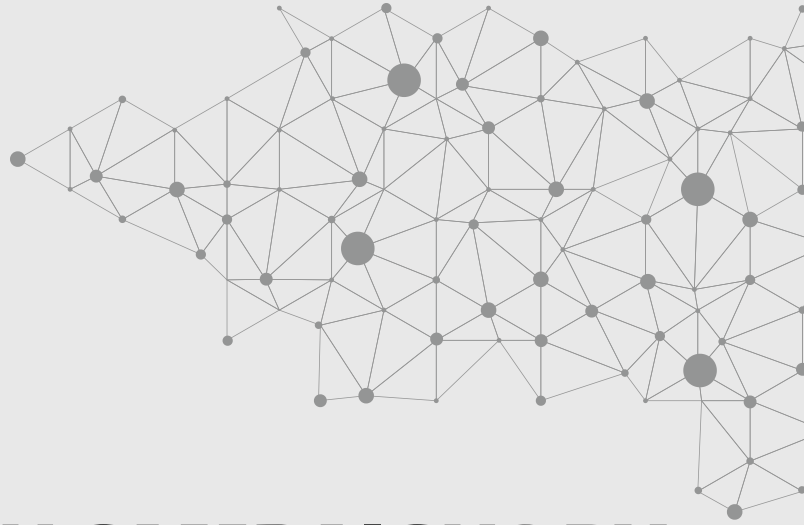


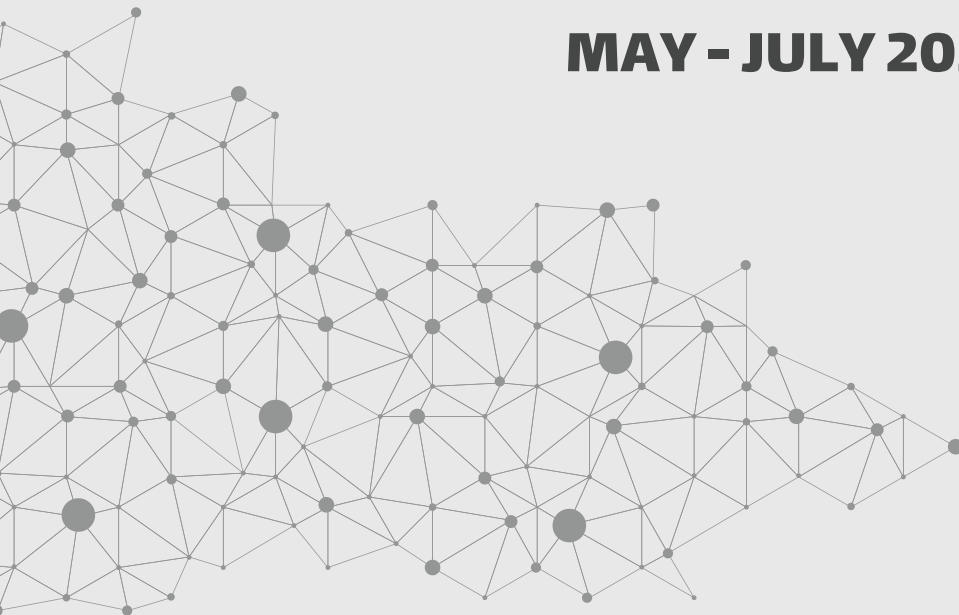


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DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS BY THE KREMLIN AND FUGITIVE OLIGARCHS ON META AND YOUTUBE PLATFORMS

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Summary

Between April 30 and July 28, the Russian Federation, through the network led by oligarch Ilan Shor, and several local political actors sponsored 1,505 advertisements on Meta platforms, with a total estimated budget of €45,000. On YouTube, Shor and Natalia Morari placed 319 ads, the total cost of which cannot be determined.

The analysis reveals an unprecedented concentration of resources in a single core: the Ilan Shor network.

- **88,1%** of Meta ads and **70.4%** of the budget are attributed to this actor.
- **MD24** acts as a major proxy node, running ~**69%** of Șor's total ads before being removed by Meta.
- A clear **tactical diversification** is evident: Șor combines official pages, media proxy pages, and anonymous pages to fragment risk and increase coverage. This model reduces the visibility of the primary source and creates **operational redundancy**: even after MD24's removal, ad distribution continues through anonymous pages and individual accounts.

Ilan Șor has significantly increased his sponsorship budgets, allocating €31,687 for 1,326 ads. The pages he finances belong to politicians Vasile Tarlev, Victoria Furtună, the Republican "Inima Moldovei" Party, the "Moldova Mare" Political pPrty., and the MD24 TV station. He has also reactivated sponsorships on anonymous pages with patriotic names such as: Știri din Moldova, Сильная Молдова, and News Moldova.

In terms of spending, Șor is followed by Andrei Năstase, who allocated approximately €10,000 for 110 ads. For the first time, the monitoring includes the "Respect Moldova" Party, led by Marian Lupu, former president of the Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova. Marian Lupu allocated €3,373 for 61 advertisements.

During the monitored period, the primary propaganda narratives promoted through advertisements on Meta and YouTube were:

- **The PAS government will rig the parliamentary elections in the diaspora;**
- **The PAS government is persecuting the Orthodox Church in Moldova;**
- **The PAS government has impoverished Moldova;**
- **PAS has imposed censorship in Moldova;**
- **The EU and PAS have destroyed Moldovan agriculture;**
- **Bugeac belongs to the Republic of Moldova and not to Ukraine;**
- **Moldova will never become an EU member.**



These campaigns aim to undermine Moldova's pro-European trajectory, destabilize the political climate, and erode trust in state institutions. As a result, poor communication from authorities and pro-European parties contributes to a decline in confidence in the country's European direction. In the context of the parliamentary elections, the authorities, in collaboration with civil society, must intensify their efforts to combat disinformation by actively informing the public and urge digital platforms to prevent electoral interference.

Between **April 30 and July 28, 2025**, **1,505** sponsored ads were identified on Meta platforms, with a total budget of approximately **€45,000**. **Ilan Șor** dominates the sponsorships: **1,326 ads** (**≈88% of the volume**), with **€31,687** spent. He is followed by **Andrei Năstase** (**110 ads, ~€10,000**) and **Marian Lupu's "Respect Moldova" Party** (**61 ads, €3,373**). **Natalia Morari** moved her activity to YouTube, where she sponsored only 4 ads on **Meta** (**~€399**), but promoted video content heavily (see the YouTube section). **Official data** on spending and audiences for YouTube **is missing** because Google did not activate the "political ads" label.



Introduction

The Kremlin is intensifying its online disinformation campaigns in the Republic of Moldova to divert the outcome of the September 28 parliamentary elections. One of the tools used by Moscow in its hybrid war is the sponsorship of advertisements promoting disinformation on Meta and YouTube platforms. The main funder of advertisements on these platforms remains the fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor, who is hiding in Moscow from Moldovan justice.

In addition to anonymous pages used to spread disinformation and promote the image of the group he leads, Ilan Șor continues to invest heavily in sponsored ads. These are broadcast through pages associated with politicians Irina Vlah, Victoria Furtună, and Vasile Tarlev, candidates supported by the oligarch in the presidential elections.

The publication Ziarul de Gardă demonstrated in an investigation that Victoria Furtună was openly supported by the Șor criminal network in the presidential elections. According to Ziarul de Gardă sources, on the day of silence, the Șor network received instructions to vote for Vasile Tarlev or Irina Vlah if Victoria Furtună were to be excluded from the presidential race. Furtună was included in the European Union's sanctions list along with other members of the Șor group for actions to destabilize the Republic of Moldova, manifested particularly by vote buying and attempts to influence the results of last fall's presidential elections and referendum.

The publication Cu SENS revealed in another investigation how Șor's criminal network arranged paid-supporter meetings for Vasile Tarlev. Tarlev, along with propagandist Natalia Morari and Chisinau Mayor Ion Ceban, are banned from entering the Schengen area "for reasons related to Romania's national security."

All three candidates have established parties with which they intend to run in this year's parliamentary elections:

- **The "Viitorul Moldovei" Party**, led by Vasile Tarlev. The party advocates for closer ties with the Russian Federation and criticizes Moldova's European course. At the same time, the party promotes the idea that "Moldova is losing its traditional values because of the West."
- **The Republican Party "Inima Moldovei,"** led by Irina Vlah. According to Vlah, her party advocates for the "neutrality" of the Republic of Moldova. She accuses the PAS government, the EU, and NATO of "militarizing Moldova to involve it in the war in Ukraine."



The party has never condemned Russia for violating the neutrality of the Republic of Moldova by occupying the Transnistrian region.

- **The "Moldova Mare" Political Party**, led by Victoria Furtună. The party claims to have a "European vocation," although Furtună criticizes the European Union and has argued against Moldova's accession to the EU.

Oligarch Veaceslav Platon was less visible on the Meta platform between April 30 and July 28, following his arrest by British authorities on March 14. However, the YouTube account of Natalia Morari, with whom he has a child and whom he previously financed on Facebook, has significantly increased the number of advertisements on the YouTube platform. With Platon's release on bail by UK authorities, we assume he will resume financing YouTube and Meta ads for accounts associated with propagandist Natalia Morari.

For the first time, the monitoring includes the "Respect Moldova Movement" Party, led by Marian Lupu, former president of the Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova, a position later taken over by oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc and held until his flight from the Republic of Moldova in June 2019. The political party was founded by Eugeniu Nichiforciuc, accused by the country's former president, Vladimir Voronin, of attempting to bribe communist deputy Elena Bondarenco to join the faction controlled by Vladimir Plahotniuc.

Andrei Năstase, running as an independent candidate in the 28 September parliamentary elections, became the absolute leader in spending from a single account on the Meta platform during the monitored period. Năstase, who in the past was the leader of protests against the Plahotniuc regime, has now come to promote manipulative narratives about his former colleagues from Blocul ACUM, about democratic processes in Moldova, and about the country's European integration.

This analysis highlights the interconnection of propaganda sources: official party pages, proxy media (e.g., MD24, Canal5), and anonymous pages. Synchronized use of these channels lowers moderation costs and exponentially increases narrative reach.

Future reports will monitor this architecture via a **digital infrastructure map** to track flows between sponsors, accounts, and platforms.



A coordinated ecosystem with three distinct levels is emerging:

- **Level 1 - visible actors** (Șor, Tarlev, Furtună, Vlah, Lupu) → provide public legitimacy;
- **Level 2 - media proxies** (MD24, Canal5) → maximise volume, expendable if blocked;
- **Level 3 - anonymous pages** (“Știri din Moldova”, “Сильная Молдова”, “News Moldova”, “Believe Media”, “Moldoshow”) → testing narratives, segmented targeting, avoiding moderation.

The correlation of sponsorship flows suggests a deliberate **risk compartmentalization** strategy.

Spending on the Meta platform between April 30 and July 28

Between April 30 and July 28, fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor spent approximately €32,000 on promoting 1,326 advertisements on Facebook and Instagram. The pages he financed belong to politicians Vasile Tarlev, Victoria Furtună, the Republican "INIMA Moldovei Party," the "Moldova Mare" Political Party, and the MD24 TV station. At the same time, he reactivated and sponsored anonymous pages with patriotic names such as: Știri din Moldova, Сильная Молдова, and News Moldova. The anonymous pages use the categories "Media/news website," "Newspaper," or "Media production and broadcasting company" to create the illusion that they belong to legitimate media institutions. The pages affiliated with the TV station "MD24" were later deleted by Meta, but during the monitored period they managed to sponsor 916 advertisements, spending €12,866.

Among the politicians affiliated with Ilan Șor, Irina Vlah and the Republican "INIMA Moldovei" Party spent €10,125 on 185 ads. They are followed by Victoria Furtună and the "Moldova Mare" political party, which spent €5,480 on 77 ads. Vasile Tarlev spent only €2,604 on 139 ads from his official page.

Meta data analysis shows distinct sets of tactics:

- **Carrier networks (e.g., MD24)** → massive volume, risk of sacrifice after detection
- **Anonymous pages** → low-risk narratives testing.
- **Official party pages** → legitimate the messages.

This structure enables coordinators to **spread risk** and maximize impact.



The amounts spent on advertisements on the META platform between April 30 and July 28

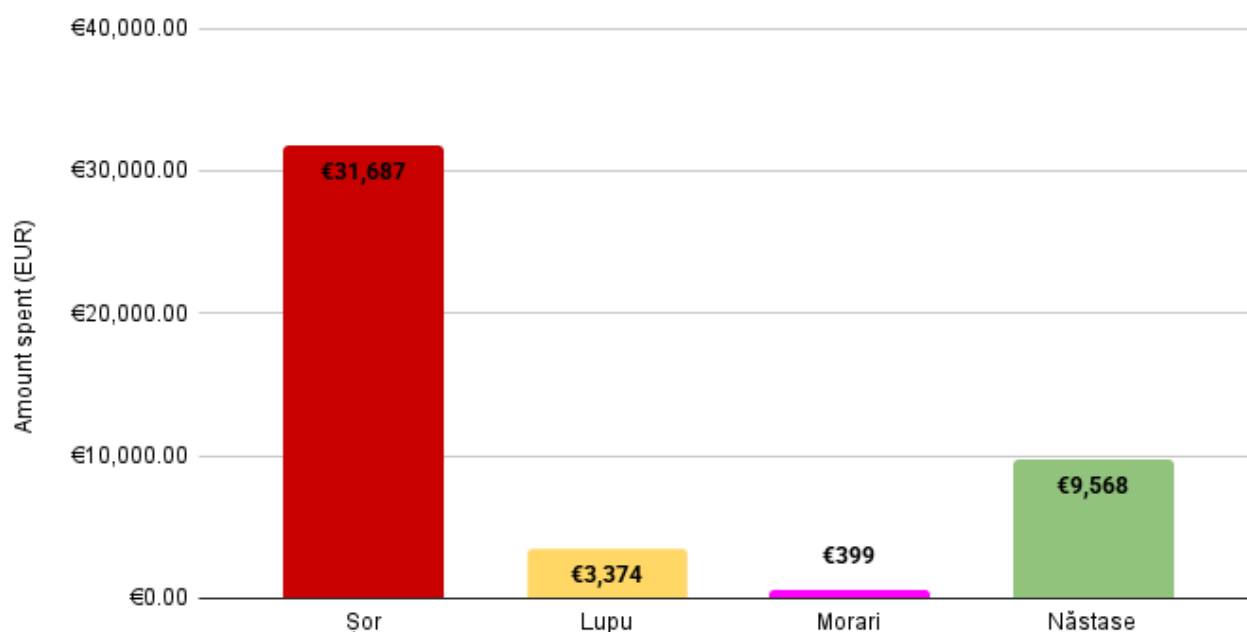


Fig.1 - Comparison of expenditures by pages affiliated with Ilan Șor, Marian Lupu, Natalia Morari, and Andrei Năstase between April 30 and July 28.

Andrei Năstase is the only political figure in Moldova who, within a period of 90 days, managed to promote 110 advertisements worth approximately €10,000 from a single account.

The Respect Moldova Party and its leader, Marian Lupu, have adopted Ilan Șor's tactic of promoting themselves through anonymous pages, in addition to their official pages. Thus, Lupu and his party were promoted by the anonymous pages "**Believe** Media" and "Moldoshow," which describe themselves as a "non-governmental organization (NGO)" and a "TV show or series." In total, the pages affiliated with Marian Lupu and the party he leads sponsored 61 advertisements for a total of €3,373.

In the case of Natalia Morari, who is associated with oligarch Veaceslav Platon, the amounts allocated for advertisements decreased compared to the period from March 1 to March 30. Thus, between April 30 and July 29, Morari spent €399 on 4 advertisements. This is due to the fact that Morari has largely moved her activity to the YouTube platform, where she promotes her content.

Proportion of ads on the META platform per actor between April 30 and July 28

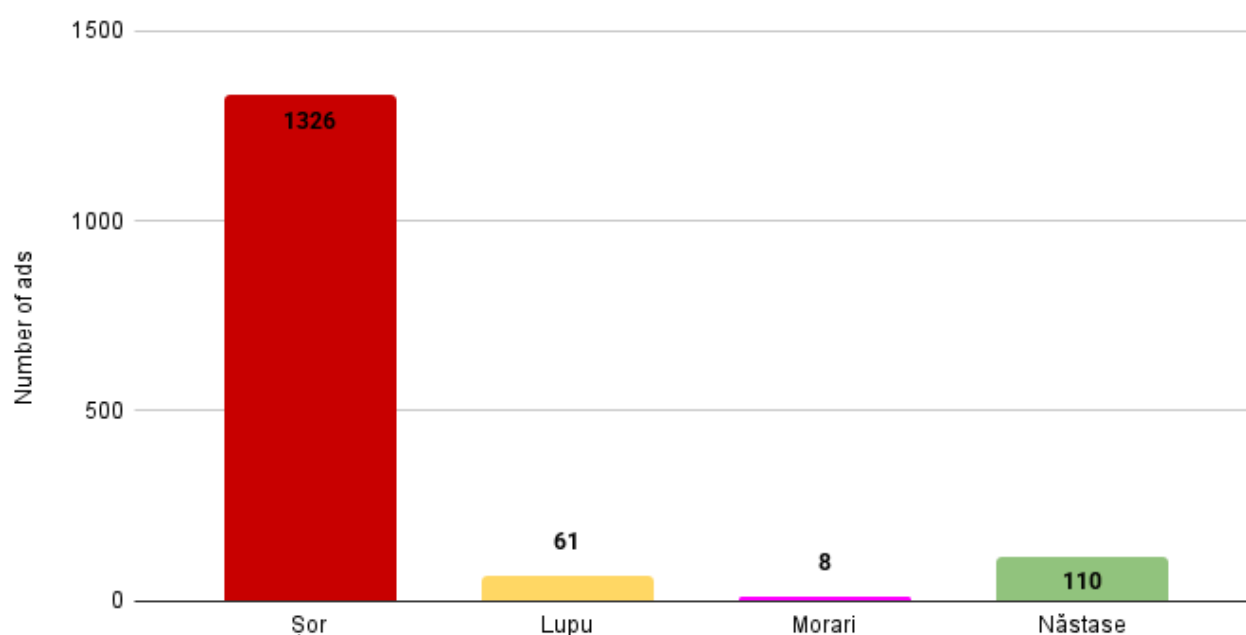


Fig.2 - Comparison between the number of advertisements sponsored by the pages affiliated with Ilan Șor, Marian Lupu, Natalia Morari, and Andrei Năstase between April 30 and July 28.

In terms of the number of sponsored ads, oligarch Ilan Șor remains the leader, surpassing the other monitored political figures by about seven times.

Promotion of disinformation on YouTube

On YouTube, only the accounts of Natalia Morari and those associated with fugitive Ilan Șor (the Republican Party "INIMA MOLDOVEI" and Media Content Distribution s.r.l., an account affiliated with the TV station "Canal5") promoted ads between April 30 and July 28. Fugitive Veaceslav Platon stopped sponsoring content on YouTube once the presidential elections ended. Ilan Șor is also the absolute leader in YouTube sponsorships, promoting over 283 ads with manipulative content during the monitored period.



Proportion of ads on YouTube per actor between April 30 and July 28

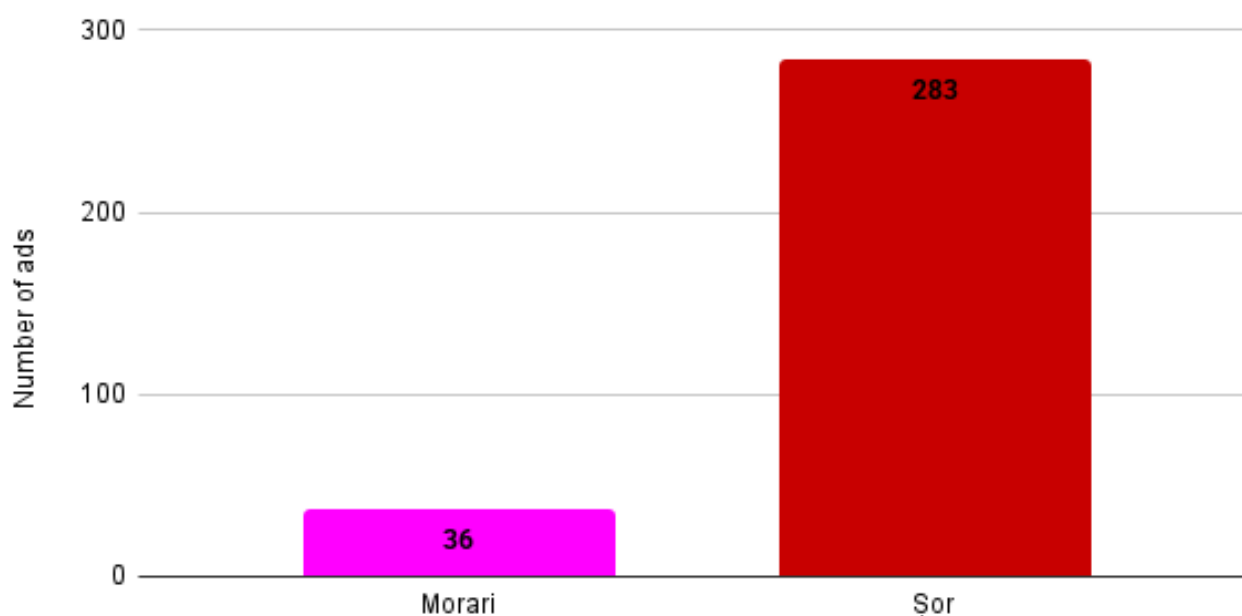


Fig.3 - Comparison between the number of ads sponsored by YouTube accounts affiliated with Ilan Șor and Natalia Morari between April 30 and July 28.

Unfortunately, Google Ads Transparency does not provide information on expenditures and broadcast periods. This is explained by the fact that, in Moldova, Google has not activated the "political ads" category, which would otherwise disclose data on budgets, duration, and audience reach.

Main manipulated topics between April 30 and July 28

During the monitored period, the main propaganda narratives promoted through advertisements on Meta and YouTube were:

- **The PAS government will rig parliamentary elections in the diaspora:** Canal5 promoted a video clip on YouTube featuring Igor Hlopețchi, a member of the "Moldova Mare" political party, claiming that the PAS government was preparing to rig the parliamentary elections in the diaspora. Vasile Tarlev accused PAS of appealing to the EU to rig the elections. According to Tarlev, the statement by Kaja Kallas on deploying a hybrid rapid reaction group to Moldova constitutes "a grave violation of national sovereignty, while citizens are kept in the dark about the true scale of the foreign advisers, specialists, and curators in the field of security, who in fact coordinate Moldova's entire policy."



The anonymous page "News from Moldova" promoted the false claim that "the Ukrainian diaspora in Italy is pressuring Moldovans to vote for PAS in the elections." The page "Сильная Молдова" accused the PAS government of discriminating against the Moldovan diaspora in Russia by opening only two polling stations. The "Respect Moldova" Party accused PAS of "initiated electoral fraud, while politicized institutions silently tolerate this anti-democratic drift."

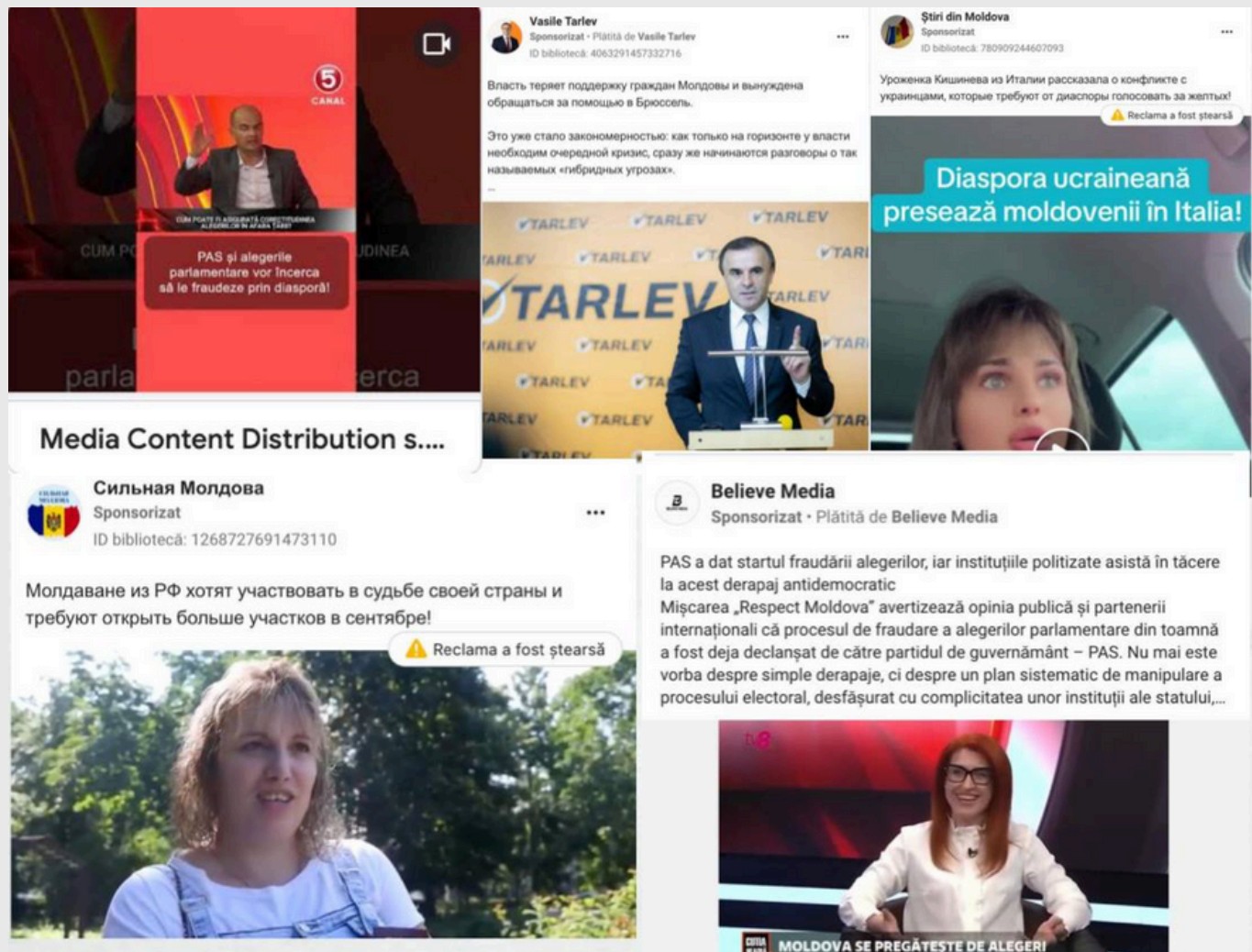


Fig.4 - The narrative "The PAS government will rig the parliamentary elections in the diaspora" promoted through YouTube and Meta ads by sources affiliated with Ilan Șor.

- **The PAS government is persecuting the Orthodox Church in Moldova:** Canal5 promoted a video clip featuring a priest from the Metropolis of Moldova, in which he accused the current pro-European government of persecuting the church following the Ukrainian model. The same idea was promoted by the TV station "MD24" through a clip featuring activist Mihail Vlah, affiliated with Ilan Șor. The "Moldova Mare" Party, led by Victoria Furtună, claims that "globalists only have to destroy the family and the Orthodox faith." In another sponsored post, the party calls Europe an "enemy" that wants to "steal the faith" of Moldovans.



Fig.5 - The narrative "The PAS government persecutes the Orthodox Church in Moldova" promoted through YouTube and Meta ads by sources affiliated with Ilan Șor.

- **The PAS government has impoverished Moldova:** The party led by Irina Vlah promoted the false claim that, because of the current pro-European government, Moldovan children are starving due to high food prices. Natalia Morari manipulated the issue of poverty in Moldova, accusing the government of destroying the economy. At the same time, Morari accused Maia Sandu of having "called Moldovans stupid" for not having seen a road being repaired. Andrei Năstase accused PAS of "doubling the country's internal debt since coming to power and pushing the state into dependence on international funds."

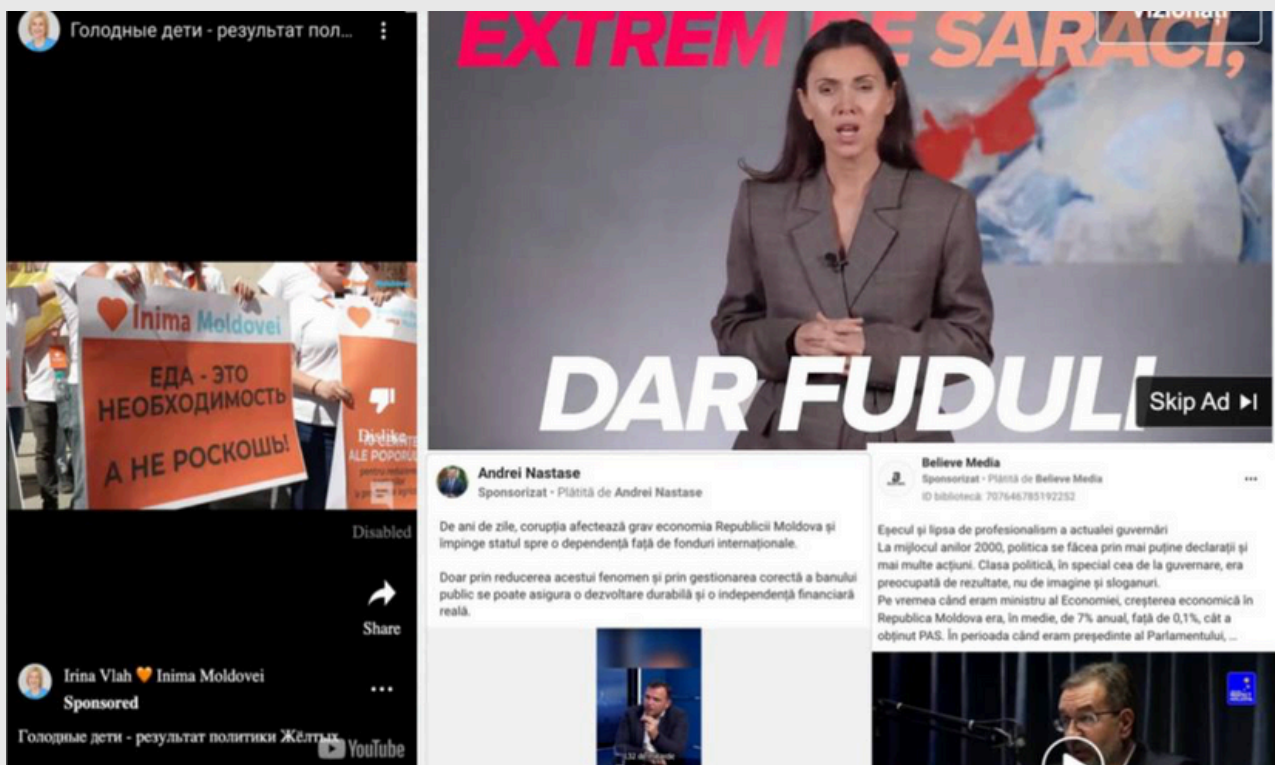


Fig. 6 - The narrative "The PAS government has impoverished Moldova" promoted through advertisements on YouTube and Meta by the monitored sources.

The anonymous page "Believe Media", promoted a video clip with Marian Lupu, claiming that PAS is economically incompetent and asserting that, when he served as Minister of Economy, "exports were growing steadily in both Western and Eastern markets."

- **PAS imposed censorship in Moldova:** During the monitored period, the Republican Party "Inima Moldovei" promoted the Russian propaganda narrative that PAS imposed censorship in Moldova, referring to the closure of TV stations affiliated with oligarchs Ilan Șor and Vladimir Plahotniuc.

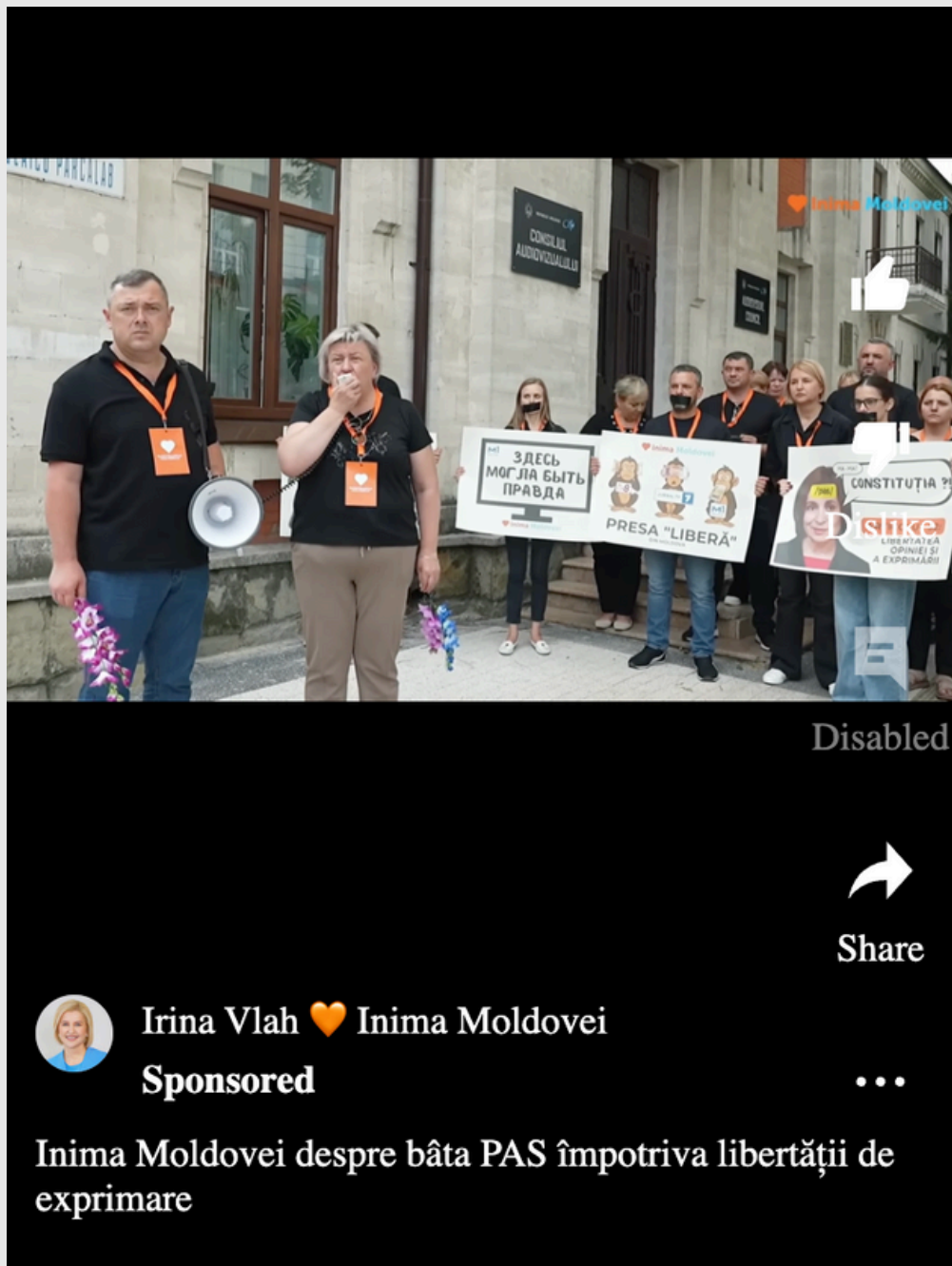



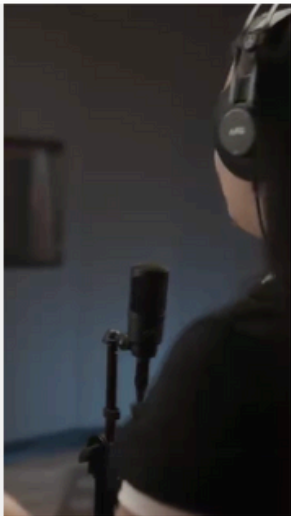
Fig.7 - Irina Vlah's YouTube account promotes a video from a Republican "INIMA Moldovei" protest that accuses PAS of censorship following the shutdown of TV outlets linked to the oligarchs Ilan Șor and Vladimir Plahotniuc.

- **The EU and PAS have destroyed Moldovan agriculture:** The Republican Party "Inima Moldovei" accused "PAS and the EU of destroying Moldovan agriculture, and local farmers' products are not reaching European markets."


Partidul Republican INIMA Moldovei
 Sponsorizat • Plătită de Partidul Republican INIMA Moldovei

Am visat Europa, cu legume la piață,
 Acum cerem ajutor, cu durere pe față.
 Fermierul e-n faliment, satul se prăbușește,
 Iar Maia deoparte privește?

PAS! Duceți-vă naiba!
 #inimamoldovei



PAS, duceți-vă naiba!
 Political Party

Trimite mesaj

Fig.8 - The Facebook page of the Republican Party "Inima Moldovei," led by Irina Vlah, promotes the false claim that Moldovan agriculture has been destroyed because of Maia Sandu and the EU.

- **Bugeac belongs to the Republic of Moldova and not to Ukraine:** Victoria Furtună stated that "Moldova has every reason to request a border revision in order to recover Bugeac" from Ukraine. In the sponsored post, Furtună urged to "recover what was stolen from us," including direct access to the sea.

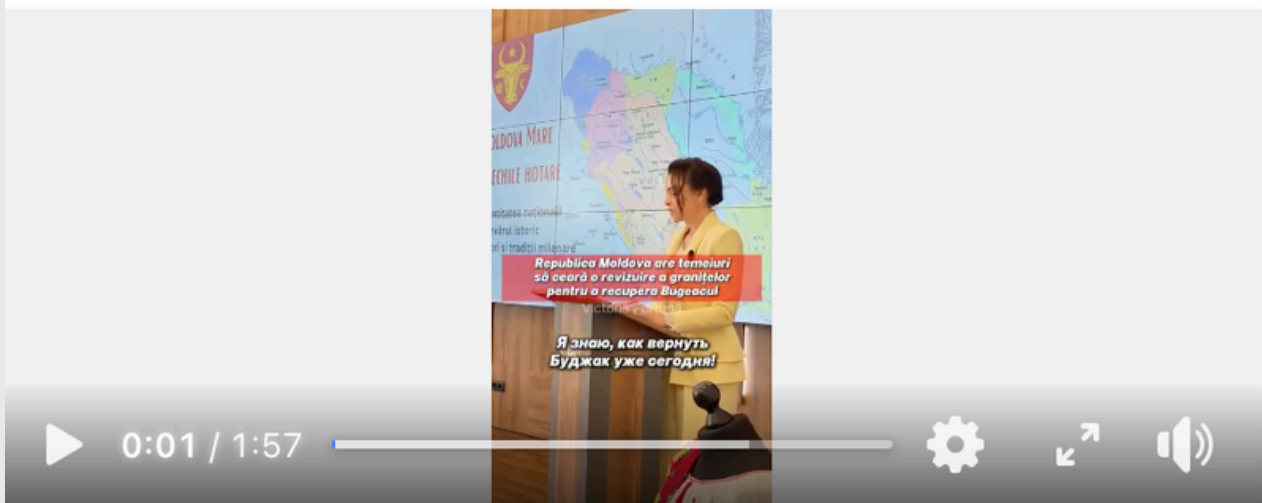


Victoria Furtună cu Partidul politic Moldova Mare

Sponsorizat • Plătită de Partidul politic Moldova Mare

Victoria Furtună: Moldova are toate motivele să ceară revizuirea granițelor pentru a-și recupera Bugeacul.

„Nu există niciun tratat internațional ratificat de Republica Moldova care să recunoască pierderea Bugeacului”, a declarat lidera partidului MOLDOVA MARE, în cadrul mesei rotunde „Identitatea națională. Adevărul istoric. Valorile și tradițiile milenare”



Victoria Furtună
Консультант

Trimite mesaj

Fig.9 - Victoria Furtună's Facebook page promotes territorial revisionism towards the Bugeac region, part of the Ukrainian state, also recognised by the Republic of Moldova.

- **Moldova will never become an EU member:** The anonymous page "Moldoshow" promoted Marian Lupu's statement that "the government promises us 2027, while some MEPs pointed to 2030, and more recently, they pushed the prospect to 2035."



Fig.10 - The anonymous page "Moldoshow" promotes a video clip with Marian Lupu in which he claims that Moldova will not become an EU member until 2030.

The seven narratives identified are distributed across **three strategic axes**:

Axis 1 - Institutional discrediting: "election fraud in the diaspora," "censorship," "PAS persecutes the Church";

Axis 2 - Socio-economic vulnerability: "PAS has impoverished Moldova", "EU/PAS have destroyed agriculture";

Axis 3 - Geopolitical redefinition: "Bugeac belongs to Moldova," "Moldova will not join the EU."

Inference: axis 1 aims to erode electoral trust, axis 2 mobilises social discontent, and axis 3 fuels identity and territorial fears.



Findings

Against the backdrop of the September 28 parliamentary elections, Russia is intensifying its rhetoric aimed at dividing Moldovan society and its attacks on European integration, democratic processes, and state institutions. Through online sponsorship, Moscow is testing a parallel ecosystem of electoral propaganda.

The monitored sources intensively promoted the narrative that "the government is rigging the parliamentary elections." The main target of these messages was the Moldovan diaspora in the West, accused of being the ground prepared by PAS for fraud.

At the same time, with the formation of the Patriotic Electoral Bloc, which brings together the Party of Socialists, the Party of Communists, the Republic Party "Inima Moldovei" and the Party "Viitorul Moldovei", messaging from formations led by Vasile Tarlev and Irina Vlah shows increasing synchronization. Although these parties, along with the "Moldova Mare" Party, are part of the network controlled by Ilan Șor, Victoria Furtună stands out with a much more radical line of messages, including narratives that question Ukraine's territorial integrity.

While anonymous pages were not prominent in March analyses, starting in June Șor began reactivating them and using them to spread toxic messages.

The considerable sums invested by Andrei Năstase in online advertising raise serious suspicions about the origin of the funds he uses, which exceed even the official expenses of PAS. The absence of an effective communication strategy on the part of the government and pro-European parties leaves the field open to oligarchic propaganda, which proves to be better calibrated both rhetorically and visually. The danger is also amplified by the inaction or, in some cases, insufficient action of Meta and YouTube platforms, which allow massive sponsorship of manipulative content and thus contribute to eroding trust in democratic processes and Moldova's European orientation.



Methodology

Purpose of monitoring

The purpose of the analysis was to identify the expenditures of the Kremlin and fugitive oligarchs to sponsor propaganda narratives about Moldova and the EU on YouTube and Meta platforms. We also flagged exceptional cases where a single page sponsored a large number of ads in a short time for a substantial amount.

Objectives of the monitoring

Given the stated purpose, the monitoring exercise pursued the following objectives:

- Identify accounts that promote and distribute manipulative content through ads on Meta and YouTube platforms;
- Classify the identified pages as anonymous or representing a party and determine whom they promote;
- Present the expenditures and the number of advertisements per political actor following the classification of pages;
- Analyze the narratives of Russian propaganda promoted by the monitored sources..

Definitions

To classify the types of pages used by monitored sources in Moldova, the following definitions were assigned:

- Anonymous page- a Facebook page that promotes a politician, political party, or Russian propaganda narratives, but no one officially claims to be its administrator. In most cases, these pages run without a disclaimer.
- Disclaimer - A disclaimer on Facebook is a statement that limits legal liability for certain risks or outcomes associated with the content, products, or services offered. It informs users what can and cannot be expected, clarifies limits of promises, and can reduce legal risk in disputes or litigation.

Monitoring period

The monitoring period covered April 30 to July 28, during which the type of content promoted, the number of advertisements, and the amounts spent by each monitored page/account were analyzed, as well as the political actors promoting manipulative messages in the public space.



Methodology

Research stages

Five working stages were established to develop the methodology:

- Identifying pages/accounts that promote toxic messages through advertisements;
- Classifying the types of accounts identified according to the definitions described in the methodology;
- Analyzing the amounts spent by pages and the number of advertisements promoted by each;
- Analyzing the main topics manipulated during the monitored period;
- Reporting.
-

Currently, the analysis has some important limitations.

On **Meta**, we have complete data on the number of ads and budgets, but there is no information on **reach** and **impressions**.

On **YouTube**, data on budgets, broadcast duration, and audiences is completely missing, making it difficult to estimate the real impact.

Also, **Telegram** and **TikTok** are not covered by this report, although they are increasingly relevant channels for distributing manipulative content.

