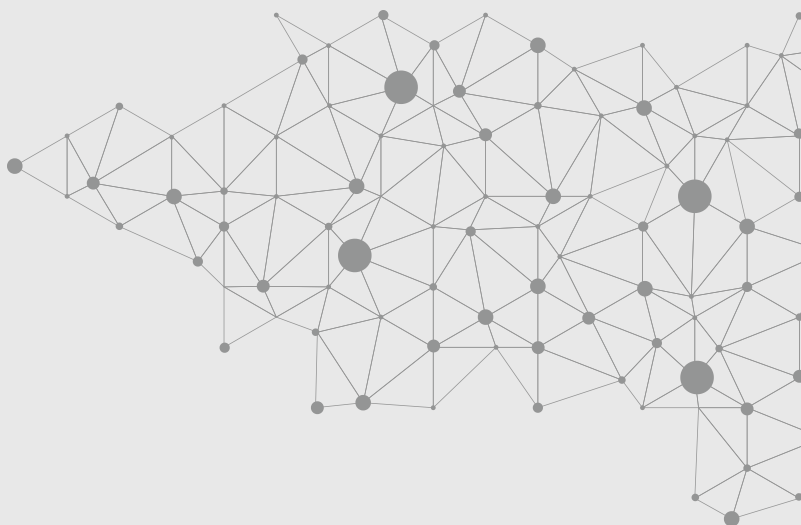


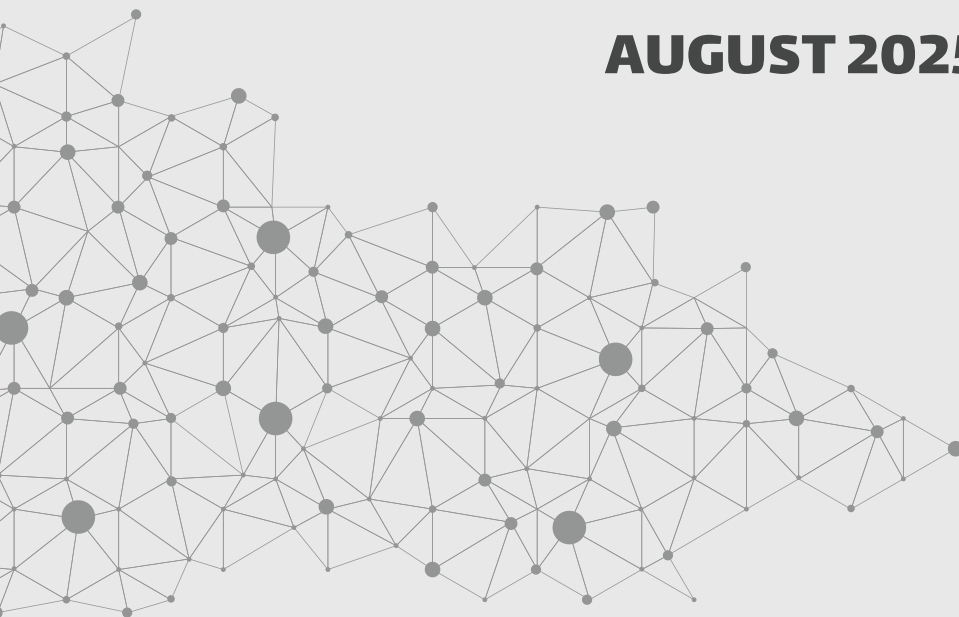


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# **DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS BY THE KREMLIN AND FUGITIVE OLIGARCHS ON META AND YOUTUBE PLATFORMS**

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**Authors:**

**CĂTĂLINA BUDURIN  
ANDREI RUSU**

## Summary

Between July 31 and August 29, 2025, the Russian Federation, through the network led by oligarch Ilan Șor, along with several local political actors sponsored **571 advertisements on Meta platforms**, with a total estimated budget of **€33,653**. Compared to the previous period (May - July), when approximately **€45,000** was spent over three months, there is a noticeable intensification of investments in a single month. On YouTube, Șor, Andrei Năstase, and Natalia Morari placed **274 ads**, but the amounts spent cannot be identified because Google has not activated the "political ads" label for the Republic of Moldova.

The analysis shows that:

- Șor dominates in terms of ad volume - 393 ads ( $\approx 68.8\%$ ), with a budget of €18,110 ( $\approx 53.8\%$ );
- Andrei Năstase invests disproportionately much - 120 advertisements ( $\approx 21.0\%$ ), but with a budget of €11,618 ( $\approx 34.5\%$ ), i.e. over one third of the total;
- Marian Lupu - 58 ads ( $\approx 10.2\%$ ), with €3,925 ( $\approx 11.7\%$ ), but supported by a network of pages designed to promote pro-Plahotniuc messages, which were later deleted by Meta.

There is a noticeable escalation of Șor's network tactics, which increased spending compared to May - July (€31,687 for 1,326 advertisements), now investing €18,110 for 393 advertisements in a single month. Pages funded by him include associated politicians such as Vasile Tarlev, the Republican Party, "INIMA Moldovei", the political party "Moldova Mare", and the TV channel MD24. Even though the MD24 page was blocked, the branded content was promoted through other proxy pages, which were subsequently blocked by Meta ("Moldova24", "David10", "Laura5", "Rich Ethan Kenneth", "Anemone GQ"). At the same time, the network reactivated sponsorships on anonymous pages with patriotic names (e.g. "Știri din Moldova", "Valorile Familiei Moldovenești", "Patrioți Agricoli", "Moldova în Veci", "Сильная Молдова" etc.).

Andrei Năstase stands out with a significant increase in advertising investments. If previously, over three months (May-July), he spent approximately **€10,000**, now this amount has been exceeded in a single month, reaching over **€11,600**.

Marian Lupu allocated **€3,925 for 58 advertisements**, also more than in the previous period. However, a key factor is the involvement of a network of fake pages clearly designed to manipulate public opinion and rehabilitate Plahotniuc's image.



During the period analyzed, **the main** propaganda **narratives** promoted through **Meta** and **YouTube** focused on:

- *election fraud;*
- *justice as a political weapon;*
- *social genocide;*
- *the agricultural crisis and the sale of land to foreigners;*
- *loss of sovereignty through European integration and IMF/EU conditions;*
- *rehabilitation of Plahotniuc's image.*

We note that these campaigns aimed to undermine Moldova's pro-European path, destabilize the political climate, and erode trust in state institutions. As a result, insufficient communication from authorities and pro-European parties leaves room for these toxic messages. In the context of the parliamentary elections, the authorities, in collaboration with civil society, must intensify their efforts to combat disinformation, actively inform the public, and request that digital platforms take firm measures to prevent electoral interference.

## Introduction

The monitored period, July 31 - August 29, 2025, confirmed that propaganda and disinformation networks affiliated with the Kremlin and fugitive oligarchs are intensifying their activity on Meta and YouTube platforms as the September 28 parliamentary elections approach. Monitored actors not only maintain an aggressive presence but also diversify tactics, using a combination of official pages, proxy media, anonymous accounts, and false identities designed to circumvent platform transparency rules and maximize the impact of manipulative messages. Approximately **571** such **advertisements** with budgets of **€33,653** ran on the Meta platform in August.

In addition to anonymous pages used to spread misinformation and promote the image of the group he leads, Ilan Șor continued to invest in sponsored ads on pages associated with politicians Irina Vlah, Victoria Furtună, and Vasile Tarlev, candidates previously supported by the oligarch in the presidential elections. The affiliation of these politicians with Șor has been repeatedly demonstrated through several journalistic investigations carried out by Ziarul de Gardă, CU SENS, etc.

A distinct aspect of this period is related to the MD24 network - a key page in the previous propaganda architecture. Although Meta permanently blocked this page, MD24-branded content did not disappear from the ecosystem. On the contrary, there have been attempts to reactivate and redistribute MD24 messages through other satellite pages, which were subsequently blocked as well. This practice highlights the resilience and adaptive capacity of the network: even after the central resource has been blocked, messages are recycled and repackaged through alternative channels.



This monitoring also targets Marian Lupu, leader of the "Respect Moldova" party and former president of the Democratic Party of Moldova, a position later taken over by oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc, who held it until his flight from Moldova in June 2019. August was marked by a coordinated campaign to rehabilitate Plahotniuc's image, in the context of Plahotniuc's arrest on July 22 in Greece and his extradition on September 25, 2025, to Moldova to face justice. A series of pages created with "alias" names ("Jose Perry", "Esther Bush", "Oleg Sandu", "Sean Hicks", "Dan Lupu", "Richard Leonard", "Eugene Jefferson", "Nicolae Răileanu", "Liviu Vicol") were activated to promote advertisements without disclaimers, in which Plahotniuc was presented as a "**solution**" and "**savior of Moldova.**" These pages were later deleted by Meta, but not before spreading messages that sought to manipulate public opinion and give a "reputational facelift" to one of the most controversial political actors in the Moldovan public sphere.

Andrei Năstase, an independent candidate for the September 28 parliamentary elections, became the absolute leader in spending from a single account on the Meta platform during the monitored period in August. Năstase, a former leader of the protests against the Plahotniuc regime, continued to promote manipulations about his former colleagues in the ACUM Bloc and about the democratic processes in the Republic of Moldova. **With €11,518 invested in just one month**, he ranks second after Ilan Șor in terms of the intensity of sponsored advertising. His ads focus on social issues such as low pensions, poverty, and inequality, with messages calibrated to exploit the frustration of the population.

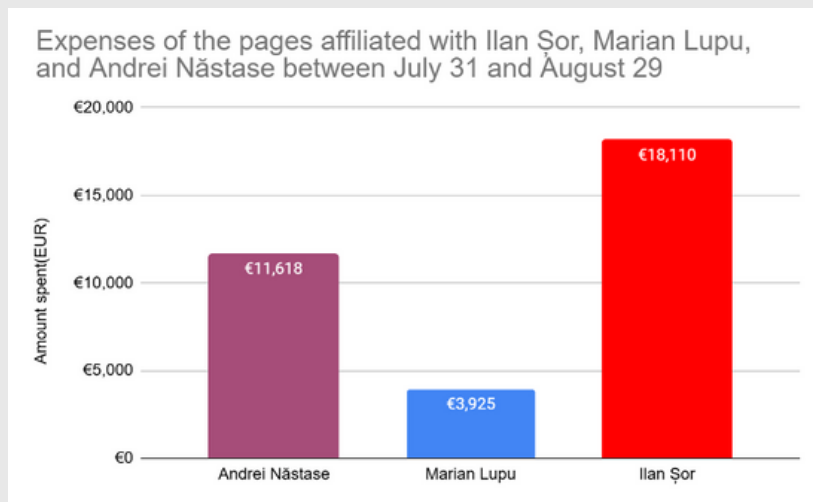
In this context, the disinformation campaigns of August 2025 are not only a continuation of the trends seen in previous months, but also an escalation. Meta's blocking of key pages demonstrates that networks are being monitored and sanctioned, but it also shows that manipulative actors are quickly regrouping, creating new channels, and constantly testing the limits of digital platforms. Thus, the coordinated, interconnected, and redundant nature of these networks remains the main risk to the informational and democratic integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

Oligarch Veaceslav Platon did not run ads on Meta platforms between July 31 and August 29, 2025, unlike previous months when he was visible through sponsored campaigns. Instead, his indirect presence continued on YouTube through Natalia Morari.



## Spending on the Meta platform between July 31 and August 29, 2025

During the monitored period, **571** sponsored ads were identified on the Meta platform, with a total budget of **€33,653**. These expenditures mark an increase compared to the previous period (May -July 2025), when approximately **€45,000** was spent over three months, indicating increased ad investments ahead of the parliamentary elections. Top spenders are Ilan Șor, Andrei Năstase, and Marian Lupu.



ig. 1 - Comparison of the expenses of the pages affiliated with Ilan Șor, Marian Lupu, and Andrei Năstase between July 31 and August 29.

The total number of sponsored ads on Meta in August (571) is higher than in the previous reporting period, and the level of spending relative to volume shows a significant increase in investment per ad unit, confirming a more focused and aggressive strategy.

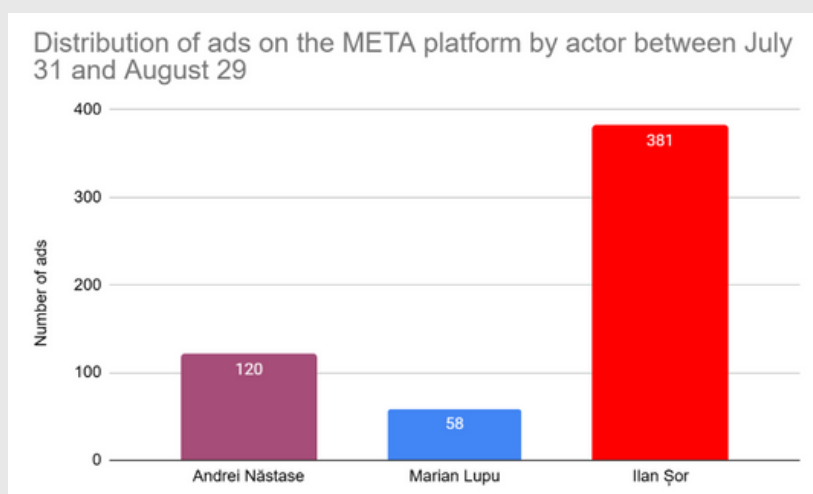
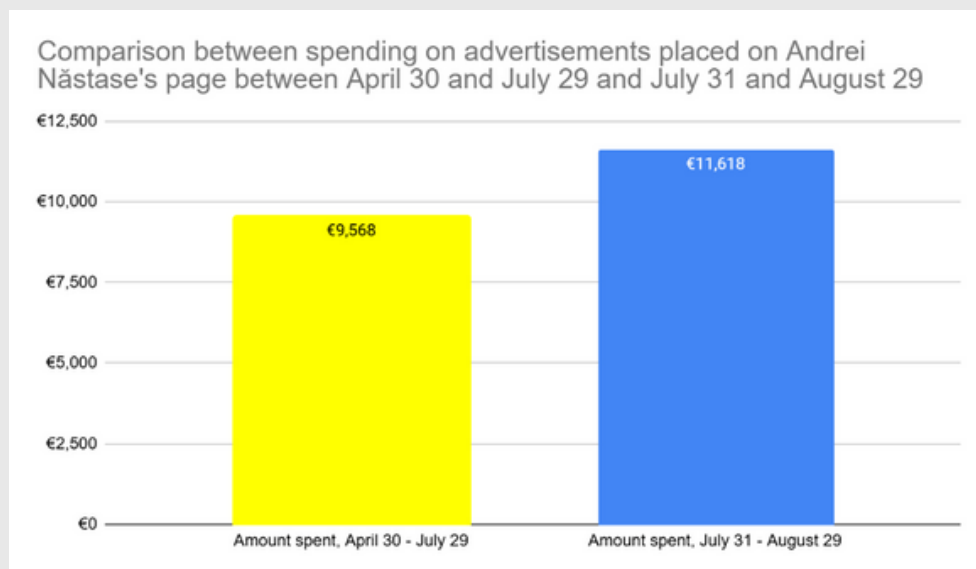


Fig.2 - Comparison between the number of sponsored ads on the pages affiliated with Ilan Șor, Marian Lupu, and Andrei Năstase between July 31 and August 29.

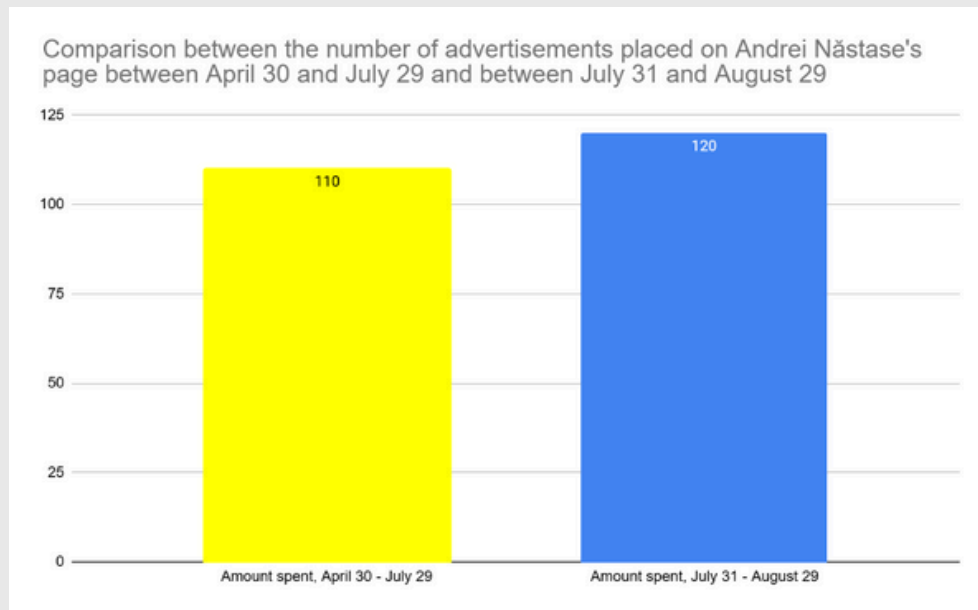
Ilan Șor dominated the online campaign, with **381 ads** and a budget of **€18,110 (≈53.8%)**. In May-July he spent **€31,687** on **1,326 ads**, while in August, the amount invested for a single month already exceeds half of the previous total. The ads were broadcast through pages associated with Irina Vlah, Victoria Furtună, Vasile Tarlev, but also through pages promoting MD24 content previously blocked by Meta. Thus, MD24-branded content continued to be distributed through alternative pages ("Moldova24", "David10", "Laura5", "Rich Ethan Kenneth", "Anemone GQ"), all of which were subsequently blocked. At the same time, the Șor network reactivated sponsorships on anonymous pages with patriotic names ("Știri din Moldova" , "Valorile Familiei Moldovenești", "Patrioți Agricoli", "Moldova în Veci", "Сильная Молдова", etc.).

Andrei Năstase sponsored **120 advertisements** with a budget of **€11,618 (≈34.5%)**, becoming the second largest contributor in terms of expenditure. It is noteworthy that in a single month he exceeded the amount invested in the period May - July (≈€10,000). The advertisements focused on social and economic issues - pensions, poverty, inequalities.



*Fig. 3 - Comparison between spending on advertisements placed on Andrei Năstase's page between April 30 and July 29 and July 31 and August 29.*

The number of advertisements also increased: from 110 over three months to 120 in August alone.



*Fig. 4 - Comparison between the number of advertisements placed on Andrei Năstase's page between April 30 and July 29 and between July 31 and August 29.*

**Marian Lupu**, leader of the Respect Moldova Party, sponsored **58 advertisements** with budget of **€3,925 (≈11.7%)**. A significant portion of the spending was directed through a network of **fake pages** ("Jose Perry", "Esther Bush", "Oleg Sandu", "Sean Hicks", "Dan Lupu", "Richard Leonard", "Eugene Jefferson", "Nicolae Răileanu", "Liviu Vicol"), designed to promote narratives rehabilitating the image of **Vladimir Plahotniuc**, recently arrested and extradited to Moldova. These pages were later deleted by Meta, but not before broadcasting advertisements without disclaimers, presenting Plahotniuc as the "solution" for the Republic of Moldova.

Thus, three main trends emerged during the period under review:

1. Escalation of financial resources, with significant budgets invested in a single month;
2. The use of proxy pages and fake accounts to bypass platform restrictions;
3. An emphasis on socio-economic and anti-European narratives, aimed at eroding trust in state institutions and the pro-European direction of the Republic of Moldova.

## Promotion of disinformation on YouTube

In August, YouTube ads continued from Natalia Morari's account and those associated with fugitive Ilan Șor (the Republican Party "INIMA MOLDOVEI" and Media Content Distribution s.r.l., an account affiliated with the TVstation "Canal5"). Andrei Năstase was added to these, with seven paid advertisements in August. **Ilan Șor** remains the absolute leader in YouTube sponsorships, with over **253 advertisements** with manipulative content.

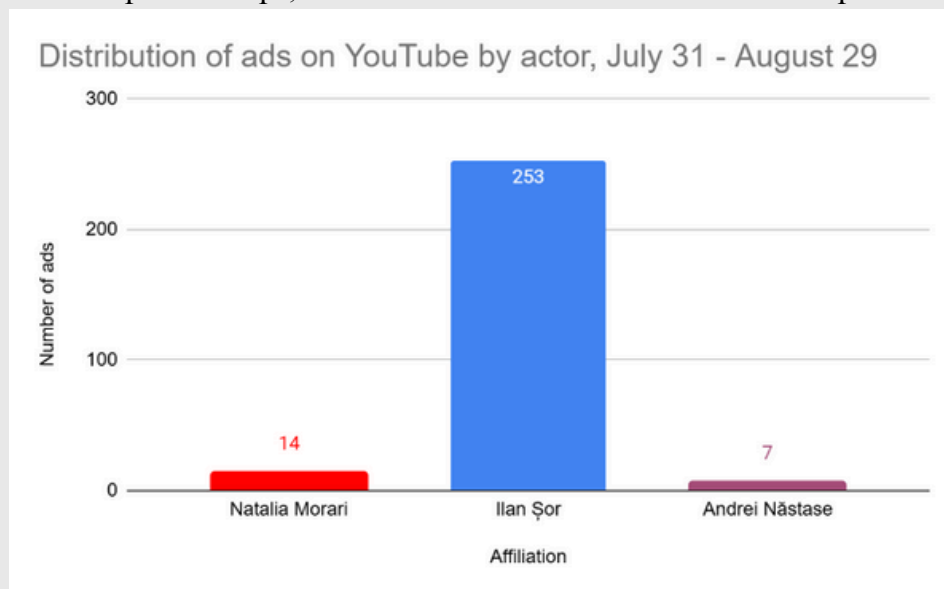


Fig. 5 - Comparison between the number of ads sponsored by YouTube accounts affiliated with Ilan Șor, Natalia Morari, and Andrei Năstase between July 31 and August 29, 2025.

We note that Google Ads Transparency does not provide information about the amounts spent on advertising and the period of dissemination. This is explained by the fact that, in the Republic of Moldova, Google has not activated the category of political advertising, which would provide data on the budget, duration, and number of views.

## Main topics covered between July 31 and August 29

Analysis of sponsored ads on Meta and YouTube in August 2025 shows a focus on several key themes, constantly repeated by networks affiliated with the Kremlin, fugitive oligarchs, and local political actors. These narratives were adapted to the electoral context and calibrated to exploit public emotions.

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

- **The PAS government has impoverished Moldova:** Both Andrei Năstase and the page "Майя в Стране чудес" affiliated with Șor intensively promoted this narrative on Facebook. The narrative was also promoted on YouTube, via Canal5 account.



**Майя в Стране чудес**  
Sponsored  
Library ID: 1409323956947660

Треть населения Молдовы живёт в бедности

Национальное бюро статистики сообщает, что уровень абсолютной бедности в Молдове достиг рекордных 33,6% в 2024 году. Это значит, что каждый третий житель страны не имеет доходов, достаточных для покрытия базовых потребностей. Для сравнения, в 2020 году показатель составлял 26,8%. Особенно тяжело



Ad removed

[Майя в Стране чудес](#) Visit profile

**Andrei Nastase**  
Sponsored • Paid for by Andrei Nastase

După zeci de ani de muncă și chin, părinții și bunicii noștri primesc și azi pensii mizerabile. Copiii nu au indemnizații, dar guvernării își măresc salariile cu zeci de mii de lei. Aceasta nu e doar nedreptate, este umilință națională, e genocid social.

Să ne amintim: ani și ani de zile, oamenii care au ridicat țara muncind chiar și 50 de ani, au primit o pensie inițială de 600–700 de lei. După trei decenii de indexări firimitură cu firimitură, părinții noștri au ajuns la circa 3 000 - 3500 de lei. Și ce înseamnă asta? O sumă care nu le ajunge nici pentru o alimentație normală, darămite pentru medicamente, facturi sau o viață demnă. Asta e „matematica nesimțirii”: cât primește un guvernant într-o lună, nu primesc unii pensionari nici în zece ani!

De aceea, voi duce la bun sfârșit inițiativa pentru care mă bat de ani de zile:  
Venitul minim trebuie garantat permanent prin Constituție, nu prin pomeni electorale sau ocazionale. Pensionarii și oamenii simpli vor fi, prin vocea mea, în centrul politicilor statului, iar Constituția va fi garanția reală a unui trai decent.



5 CANAL

LEX ECON

În ultimii cinci ani avem o tendință de creștere a sărăciei absolute în țară.

Skip Ad ►

Fig. 6 - The narrative "The PAS government has brought the standard of living to a historic low" promoted through advertisements on YouTube and Meta by sources affiliated with Ilan Șor.

- **PAS government restricts electoral rights:** Canal5 promoted a video clip with the message that PAS restricts the right of Moldovan citizens in Russia to vote. The same idea was promoted by the page "Сильная Молдова". The page "News from Moldova" spread the falsehood that "the Ukrainian diaspora in Italy is pressuring Moldovans to vote for PAS". Vasile Tarlev promoted the idea that "the government is limiting access to voting for residents on the left bank of the Dniester - a practice of dividing the country, presented as a sacrifice for "European integration."



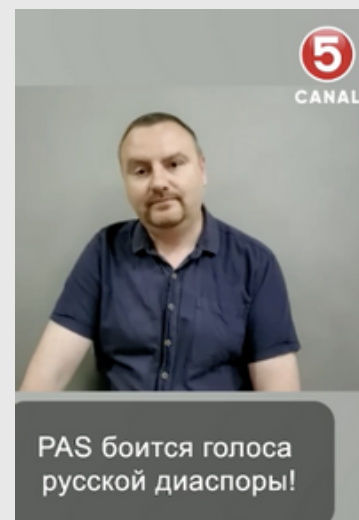
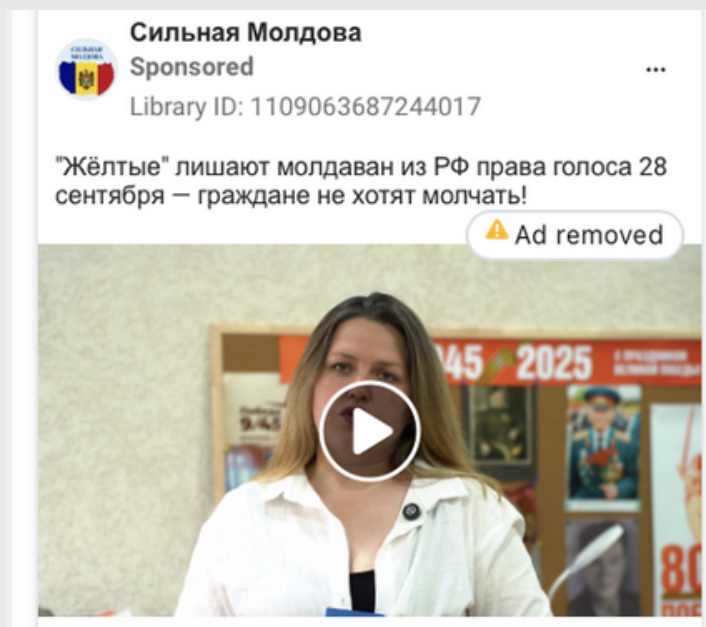


Fig.7 - The narrative promoted by Ilan Șor's affiliated sources through YouTube and Meta ads "limits citizens' right to vote."

- **Justice used as a political weapon:** INIMA MOLDOVEI organized protests in front of the Buiucani Police Inspectorate, accusing that criminal cases against its members were "fabricated at Maia Sandu's request." Vitalie Blanari compared the police's actions to the methods of the Third Reich, stating that "Sandu has turned the police into a tool of the yellow clan." At the same time, that page also promoted another post stating that Maia Sandu and PAS are violating the law and the Constitution by persecuting the opposition. Similar posts can be found on Vasile Tarlev and Canal 5 in the context of Evghenia Guțul's conviction.

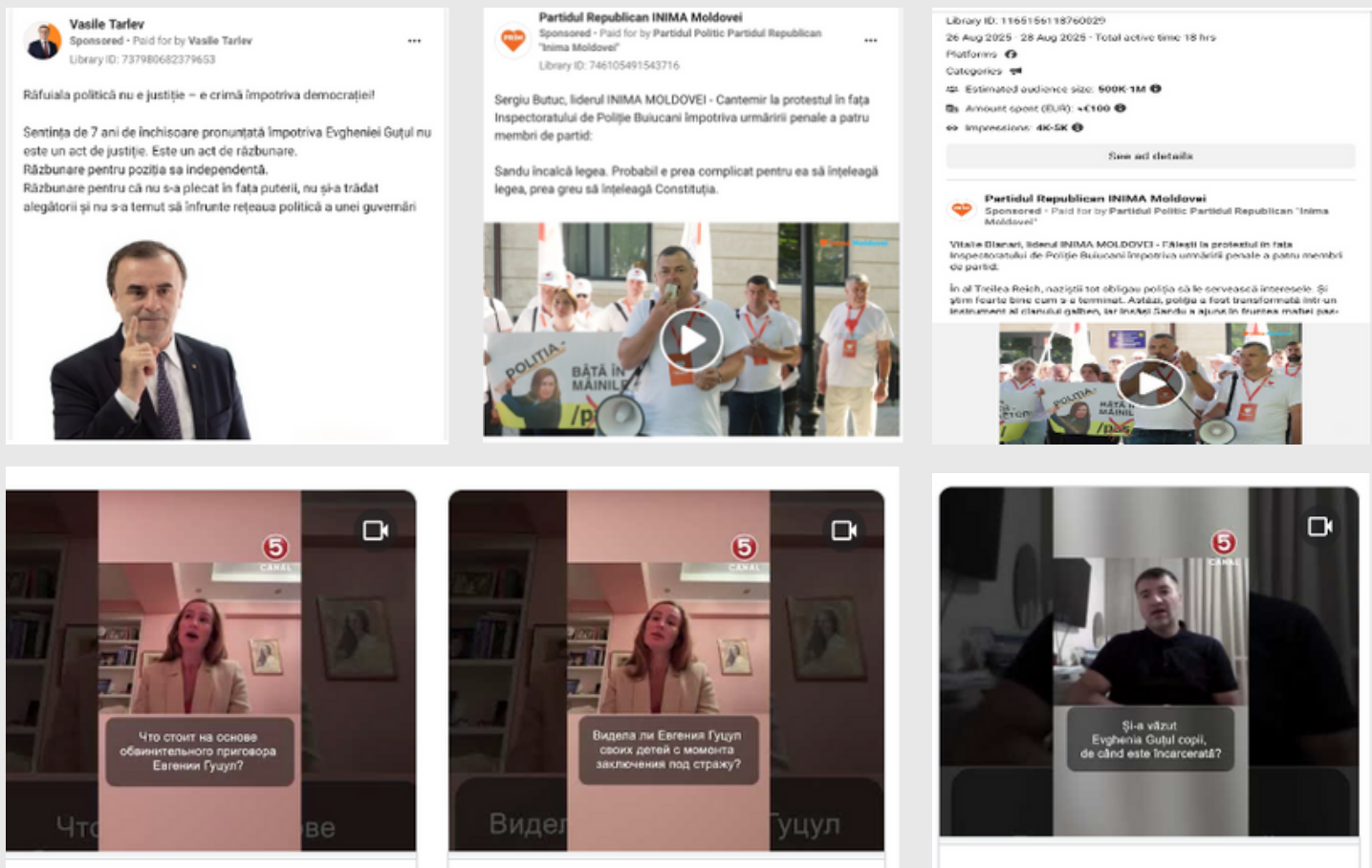


Fig.8 – The narrative “Justice used as a political weapon,” promoted via YouTube and Meta ads from monitored sources.

- **The government is destroying agriculture to sell land to foreigners:** Gheorghe Cazaciuc, leader of INIMA MOLDOVEI in Dondușeni, claimed that PAS "is bankrupting local farmers to sell land to foreigners."



Fig.9 - The narrative promoted by Meta advertising: "The government is destroying agriculture to sell land to foreigners."



- ***Moldova will lose its sovereignty once it joins the EU:*** The Moldova Mare political party spread the message that "the IMF and the EU are imposing conditions that impoverish Moldova, increase tariffs, and reduce national sovereignty."



Fig.10 - The narrative promoted by Meta advertising that "Moldova will lose its sovereignty once it integrates into the EU."

- ***The rehabilitation of Vladimir Plahotniuc:*** A network of fake pages ("Jose Perry", "Esther Bush", "Oleg Sandu", "Sean Hicks", "Dan Lupu", "Richard Leonard", "Eugene Jefferson", "Nicolae Răileanu", "Liviu Vicol") was reactivated in August to run ads without disclaimers, in which Plahotniuc was presented as "Moldova's solution" and "the savior of the people." These pages were later removed, but prior to deletion they disseminated messages manipulating public opinion and providing oligarch Plahotniuc a "reputational facelift." The context of Plahotniuc's arrest and subsequent rumors of his extradition from Greece in September 2025 fueled this campaign, which sought to bring him back into the public sphere as a legitimate political actor. Other pages, including Canal5 on YouTube, promoted the idea that PAS fears Plahotniuc's return to the country, as he has a lot to say, which could affect PAS's image and credibility.



**Esther Bush**  
Sponsored  
Library ID: 1130410108957744

- Și din nou, Grișa are dreptate
- Прямо в точку
- Plahotniuc este un fenomen
- Vreau să-i văd fața lui Grosu când va fi coleg de Parlament cu Plahotniuc
- Plahotniuc nici nu ar avea nevoie de bani pentru campanie și ar câștiga ...

Ad removed




**Sean Hicks**  
Sponsored  
Library ID: 1154424856519683

În 6 ani s-a văzut cine muncea și cine e la guvernare pentru distracție

Revine acasă, se termină discotecile pentru cei din PaS

Acum PAS e ca în proverbul cu greierul, toamna nu prea le va fi a dansa

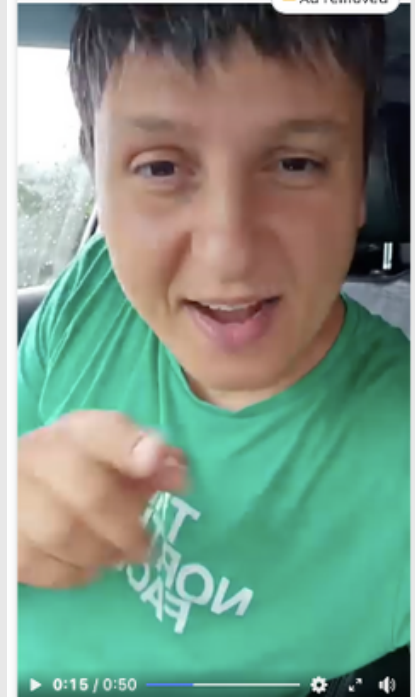
Ad removed



**Oleg Sandu**  
Sponsored  
Library ID: 1267900707812037

- Tremură chilotii la cei de la guvernare
- Adă! Doamne, adă! că era mai bine cu el decât cu prăpădiții actuali
- Eu sper să revină și să ajungă iar la putere, să împrăstie gălbeneala asta care a ajuns la putere acum
- Cei din PAS au să fugă ca șobolanii de prin țară
- Coșmarul celor din PAS devine realitate


Ad removed



**Dan Lapu**  
Sponsored  
Library ID: 1288395042841727

- În 6 ani s-a văzut cine muncea și cine e la guvernare pentru distracție
- Revine acasă, se termină discotecile pentru cei din PaS
- Acum PAS e ca în proverbul cu greierul, toamna nu

Ad removed



**Eugene Jefferson**  
Sponsored  
Library ID: 1914370802478109

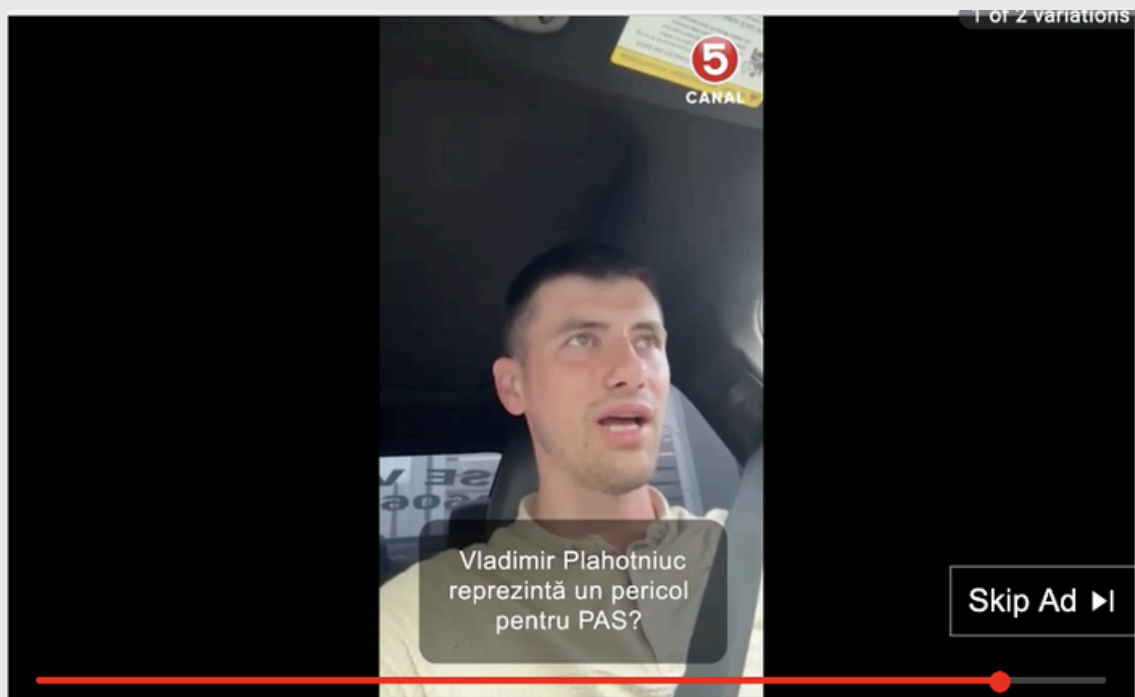
- Tremură voce la cei din PAS când vorbesc de revenirea lui Plahotniuc
- Mulți îl așteaptă, numai cei din PAS nu-l vor acasă
- Maia sigur e în isterie, se trănțește pe jos și plânge prin Președinție
- Va fi interesant de acum înainte în politica ...



**Richard Leonard**  
Sponsored  
Library ID: 3017288541766124

- Și din nou, Grișa are dreptate
- Прямо в точку
- Plahotniuc este un fenomen
- Vreau să-i văd fața lui Grosu când va fi coleg de Parlament cu Plahotniuc
- Plahotniuc nici nu ar avea nevoie de bani pentru campanie și ar câștiga ...





*Fig.11 - Promotion of the "positive" image of Plahotniuc's "return" to the country.*

## Findings

Between July 31 and August 29, 2025, there was an intensification of sponsored political advertising on Meta, with 571 ads and a total budget of €33,653. Although the number of ads is smaller than May - July, the expenditure per ad increased significantly, indicating a more aggressive, better-calibrated strategy for electoral impact.

Ilan Șor's network remains the main vector of disinformation, dominating in both volume and expenditure. He used official and anonymous pages, as well as content from MD24, distributed via satellite pages later removed by Meta. Simultaneously, Andrei Năstase strengthened his position as the second-largest digital actor, exceeding the previous quarter's budget in a single month with messages focused on social crises and low pensions. Marian Lupu spent less, but his campaigns had a distinct feature: promoting coordinated fake pages to rehabilitate Vladimir Plahotniuc, demonstrating a digital infrastructure dedicated to "reputational lifting."

On YouTube, Șor remained the most visible with hundreds of manipulative ads, while Natalia Morari and Andrei Năstase continued to use the platform, although the lack of budget transparency makes precise resource estimation impossible.

Main topics promoted through these campaigns included election fraud, presentation of justice as a political tool, social genocide narratives, agricultural ruin, and loss of sovereignty through European integration - all converging to delegitimize pro-European authorities and erode public trust in democratic processes.



# Methodology

## Purpose of Monitoring:

The analysis aimed to identify Kremlin and fugitive oligarch expenditures for sponsoring propaganda narratives about Moldova and the EU on YouTube and Meta platforms. Special attention was paid to cases where a page sponsored a large number of ads in a short time for a significant sum.

## Monitoring objectives

Taking into account the proposed purpose, the monitoring exercise has the following objectives:

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

## Definitions

In order 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 operate without a disclaimer.
- **Disclaimer** - A disclaimer on Facebook is a statement that limits your legal liability for certain risks or outcomes associated with the content, products, or services you offer. It informs users about what they can and cannot expect, clarifies the limits of certain promises, and can reduce the risk of being held liable in the event of disputes or legal action.

## Monitoring period

The monitoring period was July 31 to August 29, 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.



### Research Stages:

Five working stages were established for the development of the methodology:

- Identify 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.

**Telegram** and **TikTok** are also not covered in this report, even though they are increasingly relevant channels for distributing manipulative content.

To strengthen analysis, integration of ad library data and additional monitoring methods is recommended.

