

ANALYSIS OF ONLINE ADVERTISING EXPENDITURES OF ELECTORAL COMPETITORS IN THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF SEPTEMBER 28



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Summary

Between August 31 and September 29, candidates in the September 28 parliamentary elections spent a total of approximately **€237,167 on 2,903** advertisements on the META platform. On Google platforms, the identified electoral competitors sponsored **2,046 advertisements**, but there is a complete lack of data on budgets, duration of broadcast, and audiences, making it difficult to estimate the real impact.

The leaders in advertising spending on META platforms during the monitored period were:

- **Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate (Action and Solidarity Party, PAS)** – €93,386 for 826 ads
- **Blocul Alternativa (Alternative Bloc)** – €33,346 for 639 ads
- **Andrei Năstase** – €28,394 for 230 ads
- **Gabriel Călin** – €20,693 for 40 ads
- **Partidul Nostru (Our Party)** – €15,265 for 118 ads
- **Partidul Național Moldovenesc (Moldovan National Party)** – €10,726 for 288 ads

If we take the average per sponsorship, Călin spent approximately **€517 per advertisement**, while the average for PAS is **€113 per advertisement**, for the Alternative Bloc **€52.18 per advertisement**, and for Our Party **€129.28 per advertisement**. PAS's expenses represent about **40% of the total amounts declared**.

On Google platforms, the leaders in terms of the number of ads set between August 31 and September 29 were:

- **Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate (Action and Solidarity Party, PAS)** – 651 ads
- **Partidul Nostru (Our Party)** – 500 ads
- **Olesea Stamate** – 300 ads
- **Blocul Electoral Patriotic (Patriotic Electoral Bloc)** – 200 ads
- **Blocul Alternativa (Alternative Bloc)** – 200 ads

Other formations, such as *Democrația Acasă (Democracy at Home)*, *AUR (Alliance for the Union of Romanians)*, *Moldova Mare (Greater Moldova)*, the *Partidul Liberal (Liberal Party)*, or Tatiana Crețu, do not appear in the *Meta Ad Library* or *Google Ads Transparency* reports, having no sponsored advertisements.

The study analyzed only pages affiliated with political competitors, excluding anonymous pages used for disinformation, as no candidate publicly claimed them. If we had determined that some anonymous accounts/pages promoted a political candidate, they would have been included in the study.

Introduction

Social media has become an important tool in modern election campaigns, providing electoral competitors with rapid means of promoting, mobilizing, and influencing the electorate. The most popular promotion techniques on social media are political advertisements broadcast through *META* and *Google* platforms. In the context of the September 28 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova, these platforms were used extensively by electoral competitors. Political advertisements placed on these platforms allowed those registered to reach both voters in the country and the diaspora.

The data collected from the *META Ad Library* platform provides partial transparency on the amounts spent and allows for verification of reports to the *Central Election Commission (CEC)*. Unlike *META*, *Google Ads Transparency* does not disclose the budgets spent by political accounts, which creates room for incomplete reporting or manipulation.

Spending on the Meta platform between August 31 and September 29

Between August 31 and September 29, candidates in the September 28 parliamentary elections spent a total of approximately **€237,167 on 2,903 ads** on the META platform. The leader in advertising spending during that period was the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), which spent **€93,386 on 826 ads**. This amount is not final because it does not include expenses for services paid to the company that handled the promotion of PAS posts on META platforms, and PAS-affiliated pages that spent less than €100 on advertisements during the monitored period.

PAS's expenses on advertisements and the services provided by the company that handled the promotions were included by the party in its final expense report to the *Central Election Commission*, which indicates that the party ran a transparent campaign.

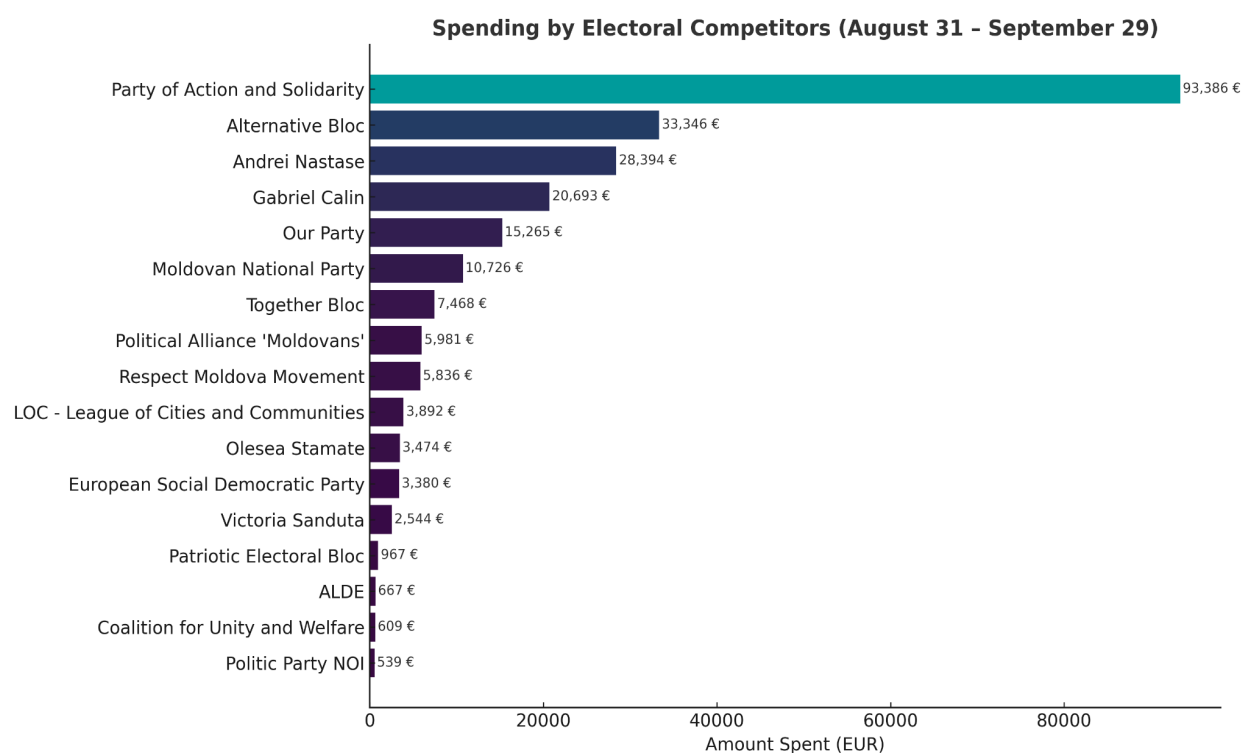


Fig.1 - Comparison of the expenses of electoral competitors registered for the parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025, during the monitored period of August 31 - September 29. The data was taken from the META Ad Library.

The *Alternative Bloc* came in second place, **spending €33,346 on 639 advertisements**. It is followed by *Andrei Năstase* - **€28,394 for 230 advertisements**. Năstase is one of the anomalies of this campaign because, as an independent candidate, he spent almost as much as the *Alternative Bloc* and twice as much as *Our Party*, led by Renato Usatîi. Unlike other electoral competitors, *Andrei Năstase's* advertisements were only made on his personal page.

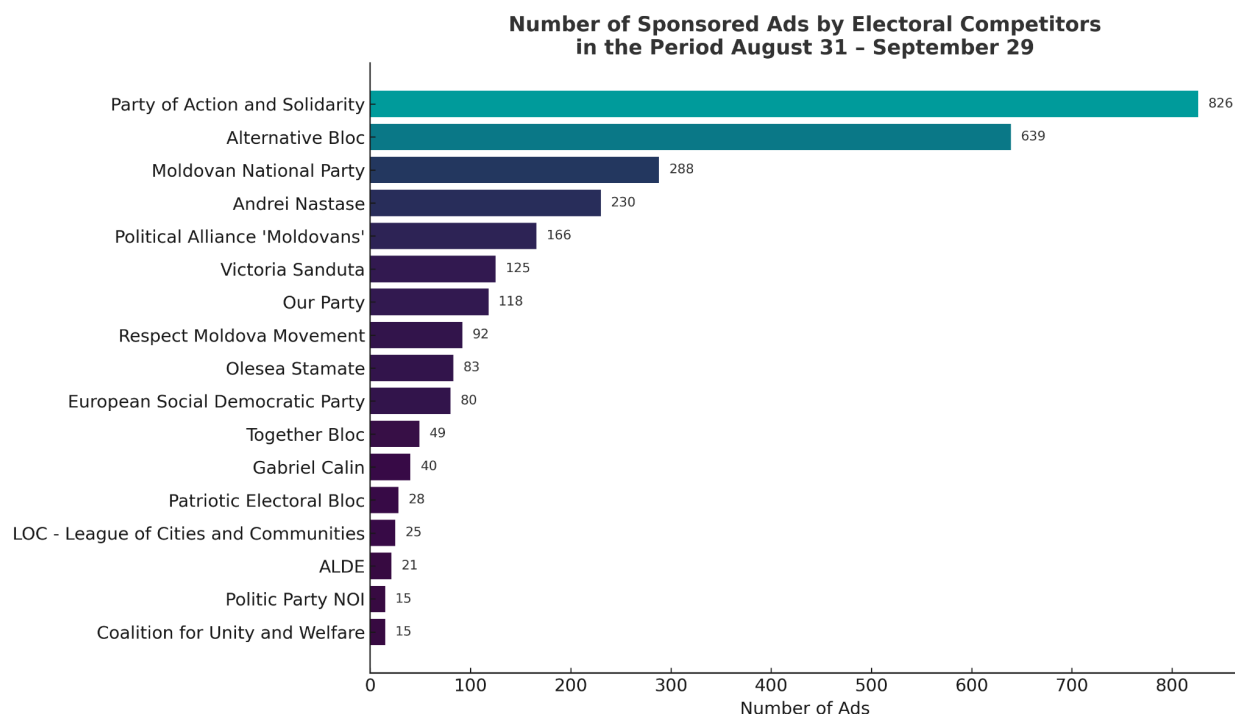


Fig.2 - Comparison between the number of advertisements sponsored on META platforms by electoral competitors registered for the parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025, during the monitored period August 31 - September 29. The data was taken from the META Ad Library.

The second most interesting anomaly is Gabriel Călin. The man who claimed that in 2024 he was living on 2,000 lei per month spent **20,693 euros on 40 advertisements**. If we take the average per sponsorship, Călin spent approximately **517 euros per advertisement**, while the PAS average is **113 euros per advertisement**, the *Alternative Bloc* **52.18 euros per advertisement**, and *Our Party* - **129.28 euros per advertisement**.

Of the total expenditure on political advertising by electoral competitors, PAS's expenditure amounts to only **40% of the total amount** spent by electoral competitors registered in the parliamentary elections.

Comparison Between PAS Spending and Other Electoral Competitors
on META Platforms

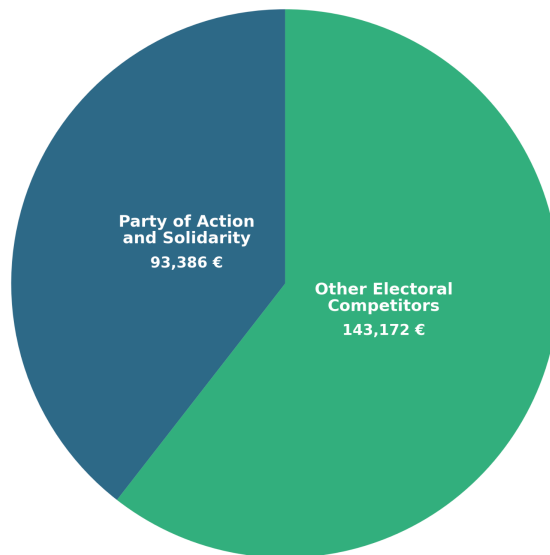


Fig. 3 - Comparison between PAS spending and that of other electoral competitors who used META platforms to promote themselves through advertising.

The parties "Democrația Acasă" (Democracy at Home), "Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor" (Alliance for the Union of Romanians), "Moldova Mare" (Greater Moldova), "Liberal" (Liberal Party) and independent candidate Tatiana Crețu could not be identified in the *Meta Ad Library* because they did not sponsor any ads during the monitored period. This does not mean that these parties did not use other tactics to promote themselves on META platforms using methods other than advertisements, such as using bots for comments and likes, or artificially increasing the number of views.

The [WatchDog.MD](#) community, [Ziarul de Gardă](#), [NordNews](#), and [BBC](#) publications have demonstrated how Moscow created an artificial network to promote pro-Russian parties in Moldova, in particular the "Moldova Mare" Party, led by Victoria Furtună and supported by Ilan Șor. The *WatchDog.MD* Community study showed that Vasile Costiuc and extremist leaders in Romania, George Simion and Călin Georgescu, benefited from media support from the Russian propaganda network during the presidential elections in Romania.

The "*Unirea Națiunii*" (Union of the Nation) bloc was not included in the analysis charts because it ran two advertisements worth less than €100. Thus, this formation did not meet the monitoring criteria established in the methodology of the study.

In the last week of the election, the candidates who spent the most money on ads on the *META* platform were:

- **Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate (Party of Action and Solidarity)** - €25,520 for 291 ads;
- **Blocul Alternativa (Alternative Bloc)** - €18,352 for 276 advertisements;
- **Gabriel Călin** - €10,585 for 10 advertisements;
- **Andrei Năstase** - €7,277 for 62 advertisements;
- **Partidul Național Moldovenesc (Moldovan National Party)** - €4,388 for 85 advertisements.

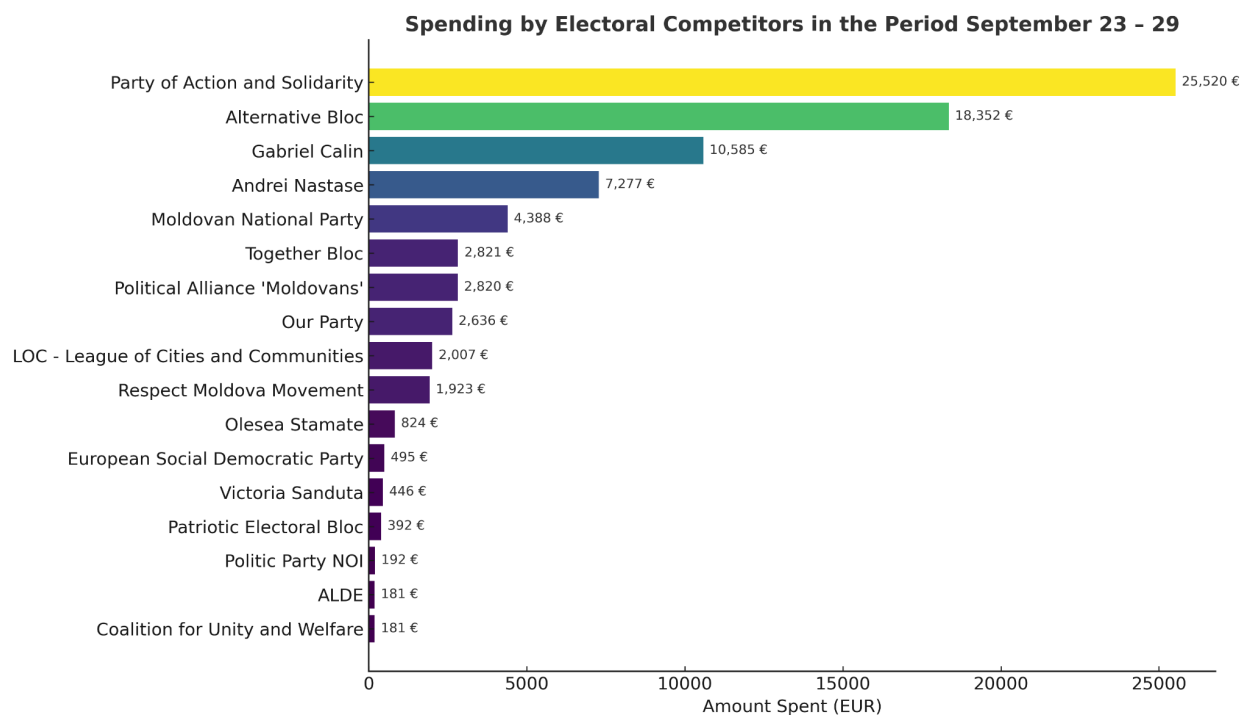


Fig.4 - Comparison between the expenses of electoral competitors registered for the parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025, during the monitored period of September 23-29. The data was taken from the META Ad Library.

If we analyze who spent the most on average for an advertisement in the last week of the election, we get the following top:

- **Gabriel Călin** - €1,058.5 for an advertisement;
- **Andrei Năstase** - €117.30 for an advertisement;
- **Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate (Party of Action and Solidarity)** - €87.70 for an advertisement;
- **Blocul Alternativa (Alternative Bloc)**- €66.49 for an advertisement;
- **Partidul Național Moldovenesc (Moldovan National Party)**- €51.62 for one advertisement.

Călin's anomaly can be explained by the fact that he used Ilan Șor's tactic of pumping a lot of money into a few advertisements sponsored by anonymous pages. Călin was supported by the fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor, whom he promoted on his Telegram and YouTube channels before running for parliament. The propagandist [was detained by the Moldovan authorities](#) on September 30 in a case of illegal party financing. He allegedly converted over \$150,000 and managed money from Russia on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

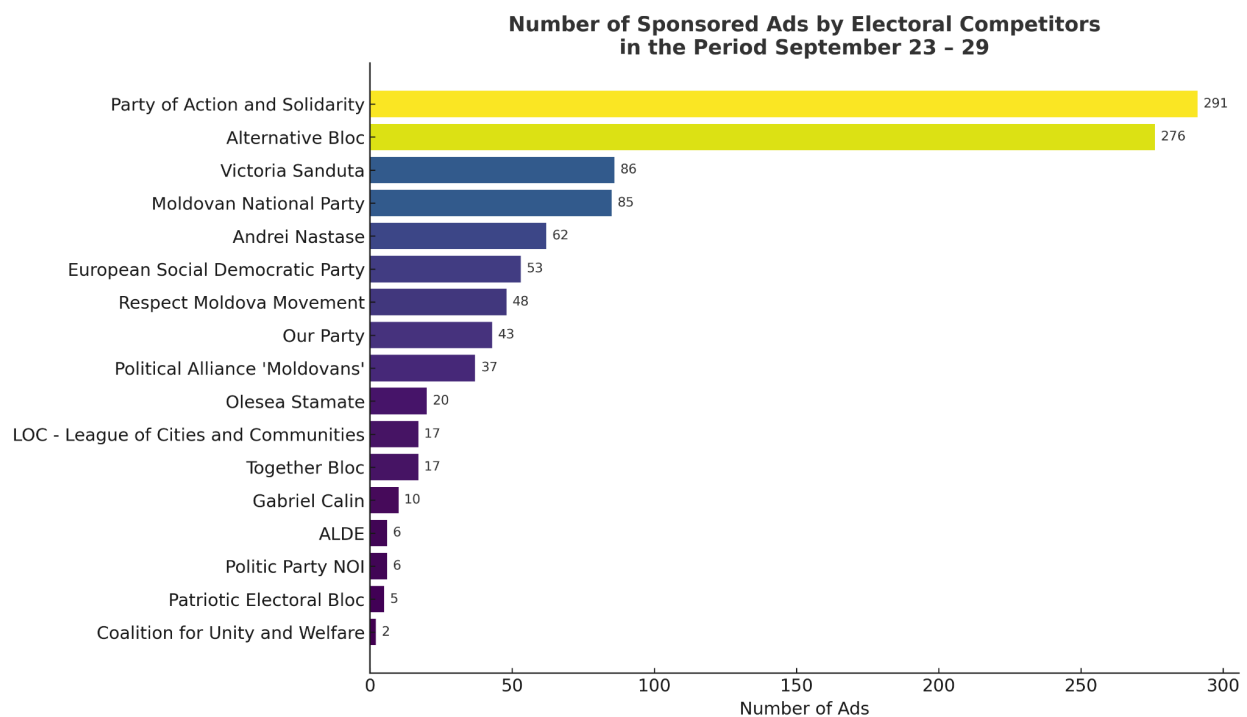


Fig. 5 - Comparison between the number of ads sponsored by electoral competitors registered for the parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025, during the monitored period of September 23-29. The data was taken from the META Ad Library.

Promotions on the Google platform between August 31 and September 29

We were unable to identify how much money the candidates registered for the September 28 parliamentary elections spent on the *Google* platform, because the *Google Ads Transparency* platform does not provide these details due to the fact that political advertising is not active in the Republic of Moldova. Such issues can subsequently lead to the manipulation of financial reports by parties regarding election campaign expenses.

The *WatchDog.MD* community was able to identify only a few electoral competitors who sponsored ads on Google platforms in the Republic of Moldova; the rest did not sponsor ads on these platforms or could not be identified. Following monitoring carried out between August 31 and September 29, it was found that the top five electoral competitors who sponsored the most advertisements in the Republic of Moldova were:

- **Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate (Party of Action and Solidarity)** – 651 advertisements;
- **Partidul Nostru (Our Party)** - 500 ads;
- **Olesea Stamate** - 300 advertisements;
- **Blocul Electoral Patriotic (Patriotic Electoral Bloc)** – 200 advertisements;
- **Blocul Alternativa (Alternative Bloc)**– 200 advertisements.

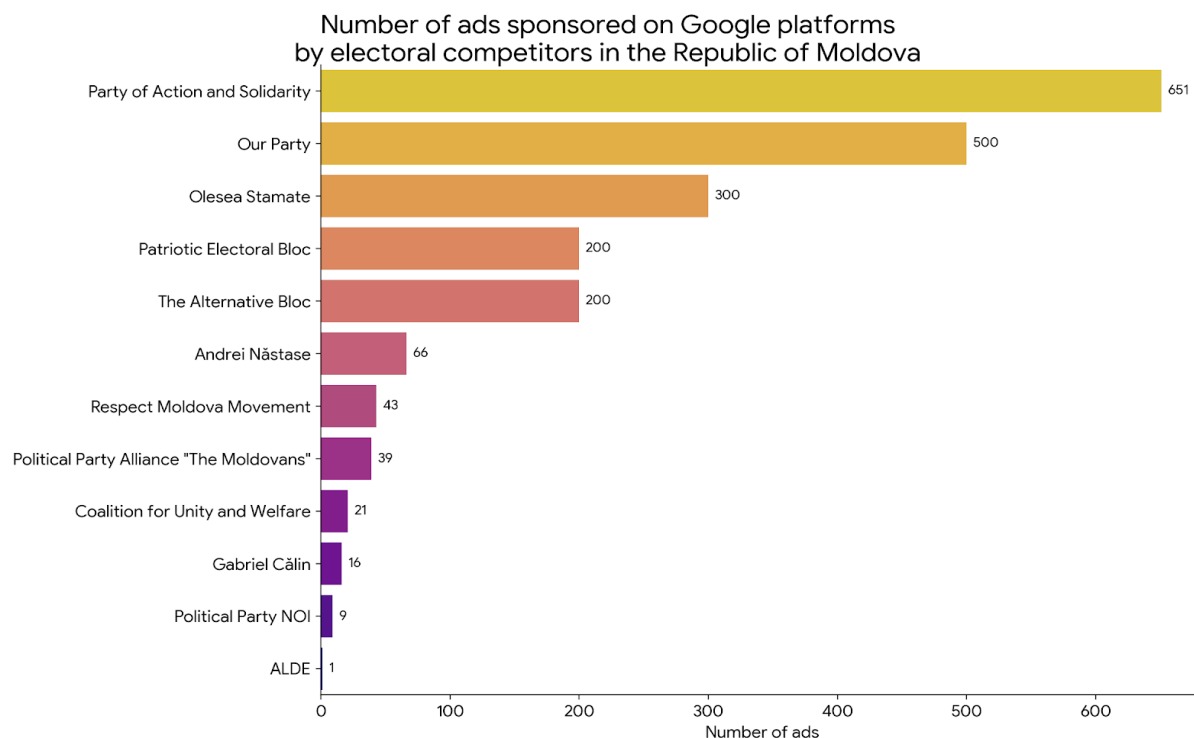


Fig.6 - Comparison between the number of advertisements sponsored on Google platforms by electoral competitors registered for the parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025, during the monitored period August 31 - September 29. The data was taken from Google Ads Transparency.

At the same time, the identified electoral competitors also displayed advertisements in the Moldovan diaspora in the West. The total number of impressions for each candidate represents the number of times an advertisement or group of advertisements was displayed in several countries. For example, if an ad was sponsored in 10 countries, it will be counted as 10 impressions. Thus, calculations showed that most ads were displayed in the diaspora by the following candidates:

- **Partidul Nostru (Our Party)** - 2,434 impressions;
- **Andrei Năstase** - 379 impressions;
- **Blocul Electoral Patriotic (Patriotic Electoral Bloc)** - 386 impressions;
- **Blocul Alternativa (Alternative Bloc)** - 329 displays;
- **Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate (Party of Action and Solidarity)** – 283 impressions.

The large number of impressions compared to the actual number of ads in the Republic of Moldova indicates that the administrators of the *Google* advertising accounts of the electoral competitors set the countries in which these ads would appear. The large number of impressions in the diaspora for *Partidul Nostru (Our Party)* indicates that the party spent enormous amounts on these ads.

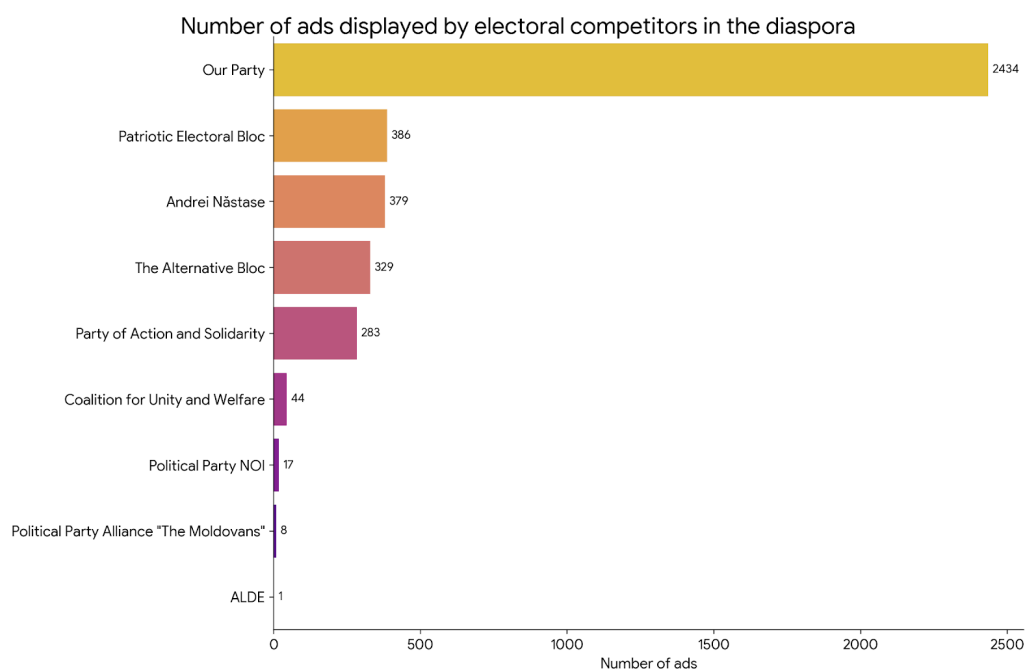


Fig.7 - Comparison between the number of ad impressions in the diaspora sponsored on Google platforms by electoral competitors during the monitored period August 31 - September 29. The data was taken from Google Ads Transparency.

The following ranking was established based on the number of ad impressions of electoral competitors per country:

- **Romania** - 533 impressions
- **Italy** - 495 impressions
- **Germany** - 366 impressions
- **France** - 344 impressions
- **Greece** - 312 impressions.

These countries were targeted by political advertisements in the Republic of Moldova because the advertisements were set to target Romanian speakers and Moldova was selected as the area of interest. Considering that a large part of the Moldovan diaspora lives in these countries, the probability that the ad will be displayed specifically to Moldovans who are Romanian speakers and have an interest in Moldova is very high. However, this does not mean that all candidates complied with the condition that the interests "Romanian language" and "Moldova" be set in their campaigns. This is difficult to determine because *Google* does not provide details about the audience targeted by a particular advertisement.

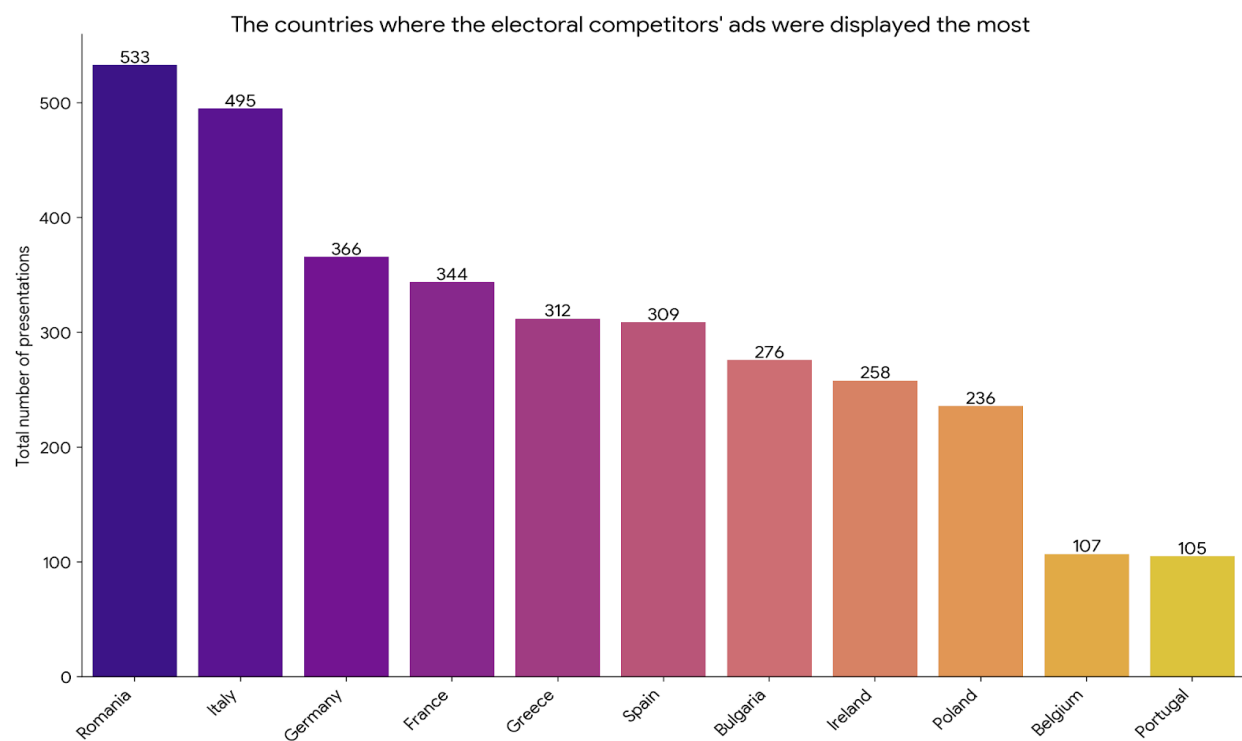


Fig.7 - Comparison between the top 10 countries where the most political ads from Moldova were displayed on Google platforms during the monitoring period August 31 - September 29.

Based on the number of ads set in the top 5 countries on Google platforms, Renato Usatîi's Our Party is way ahead of other competitors. The party displayed the following number of ads in the top 5 countries:

- **Romania** - 300 ads displayed;
- **Italy** - 300 ads displayed;
- **Germany** - 200 ads displayed;
- **France** - 200 ads displayed;
- **Greece** - 200 advertisements displayed.

Our Party is followed in the top by Andrei Năstase, the Patriotic Electoral Bloc, the Alternative Bloc, and PAS. In the case of these top competitors, most ads were displayed in Romania:

- **Partidul Nostru (Our Party)**- 300 ads displayed;
- **Andrei Năstase** - 74 advertisements displayed;
- **Blocul Electoral Patriotic (Patriotic Electoral Bloc)**- 66 ads displayed;
- **Blocul Alternativa (Alternative Bloc)** - 44 advertisements displayed;
- **Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate (Party of Action and Solidarity)** - 41 ads displayed.

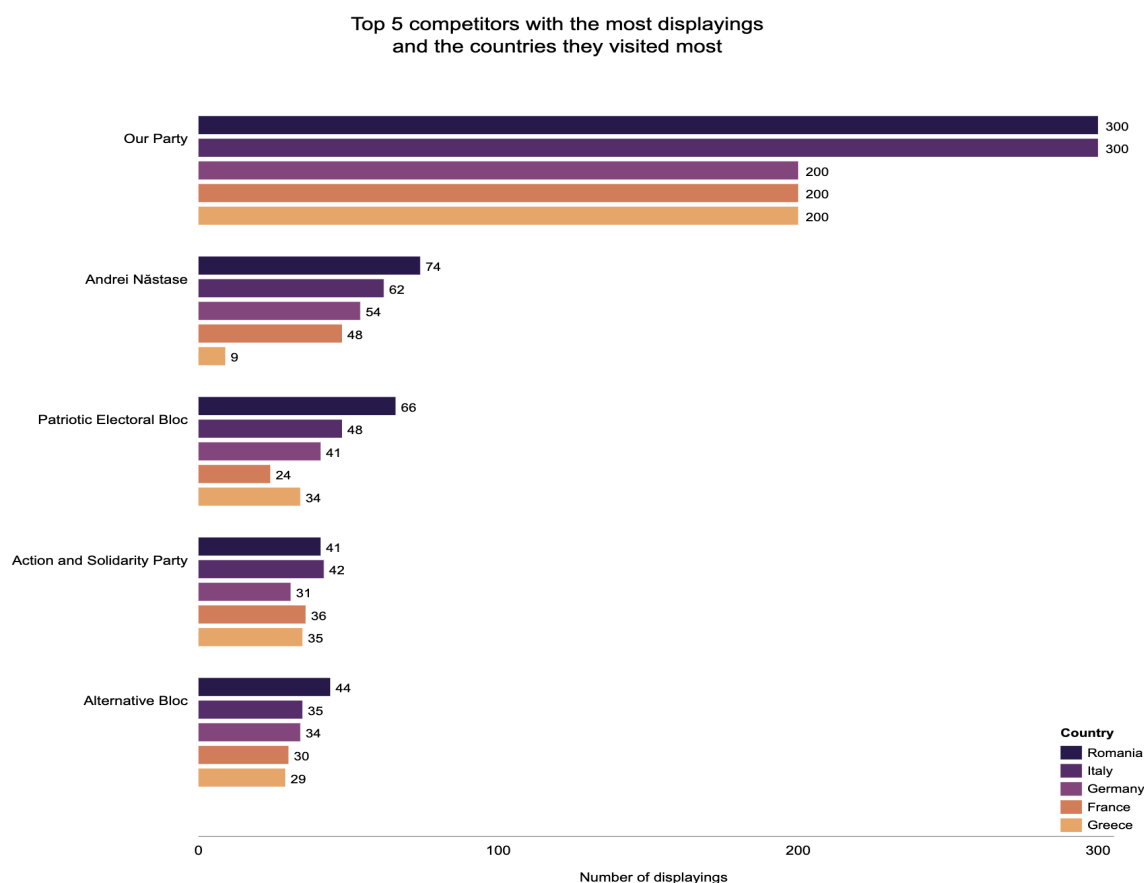


Fig.8 - Comparison between the number of ads displayed by electoral competitors in the top 5 countries where the most political ads in Moldova were sponsored on Google platforms during the monitored period August 31 - September 29.

Findings

The analysis of electoral competitors' advertising spending in the campaign for the parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025 reveals intense competition on digital platforms, dominated by the massive use of paid advertising on *META* networks and, to a lesser extent, on *Google*.

On the *Google* platform, the analysis was constrained by the lack of data on budgets and audiences – a systemic gap that reduces the transparency of online campaigns and favors possible incomplete reporting to the *Central Election Commission*.

The general trends of the online campaign show a polarization between pro-European and pro-Russian parties, visible not only in messages but also in the allocation of financial resources. PAS ran a transparent campaign, with full reporting and in accordance with current CEC rules, while other actors — such as Călin or groups such as "Moldova Mare" (Greater Moldova) — raise suspicions about the origin of funds and hidden promotion networks.

For future campaigns, it is essential to strengthen digital transparency mechanisms, correlate data between platforms, and extend monitoring to networks where electoral disinformation spreads. The *Central Election Commission* should request more details from *META* and *Google* about campaigns during the election period in order to detect whether any candidate has violated election law. At the same time, *Google* needs to review its policies on political advertising and provide transparency on the amount allocated by a political account for advertising.

Overall, the 2025 election campaign showed that the digital space has become the main arena for political competition, where it's not just the amount invested that makes the difference, but also the strategy, credibility, and transparency with which political actors operate.

Recommendations

1. Automated digital transparency and institutionalized cooperation

The Central Election Commission (CEC) should introduce an automated digital mechanism for reporting and verifying online advertising expenses, in partnership with *META* and *Google* platforms.

This system would involve:

- a standardized electronic form, completed weekly by electoral competitors, including the link to the advertisement, the amount, the broadcast period, and the publication page;
- automatic integration with *META* and Google ad libraries for real-time verification of the declared data;
- memoranda of cooperation between the CEC and platforms, which would allow for the rapid and secure exchange of information about advertisements, audiences, and anonymous accounts;
- weekly publication of data in an open dashboard, with the amounts, number of advertisements, and level of compliance of each electoral competitor.

This measure would make transparency operational and verifiable, rather than merely declarative, and civil society, the press, and observers would be able to independently monitor financial flows in digital campaigns.

2. Civic support and digital education

Civil society organizations and independent media can contribute through an informal consortium to the public verification of digital advertisements. A broad partnership with access to *META* and *Google* data could provide external auditing and digital literacy campaigns for voters, explaining how to identify sponsored content and how to verify sources.

3. Strengthening the legal framework for digital financing

Parliament and the CEC should amend electoral legislation to include mandatory detailed reporting of online spending, regardless of platform. These changes should also target the application of clear penalties for anonymous financing of digital advertising. This measure would

reduce illegal external funding and bring digital campaigns under the same transparency framework as traditional advertising.

Methodology

Purpose of monitoring

The purpose of the analysis was to identify the advertising expenditures of electoral competitors who participated in the parliamentary elections on September 28. At the same time, we drew attention to exceptional cases when a particular page sponsored a large number of advertisements for a large amount of money in a short period of time.

Objectives of monitoring

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

- Identify accounts that promote and distribute electoral content through advertisements on META and Google platforms;
- Classifying the identified pages/accounts if they represent a party registered in the parliamentary elections;
- Presenting the expenses and number of advertisements on META platforms per political actor following the classification of pages/accounts;
- Presenting the number of advertisements and their displays in the diaspora on Google platforms following the classification of pages/accounts per registered political actor.

Definitions

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

- **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 may reduce the risk of liability in the event of disputes or legal action.

Monitoring period

The monitoring period was August 31 to September 29, during which the number of advertisements and the amounts spent by each page/affiliate account of the electoral

competitors, included in the race, for the parliamentary elections on September 28 were analyzed.

Research stages

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

- Identification of pages/accounts promoting electoral competitors registered for the September 28 parliamentary elections through advertisements;
- Classifying the types of pages/accounts identified according to their affiliation with candidates;
- Analyzing the amounts spent by Facebook pages and the number of advertisements promoted by each;
- Analyzing the number of ads sponsored by accounts on Google platforms and the number of impressions in diaspora countries;
- 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 not covered in this report, although they are increasingly relevant channels for the distribution of manipulative content.

To strengthen the analysis, we recommend integrating available data from ad libraries and testing additional cross-platform monitoring methods.