raise particular concern with regard to the Moldovan media market.

The first is the continuing significant presence of Russian influence in the Moldovan media. Several outlets have found workarounds to the anti-propaganda law to allow for Russian news to be broadcast in Moldova. RTR Moldova split its ownership to be partially among Moldovan citizens, even though it is owned by the Russian government. Several outlets, such as NTV, KP in Moldova, Argumenti i Fakty, and Hit FM, are the twin publications of or are affiliated with the Russian outlets of the same name. Lastly, other outlets such as Prime TV and Point.md share Russian viewpoints with their audiences. All of these factors lead to direct influence by Russia on the Moldovan media audience.

In many instances, overlapping with these Russian ties are the ties to the Moldovan political elite. To the extent that the Kremlin can strengthen ties with Moldova's political elites, Moscow can exert indirect influence via the media outlets in which these leaders have a controlling stake. Two outlets—Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova—are owned by the state, but several others are owned by current and former politicians or their family members.

The third concerning issue regarding Moldovan media ownership is the lack of transparency about who controls the media. Even with transparency laws, the identities of the individuals and companies who truly control many Moldovan outlets still remain obscured. While at first glance the Moldovan domestic media environment appears to have many diverse owners, what relationships we have been able to uncover show a small group of elites controlling substantial portions of the country's media environment.

This leads us to the final issue, which is concentration of media ownership. Many of the same outlets and owners appear across the mediums, notably Topa who owns a top television, print, radio, and online outlet, along with Furculita and Plahotniuc, who also own outlets in multiple mediums. This concentration limits the diversity of narratives and means that consumers are likely receiving the same information, regardless of which medium they consume. Especially for those companies controlled by a single

owner, there are opportunities for leverage by malign actors to shape the country's media narratives.

Ownership laws to encourage media diversity in Moldova are not always enforced and in some cases have led to murkier information but no real change in narrative control. Although Moldova restricts rebroadcasting in an attempt to emphasize its own media, it appears that this has led to greater domestic ownership and consequently bias by the Moldovan political elite. Restrictions on Russian broadcasting have also failed to impact the Kremlin's control of narratives in the Moldovan media space.