

# KREMLIN AND FUGITIVE OLIGARCHS' DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

ASSESSMENT PERIOD:  
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## Summary

Between March 1–30, the Russian Federation, through fugitive oligarchs Ilan Shor and Veaceslav Platon, placed 329 ads on META platforms, amounting to €7,532.

Just like last month, we note that both Ilan Shor and Veaceslav Platon have significantly reduced their budgets for promoting posts aimed at manipulating public opinion. They have also shortened the ad durations—from 7 days to 2–3 days or even just a few hours. During the monitored period, we observed that Ilan Shor significantly increased the number of ads compared to last year. At the same time, Veaceslav Platon reduced the number of Facebook sponsorships, and on the YouTube platform, he stopped advertising altogether after the presidential election campaign ended.

In addition to these two oligarchs, former Prime Minister Vlad Filat has also started promoting various manipulative posts through paid ads. Through these sponsored posts, Vlad Filat launches attacks on the current government, the European Union, civil society, and independent media.

All analyzed ads included the mandatory disclaimer for political and social topics. This allowed us to partially identify the investments made in ads placed on META. The transparency of these expenses is only possible when the page follows META's rules and uses the necessary disclaimer for political and social ads. Ads running without a disclaimer disappear from META's Ad Library, and during their circulation, the paid amount and duration are not publicly visible.

### **The main narratives sponsored by the fugitive oligarchs and Vlad Filat between March 1–30:**

- **The EU is no longer a democracy:** The European Union is said to have lost its democratic values, with the voided elections in Romania cited as an example.
- **Moldova will not become an EU member:** Moldova is not ready to join the EU, and the current government has done nothing to advance this process.
- **The EU is militarizing Moldova and wants to drag it into war:** The military aid offered by the EU for the protection of Moldova's airspace is portrayed as unhelpful. On the other hand, this support is said to involve Moldova in war.
- **EU financial aid is indebting Moldova:** The €1.9 billion financial support from the EU is promoted by pro-Russian politicians as a debt. According to them, Moldova will feel no benefit from this aid, and the money will be stolen by PAS.
- **NGOs – the enemies of the people:** NGOs are accused of stealing USAID funds meant for Moldova. Russian propaganda aims to portray civil society, independent media, and

the current government as a bourgeois class that has impoverished the country.

- **Moldova should not express an opinion on the war in Ukraine:** Moldova should not take Ukraine's side in order not to anger the Russian Federation.

These campaigns aim to undermine the pro-European path of the Republic of Moldova, destabilize the political climate, and erode trust in state institutions. As a consequence, the weak communication of the authorities and pro-European parties contributes to the diminishing trust in the country's European direction. In the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for 2025, the authorities, in collaboration with civil society, must intensify their efforts to counter disinformation by actively informing the public and urging digital platforms to prevent electoral interference.

## Introduction

The Kremlin is intensifying its hybrid attacks against the Republic of Moldova in the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections on September 28 of this year. One of the mechanisms used by Russia in its hybrid warfare is sponsored disinformation through Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

The first noticeable change after the conclusion of the presidential elections in the fall of 2024 is the significant decrease in the amount of money spent on ads. We assume these savings are intentional, with the financial resources likely being reserved for a potential large-scale offensive on the eve of the parliamentary elections.

After the arrest of [Veaceslav Platon](#) by British authorities, both the number of ads and the budget allocated to his Facebook page and that of Natalia Morari—a former journalist with whom he has a child—dropped significantly compared to February. This trend was also observed on YouTube, where the number of ads sponsored by Natalia Morari's account decreased from 9 to 7.

Ilan Shor has ceased using anonymous pages to sponsor disinformation on Facebook. This move appears to be temporary and may resume closer to the parliamentary elections. Currently, Ilan Shor is indirectly sponsoring the ads of politicians Irina Vlah, Victoria Furtună, and Vasile Tarlev, whom the oligarch supported in the presidential elections.

The publication *Ziarul de Gardă* revealed in an investigation that [Victoria Furtună](#) was openly supported by the Shor criminal network during the presidential elections. According to *Ziarul de Gardă*'s sources, the [Shor network](#) was instructed on the day of electoral silence to vote for Vasile Tarlev or Irina Vlah, should Victoria Furtună be excluded from the presidential race.

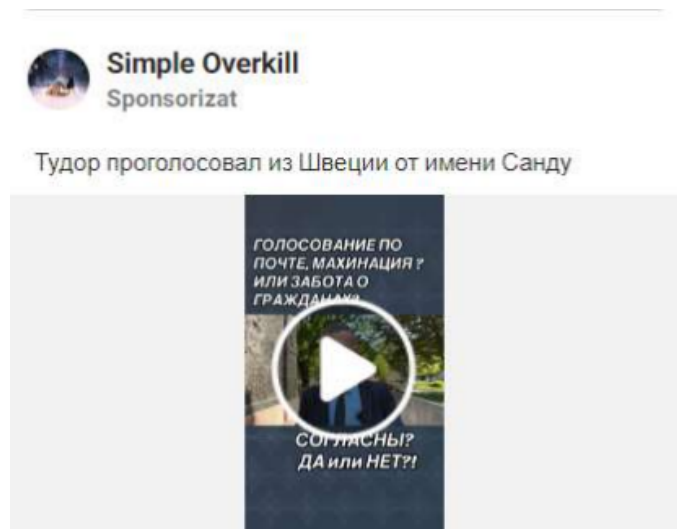
Another investigation by the publication “*Cu SENS*” showed how the Shor criminal network organized meetings for [Vasile Tarlev](#) with paid supporters who were compensated to attend events featuring this candidate.

In addition to the three politicians, Ilan Shor is also sponsoring the page of the propaganda TV channel “MD24”, launched in Moscow [last year](#). The channel provides a media platform for Kremlin agents in the Republic of Moldova, including the three politicians mentioned above. All interviews published on the station’s website and social media pages are recorded online via videoconference. The Intelligence and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova [blocked](#) the website through which this TV station was broadcasting in the country last year.

Former Prime Minister Vlad Filat, who has become a useful tool for promoting pro-Russian narratives, continues to increase the number of sponsored ads on Facebook.

All the analyzed ads carried the “political advertisement” disclaimer. This allowed us to identify only part of the spending published on META. Ads that run without a disclaimer disappear from META’s Ad Library, and while they are broadcasted, neither the paid amount nor the sponsorship period is publicly available.

For example, the page “Simple Overkill”, which promoted members of the Shor criminal group, ran ads without any disclaimer. As a result, the ads from this page did not appear in META’s Ad Library.

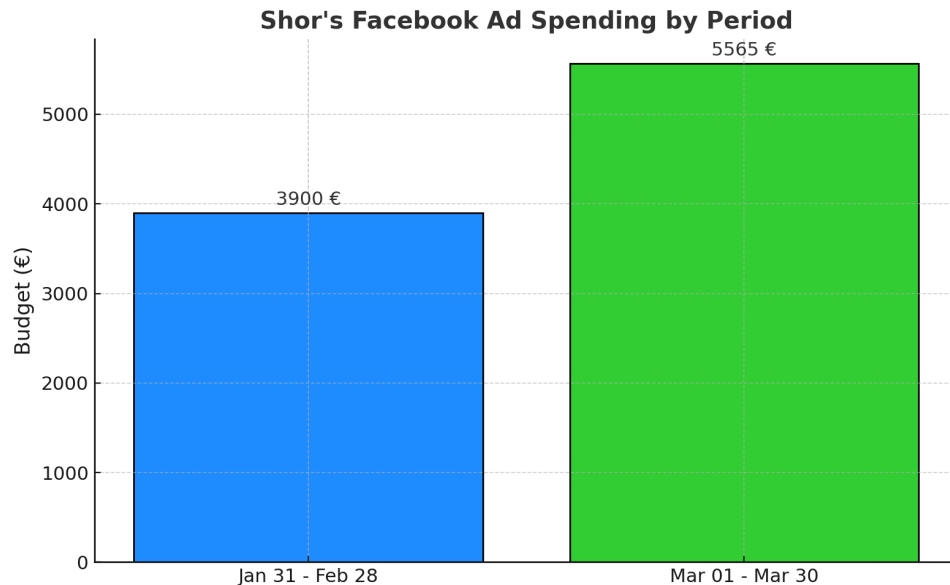


*Fig. 1 – The page Simple Overkill sponsored a video ad without a disclaimer featuring Tudor Șoiliță, a member of the Shor criminal group, who spread the false claim that “the diaspora was voting massively for PAS by mail and that no one is verifying the process.” The ad can no longer be found in META’s Ad Library.*

## Spending on the META platform between March 1–30

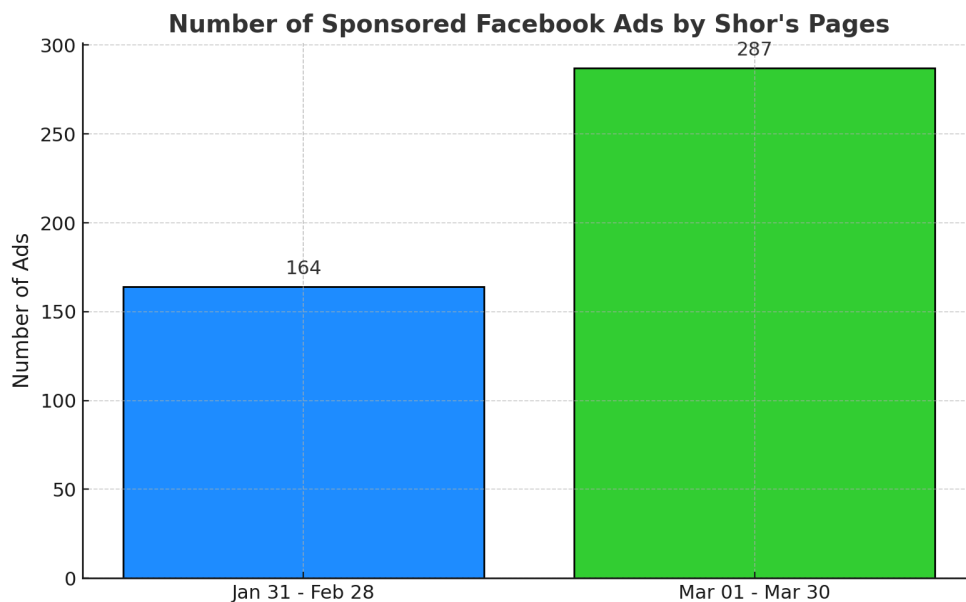
Fugitive oligarch Ilan Shor spent approximately **€5,565** between March 1–30 to **place 287 ads** on Facebook and Instagram. The pages funded by him belong to politicians [Vasile Tarlev](#), [Victoria Furtună](#), the [Republican Party INIMA MOLDOVEI](#), and the TV channel “MD24”. During the monitored period, Shor did not promote ads through anonymous pages—a tactic he had

used last year. Compared to the period of January 31–February 28, both the allocated budget and the number of ads increased significantly.



*Fig. 1 – Evolution of spending on ads sponsored by pages affiliated with Ilan Shor on Facebook, comparing the period January 31–February 28 with the period March 1–30.*

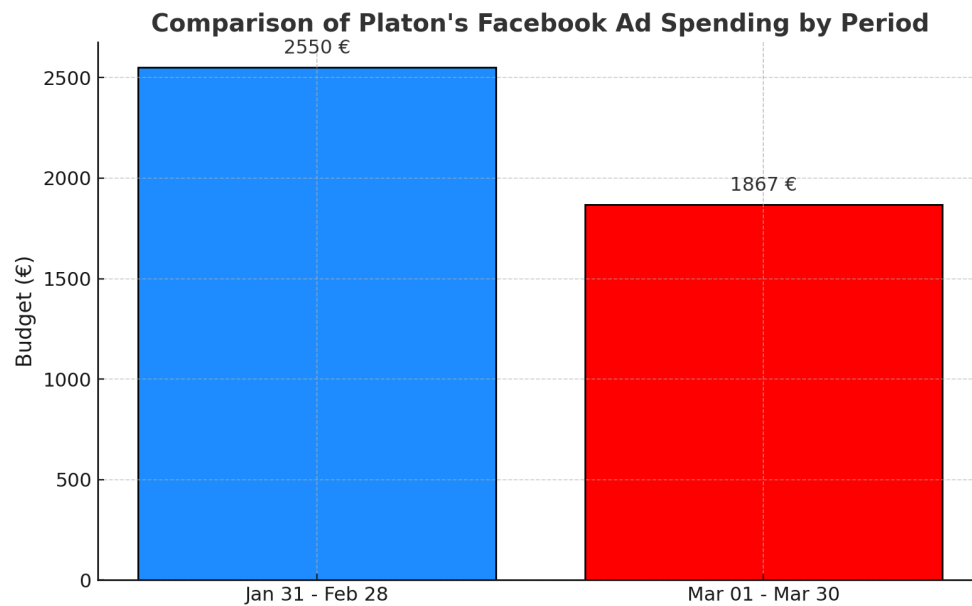
The highest number of ads was promoted from the “MD24 page” – **205 ads with a budget of €3,299.**



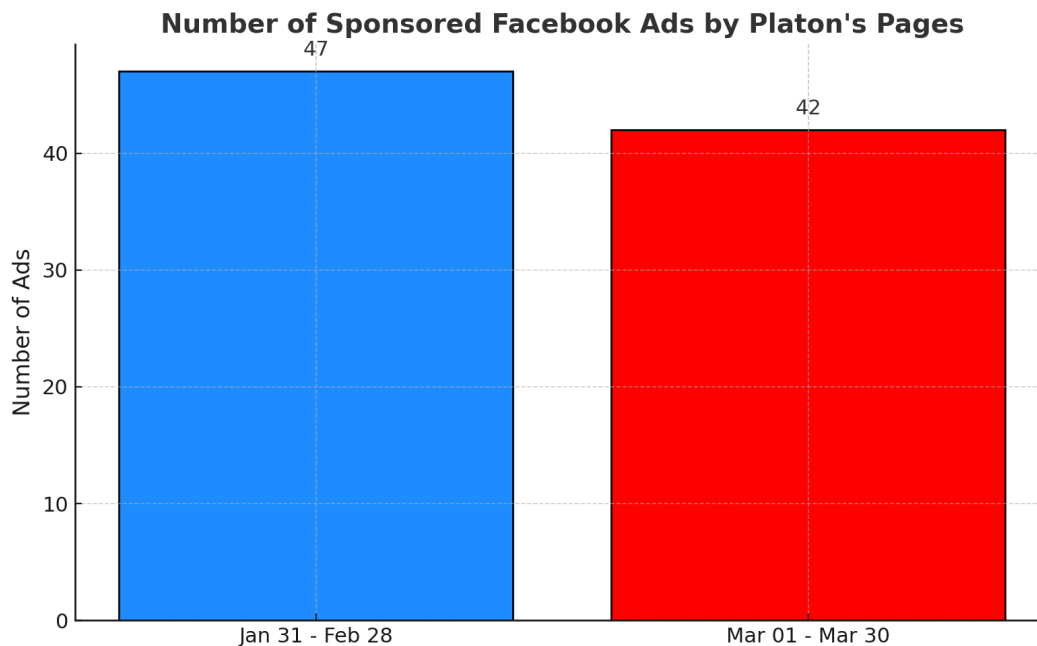
*Fig. 2 – Evolution of the number of ads sponsored by pages affiliated with the Shor group, comparing the period January 31–February 28 with the period March 1–30.*

In the case of Veaceslav Platon’s sponsorships, the amounts allocated for ads decreased compared to the period January 31–February 28. Between March 1–30, Platon spent **€1,867** on

**42 ads.** The main page investing the most in Facebook ads is affiliated with Natalia Morari, a former journalist with whom Platon has a child.

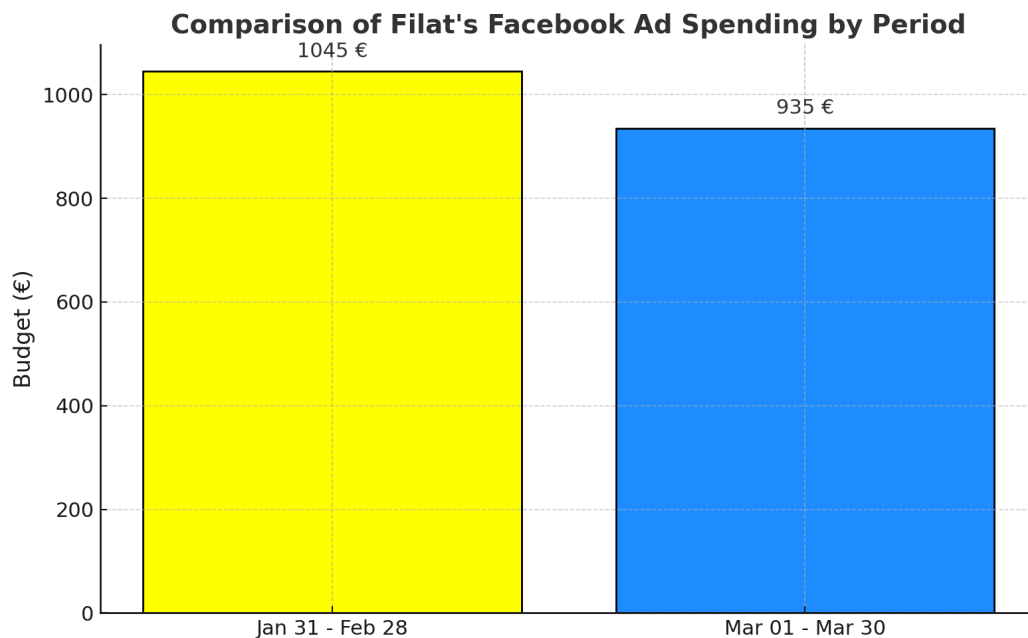


*Fig. 3 – Evolution of spending on ads sponsored by pages affiliated with Veaceslav Platon on Facebook, comparing the period January 31–February 28 with the period March 1–30.*

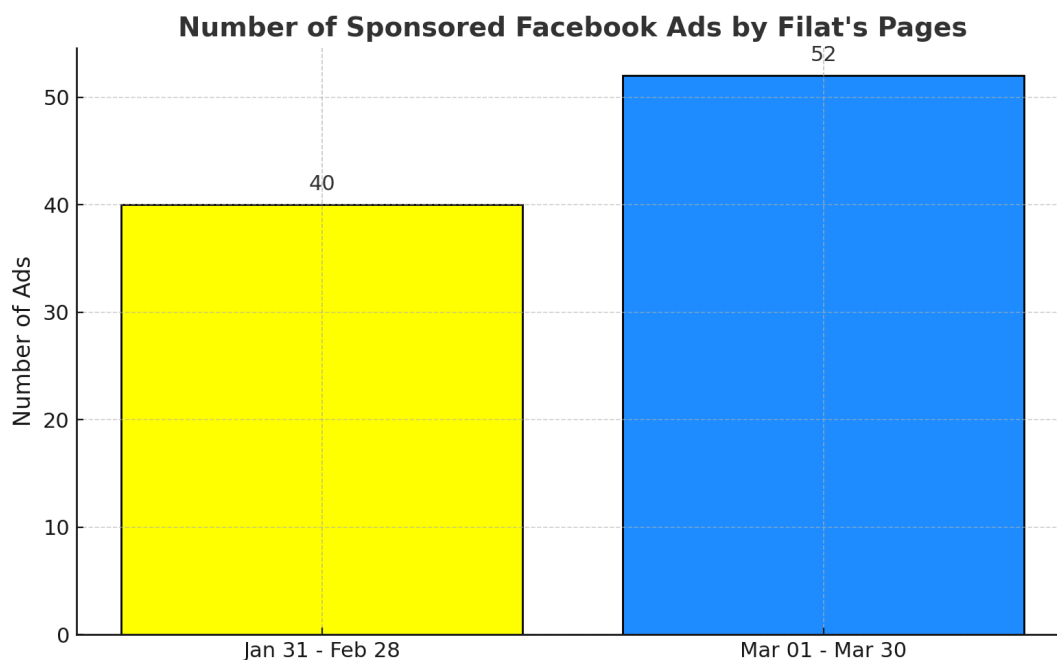


*Fig. 4 – Evolution of the number of ads sponsored by pages affiliated with Veaceslav Platon, comparing the period January 31–February 28 with the period March 1–30.*

Former Prime Minister Vlad Filat is becoming a key player in promoting disinformation through ads on META platforms. Between March 1–30, Filat allocated **€935 for 52 ads**. Compared to the period January 31–February 28, the budget is slightly lower, but the number of ads increased significantly.



*Fig. 5 - Evolution of spending on ads sponsored by Vlad Filat's Facebook page, comparing the period January 31–February 28 with the period March 1–30.*



*Fig. 6 -.Evolution of the number of ads sponsored by Vlad Filat's page, comparing the period January 31–February 28 with the period March 1–30.*

In terms of the number of sponsored ads, oligarch Ilan Shor remains the undisputed leader. Even when combined, the ads sponsored by Veaceslav Platon and Vlad Filat do not surpass Ilan Shor in this regard.

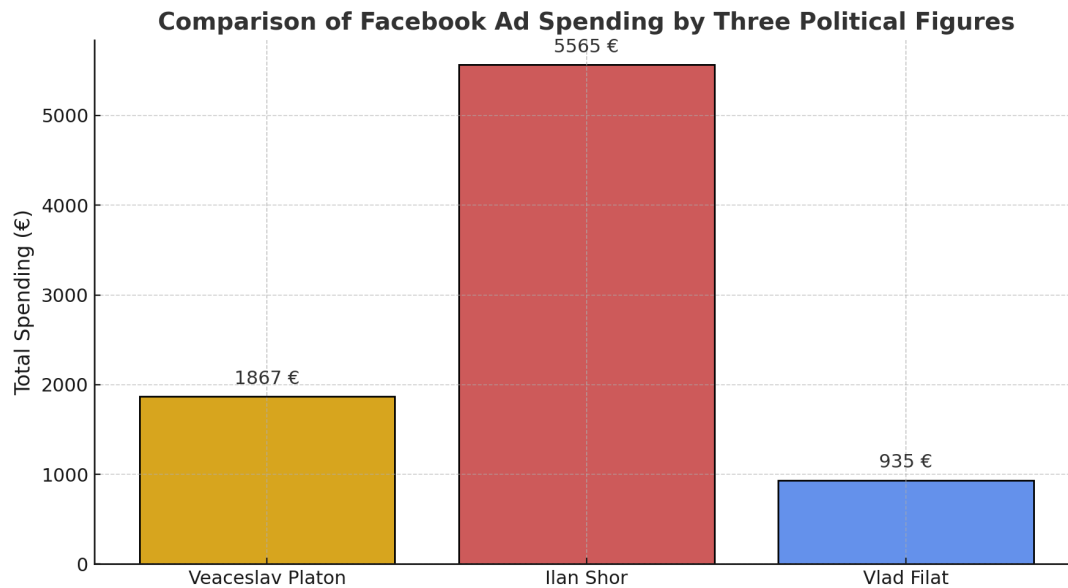


Fig. 7 - Comparative chart of Facebook ad spending by Veaceslav Platon, Ilan Shor, and Vlad Filat.

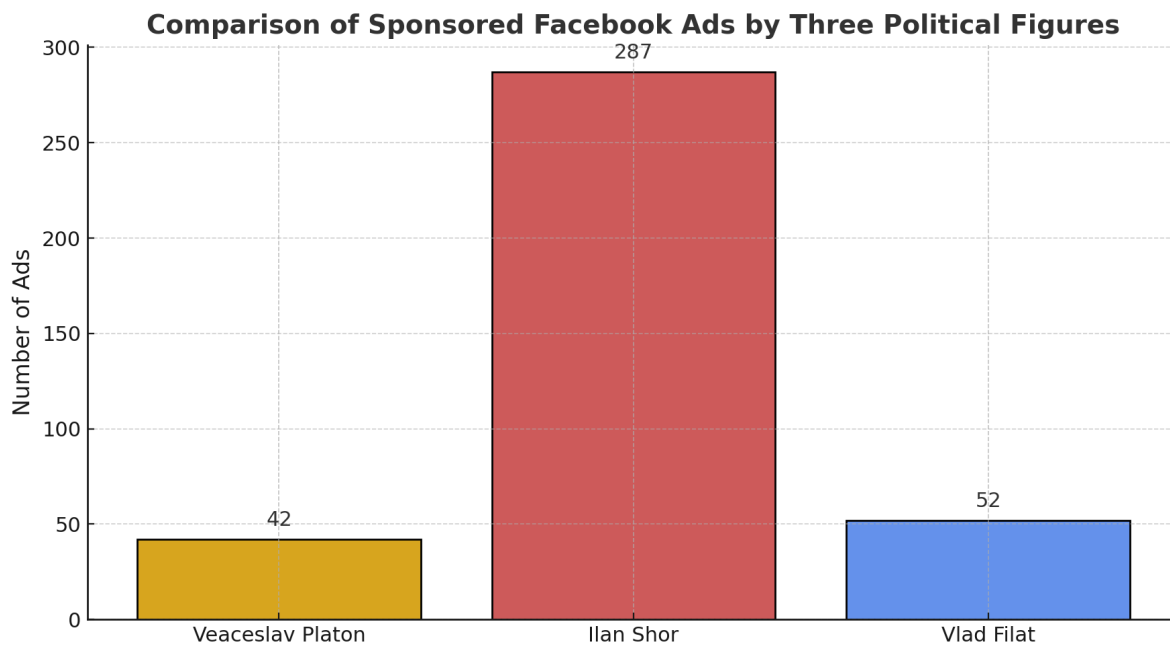
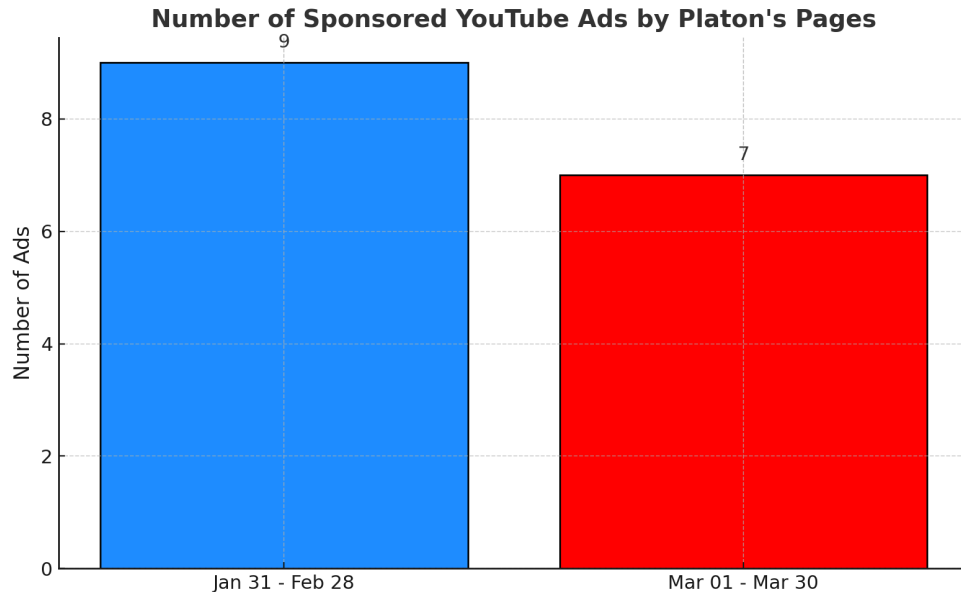


Fig. 8 - Comparison of the number of Facebook ads sponsored by Veaceslav Platon, Ilan Shor, and Vlad Filat.



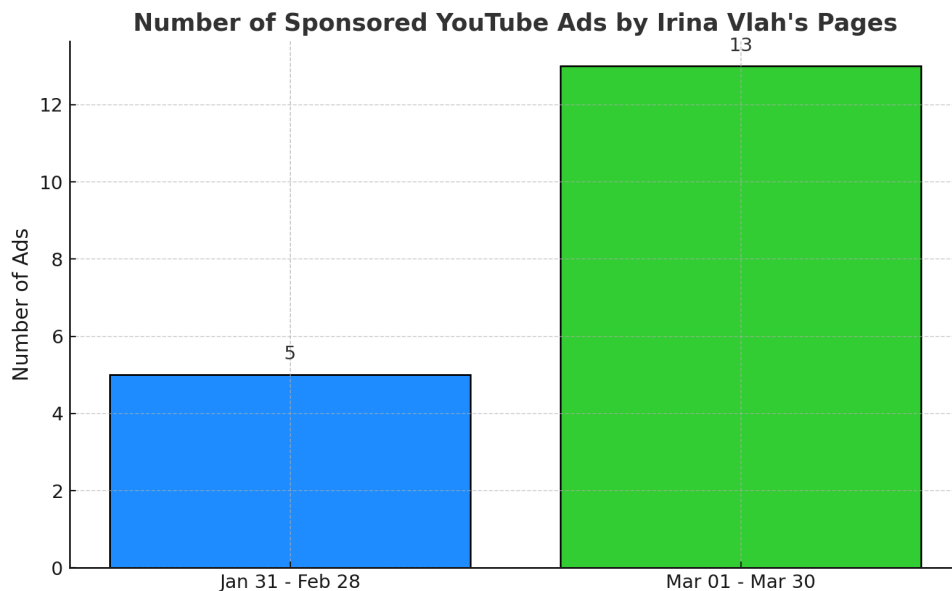
## Promotion of Disinformation on YouTube

On the YouTube platform, only Natalia Morari and Irina Vlah promoted video clips between March 1–30. Fugitive Veaceslav Platon stopped sponsoring ads on YouTube following the conclusion of the presidential elections. Additionally, the number of ads promoted by Natalia Morari on YouTube decreased compared to the period January 31–February 28.



*Fig. 9 - Evolution of the number of YouTube ads sponsored by accounts affiliated with Veaceslav Platon, comparing the period January 31–February 28 with the period March 1–30.*

Irina Vlah doubled the number of sponsored ads on YouTube compared to the period January 31–February 28.



*Fig. 10 - Evolution of the number of YouTube ads placed from Irina Vlah's account, comparing the period January 31–February 28 with the period March 1–30.*

Unfortunately, Google Ads Transparency does not provide information on the amounts spent on ads or their duration. This is due to the fact that, within the territory of the Republic of Moldova, Google has not activated the political ads category, which would otherwise offer data on budget, duration, and number of views.

## Main narratives promoted between March 1–30

During the monitoring period, the main propaganda narratives promoted through Facebook and YouTube ads were:

- The EU is no longer a democracy** – The exclusion of Călin Georgescu from the Romanian presidential race was a subject manipulated by pro-Russian actors in Chișinău. [Natalia Morari](#) promoted the idea that “the EU is no longer a democracy.” According to Morari, after Georgescu’s exclusion from the race, “Maia Sandu hopes Brussels will allow her to commit abuses in the parliamentary elections.” [Vasile Tarlev](#) also criticized Georgescu’s disqualification, stating that the Romanian authorities’ decision “is a provocation against the democratic values of modern Europe.”
- Moldova will not become an EU member** – The three-year anniversary of Moldova’s application for EU membership was another topic manipulated by [Natalia Morari](#). She claims that “the authorities in Chișinău were instructed by Brussels to submit the application.” According to Morari, three years after the application was filed, Moldovans are “living worse,” while NGOs, the independent press, and the current government have become “millionaires.”



Fig. 11 - Sponsored video by Natalia Morari on YouTube promoting the narrative that “Moldova will not become an EU member.”

- **The EU is militarizing Moldova and wants to drag it into war** – [Vasile Tarlev](#) criticized the military aid provided by the EU, including for air defense systems. According to him, the aid package “will not defend Moldova but increases the risk of the country being drawn into war.” [Victoria Furtună](#) also targeted the EU’s *ReArm Europe* initiative, accusing Brussels of militarization and claiming it “wants to push Moldova into war with Maia Sandu’s help.”



**Victoria Furtună**

Sponsored • Paid for by Victoria Furtună

"Război pentru pace" – paradoxul periculos al zilelor noastre

Vedem cum Ucraina merge în SUA pentru a „negocia” pacea, iar la doar o zi distanță, la un alt summit, adoptă decizia de a continua înarmarea. Acesta nu mai este un proces de pace – este un război pentru pace, o formulă absurdă care justifică doar mai multă distrugere.

...



*Fig. 12 - Sponsored post by Victoria Furtună’s page accusing the EU of militarization and attempting to involve Moldova in the war.*

- **EU financial aid is indebting Moldova** – [Victoria Furtună](#) claimed that the €1.9 billion aid package “is turning Moldova into an EU colony.” [Vlad Filat](#) asserted that “the €400 million in grants from the EU will be directed to NGOs.” The “MD24” channel promoted the false claim that “PAS and Maia Sandu are indebting Moldova at the behest of foreign forces.” Through such disinformation, MD24 attempts to shape public perception that the current government is anti-national. In the context of EU financial support, [Natalia Morari](#) stated that PAS will be unable to manage such a large sum. According to her, the government borrows €1 billion annually, yet “Moldovans feel no positive effects from these loans.”



**Vlad Filat**

Sponsored · Paid for by Vlad Filat

Haideți să le spunem oamenilor cum stau lucrurile în realitate. Nu este vorba de ajutor, ci de un credit de 1,5 miliarde de euro și 400 milioane de euro sub formă de grant. Noi până acum nu cunoaștem pe ce proiecte vor veni acești bani. Urmează să fie identificate și lansate aceste proiecte pentru accesarea acestei finanțări, ceea ce, din punctul meu de vedere, este o abordare absolut greșită.

Iar dacă este să ne uităm pe componenta grant, o să vedeți că este pentru...



Fig. 13 - Sponsored video by Vlad Filat's page in which the politician claims that €400 million from the EU grant will be allocated to NGOs.

- **NGOs – the enemies of the people** – The topic of USAID funding for Moldova was the most manipulated narrative in March. [Vlad Filat](#) and [Victoria Furtună](#) accused NGOs of stealing the money provided by the United States. [Irina Vlah](#) claimed that NGOs “have pushed Moldova into debt and are the reason why Moldovans live in poverty.”

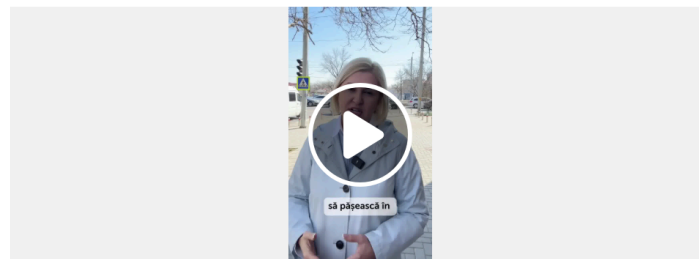


**Partidul Republican INIMA Moldovei**

Sponsored · Paid for by Partidul Republican INIMA Moldovei

Puterea activiștilor pe granturi s-a transformat într-un coșmar pentru Moldova. INIMA MOLDOVEI va curăța structurile de stat de influența ONG-urilor!  
Declarația completă a Partidului INIMA MOLDOVEI este disponibilă aici:  
<https://irinavlah.md/ro/articles/moldova-zahvachena-npo-inima-moldovei-osvobodit-stranu>

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Власть грантовых активистов обернулась для Молдовы кошмаром. INIMA...



Partidul Republican INIMA Moldovei  
Political Party  
934 people like this

Like Page

Fig. 14 - Sponsored video by the INIMA Moldovei Republican Party page accusing NGOs of secretly controlling the state and blaming them for the poverty of Moldovans.

- **Moldova should not express an opinion on the war in Ukraine** – The negotiations surrounding peace in Ukraine were used by local actors to promote the idea that “Moldova should not support Ukraine.” According to [Vlad Filat](#), Maia Sandu “should not involve herself in the negotiations between the U.S. and Ukraine, and Moldova should mind its own business.” This idea was echoed by [Victoria Furtună](#), who stated that “Maia Sandu’s message of support for Ukraine harms Moldova.”



*Fig. 15 -Sponsored post by Vlad Filat’s page in which he blames Maia Sandu for her message of support for Ukraine following the dispute at the White House.*

## Findings

In the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections on September 28, Russia is intensifying its rhetoric aimed at dividing Moldovan society. Through pro-Russian politicians backed by fugitive oligarchs, the Kremlin is attempting to portray civil society and independent media—seen as barriers to the capture of state institutions by pro-Russian forces—as enemies of the people. Through online sponsorships, Moscow is testing a parallel ecosystem of electoral propaganda.

At the same time, a potential end to the war in Ukraine is being promoted as a victory for the Russian Federation. Pro-Russian actors in Moldova are trying to instill the idea that a peace deal favorable to Russia should be of no concern to the Republic of Moldova. According to them, any open support for Ukraine could risk dragging Chișinău into war against Moscow.

Monitoring results reveal an increasingly distinct divergence in the messages promoted by politicians Vasile Tarlev, Irina Vlah, and Victoria Furtună in the context of the parliamentary

elections. Meanwhile, Shor and Moscow have already outlined the core messaging lines for their parties, dictating the themes to be pushed in front of their electorate:

- The **“Viitorul Moldovei” Party**, led by Vasile Tarlev, advocates for closer ties with the Russian Federation and criticizes Moldova’s European integration path. The party also promotes the narrative that “Moldova is losing its traditional values because of the West.”
- The **“Inima Moldovei” Republican Party**, led by Irina Vlah, claims to support Moldova’s “neutrality.” Vlah accuses the PAS government, the EU, and NATO of “militarizing Moldova in order to drag it into the war in Ukraine.” The party has never condemned Russia for violating Moldova’s neutrality by occupying the Transnistrian region.
- The **“Moldova Mare” Party**, led by Victoria Furtună, claims to have a “pro-European vocation,” despite Furtună’s repeated criticism of the European Union and her opposition to Moldova joining the EU.

The arrest of Veaceslav Platon by British authorities played a key role in the decline of both the budget and the number of ads promoted by pages affiliated with him. At the same time, throughout the monitoring period, we observed a clear alignment in the messaging pushed by Natalia Morari, politicians linked to Shor, and Vlad Filat—particularly in their attacks on NGOs, the EU’s economic support, and Moldova’s European integration.

The reduction in visible budgets does not signal a withdrawal, but rather a shift in strategy. Pro-Russian actors are testing new methods: short ads with limited duration, distributed through obscure or anonymous pages that are difficult to track. It’s a form of “hit and run” propaganda—strike fast, disappear before effective monitoring can take place. This tactic shows that these actors are learning from past mistakes and adapting to evade the transparency requirements imposed by digital platforms.

Vlad Filat is increasingly emerging as a piece in the propaganda network—not through formal association, but through thematic alignment. While presenting himself as a pro-European politician, his messages mirror those of Shor and Platon: attacks on the EU, NGOs, and civil society. When such narratives come from a figure who maintains a veneer of legitimacy, they have a greater impact on hesitant segments of the public. Rather than crafting new narratives, Filat repackages Russian themes under a local facade.

The pro-European government and its affiliated parties are failing to deliver an adequate response. The absence of a coherent, data-driven communication strategy tailored to the general public leaves the field wide open for propaganda. Both rhetorically and visually, the oligarchs’ campaigns are more finely tuned than official messaging. Without an effective counter-narrative, the threat is not merely electoral—it is structural: public opinion is being systematically eroded, and trust in the European path weakens with every cycle of manipulation left unanswered. Once the official date of the parliamentary elections is announced, we expect META and YouTube platforms to be flooded with ads promoting disinformation. In the near future, we will likely witness the emergence of dozens of anonymous pages affiliated with Shor,



spending enormous sums to smear the current government, promote pro-Russian politicians, and discredit the European Union.

## Recommendations

### 1. **Creation of rapid-response units in strategic communication**

Pro-Russian actors are testing narratives in real time. The response from institutions and pro-European parties cannot follow the classic bureaucratic pace. Agile structures are needed—capable of reacting within 12–24 hours, with concise messages distributed through relevant channels (including social media), tailored to each public segment. These can operate temporarily around key topics such as the celebration of May 9 and its propagandistic use, electoral corruption, or the management of European funds.

### 2. **Audience segmentation and adaptation of communication channels and formats**

Traditional formats (TV, official press releases) often fail to reach the audiences most vulnerable to digital disinformation. It's essential to map influence channels and profile key groups—like disengaged youth, TV-dependent elderly, diaspora communities, and precarious workers. Just as crucial is tailoring the format and tone of messaging to fit the specific needs and contexts of each group.

### 3. **Institutional collaboration with digital platforms and coordinated pressure**

In the absence of a designated “political” category for Moldova in Google Ads or proper control on Facebook Ads, sponsored disinformation remains under the radar. Authorities must adopt an interinstitutional approach (involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CEC, SIS, and the Audiovisual Council), formally requesting partnerships and regular reporting from platforms.

### 4. **Transparency in the use of EU funds and impact-oriented communication**

Every form of European support—grant, loan, technical assistance—must be accompanied by accessible, quantifiable communication: who received it, for what purpose, and what the results are. Without such systematic transparency, a vacuum is created in which disinformation can operate unchecked.

### 5. **Integrating the informational dimension into electoral security**

In the run-up to the 2025 parliamentary elections, informational risks must be treated with the same priority as logistical or legal ones. A national strategy for digital electoral defense is needed—one that includes monitoring tools, international partnerships, and penalties for coordinated foreign influence campaigns.