

MOLDOVAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN SOCIAL MEDIA



Moldovan election: Incumbent Dodon way behind Usatîi and Sandu in social media campaign

Moldova's incumbent President Igor Dodon is losing out on social media to his ideological rival Renato Usatîi and the pro-European candidate Maia Sandu, who are dominating the online campaign in the lead up to the Presidential election on 1st November.

The research, conducted by Mediapoint, a Moldovan new media organization, and MEMO 98, a Slovak non-profit, examined social media in Moldova between 1st September and 24th October, monitoring the public pages of 37 politicians and parties.

Usatîi and Sandu account for over 70% of all the interactions during the period, with an active campaign from Usatîi leading the way with close to 570k engagements and Sandu not far behind with 410k, despite posting significantly less. The incumbent Dodon comes in fourth behind Andrei Nastase, with a little over a quarter the figure of Sandu and fifth that of Usatîi.

The monitoring shows the battle is focused primarily on Facebook, which saw over 3,700 posts from the pages and 2.7m interactions over the period, compared to only 514 posts and a little over 190,000 interactions on Instagram. Individual candidates' pages were also far more important for the campaign than their official party pages, generating 13.5 times more engagement than the party pages.

Usatîi was by far the most active candidate on Facebook, posting twice as much as his nearest rival, while his *Partidul Nostru* party posted 3.5 times more than any other party. Usatîi was also the biggest spender on paid promotion on social media, paying out €15k for advertising. The overall spending during the campaign was relatively low, with a little over €40,000 invested by registered candidates and parties from 4th August onwards.

While Usatîi and his party have been the most prolific, Sandu and the *Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate* have shown similar popularity despite posting far less. Sandu posted just 84 times on Facebook in comparison to Usatîi's 273 posts, while her party posted 99 times to Partidul Nostru's 343 posts. But on engagement, *Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate* significantly outperformed Partidul Nostru, generating 86,000 engagements – three times the figure of Partidul Nostru.

In terms of the content of campaigns, candidates and parties focused on roads and infrastructure, reunification with Romania, salaries and pensions, and COVID-19, with the government's handling of the crisis coming under increased scrutiny. Social media users, however, were most engaged on salaries and pensions, education, corruption and bribery, with the problems of the judicial system and pensions generating the most comments.

Remarking on the findings, Andrei Fornea of MediaPoint said: "This is the first time anyone has looked in depth at political campaigning on social media around elections in Moldova, and it is already throwing up some interesting findings. We will have to wait until Sunday to find out if the social media battle reflects the public at large."

Mediapoint and MEMO 98 will issue a final report covering the full campaign period as well as any second-round run-off following the conclusion of the elections.

Facebook posts

Total number of posts by candidates (2–24 October 2020)



Renato Usatîi



Violeta Ivanov



Igor Dodon



Dorin Chirtoacă



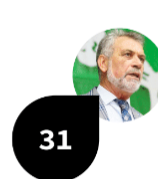
Octavian Țicu



Andrei Năstase



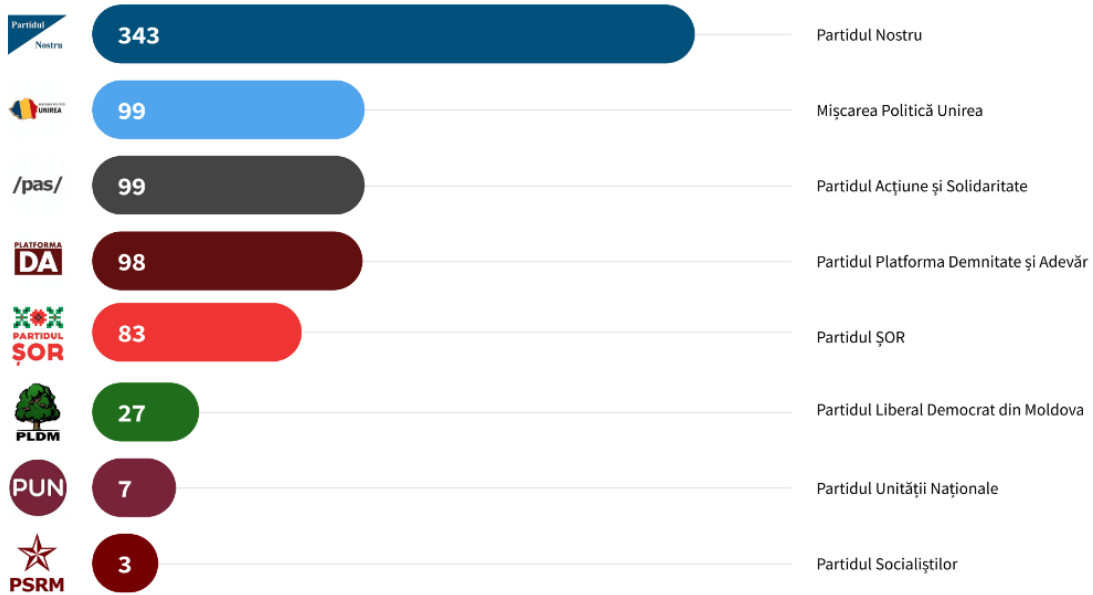
Maia Sandu



Tudor Deliu

Facebook posts

Total number of posts by parties (2-24 October 2020)

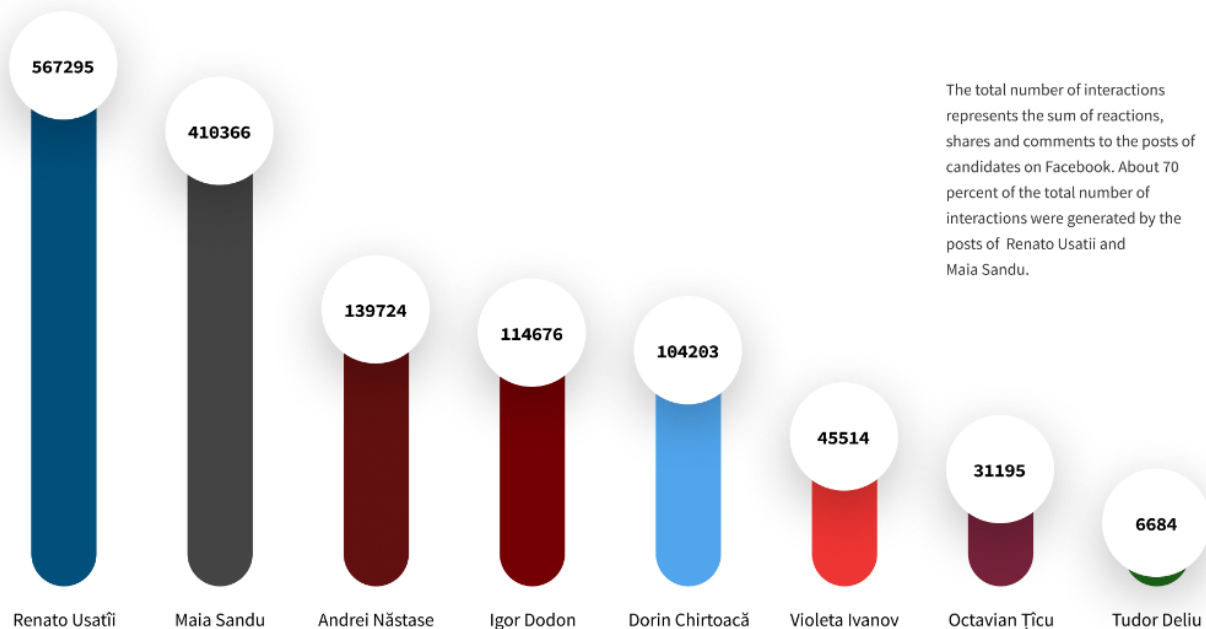


Facebook posts

Total number of interactions with posts of candidates (1-24 October 2020)

1.41

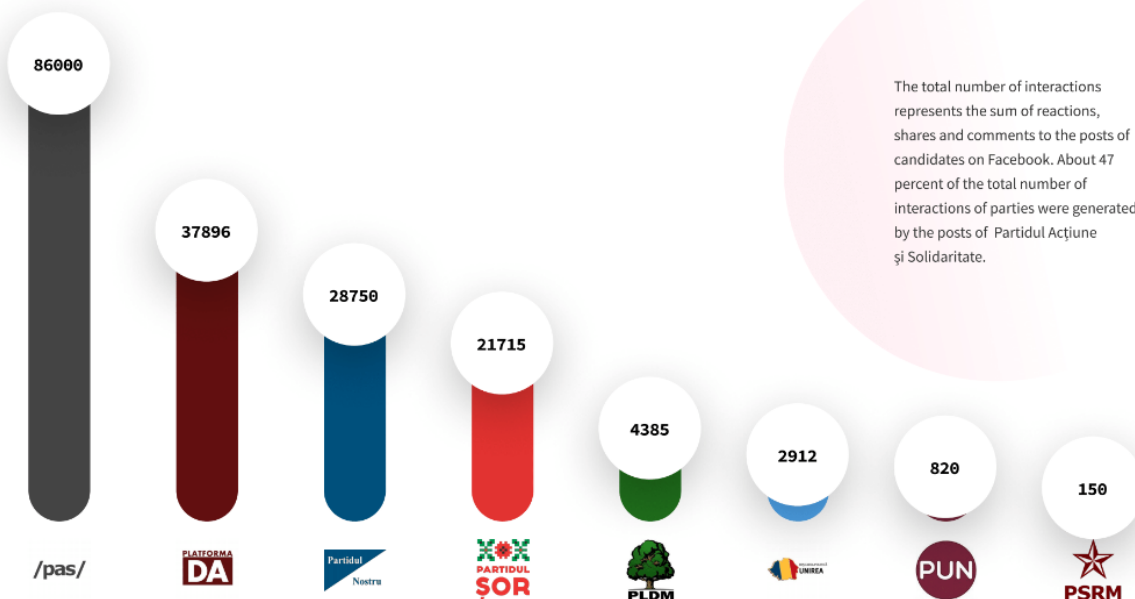
mIn total interactions



The total number of interactions represents the sum of reactions, shares and comments to the posts of candidates on Facebook. About 70 percent of the total number of interactions were generated by the posts of Renato Usatii and Maia Sandu.

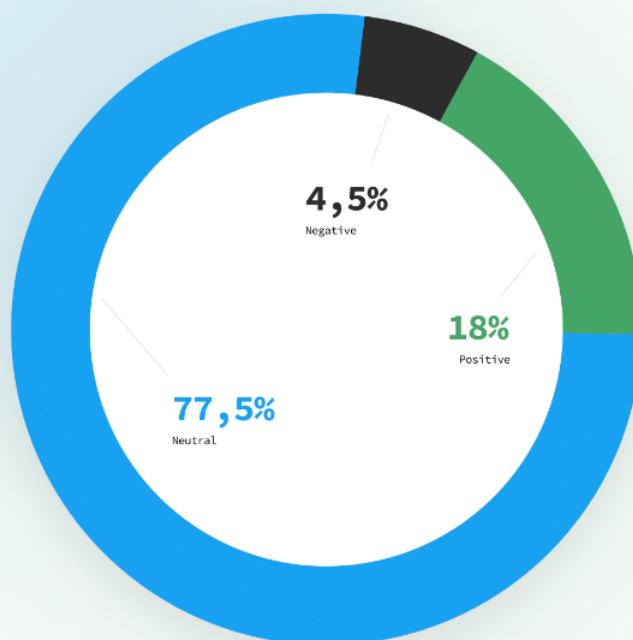
Facebook posts

Total number of interactions with posts of parties (1-24 October 2020)



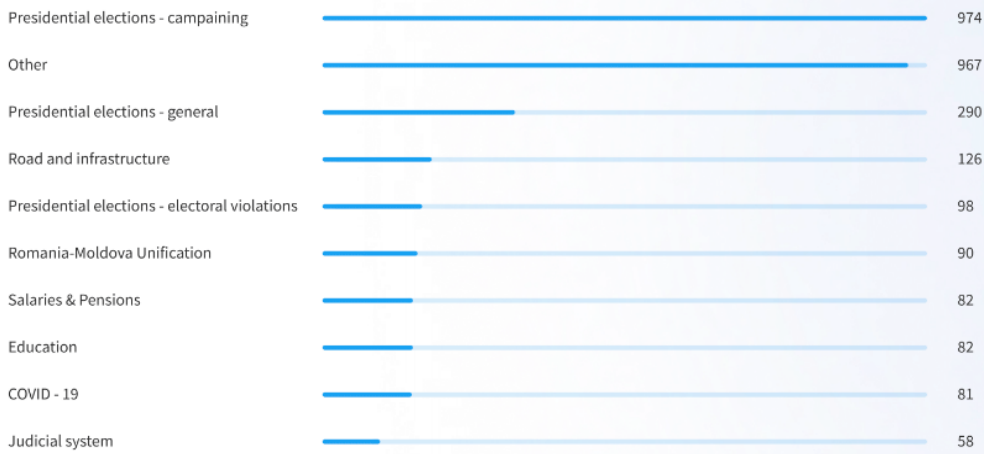
Facebook posts' tone of voice

What was the tone of voice used by politicians and parties in their facebook posts 1.09-24.09.2020



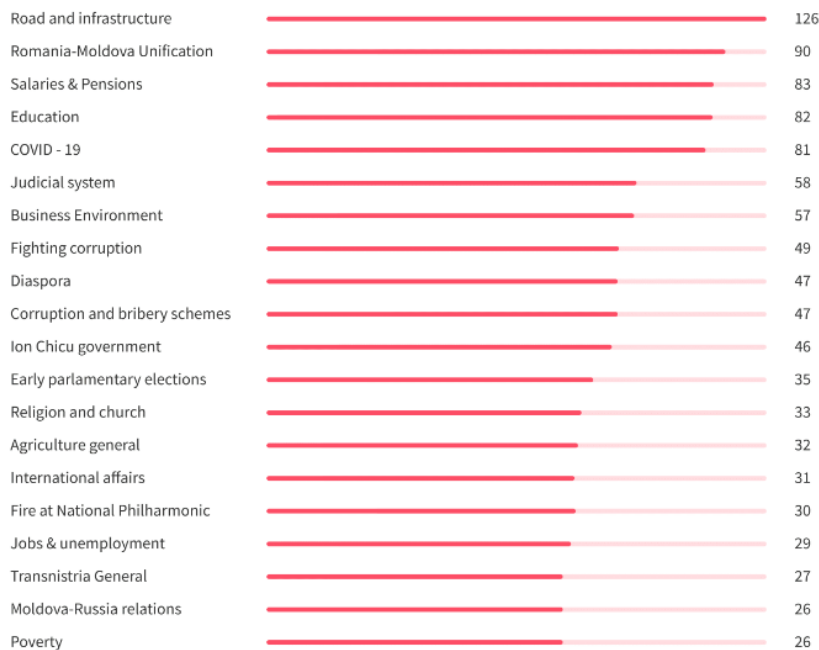
Facebook posts

Top 10 issues discussed by parties and politicians during 1.09 - 24.10.2020



Facebook posts

Top 20 issues discussed by parties and politicians during 1.09 - 24.10.2020



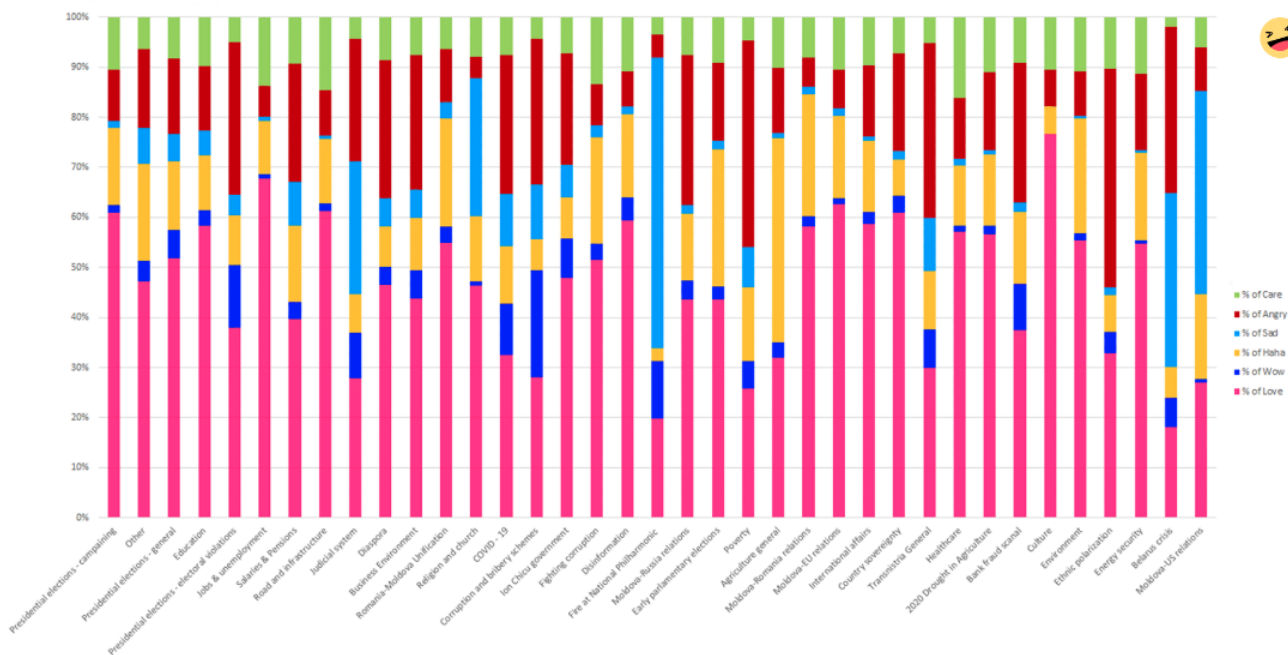
The graph includes issues that were discussed by politicians and parties in their posts on Facebook, excluding the "Other" and the election related categories.



Facebook posts



Citizens' emotions (excluding likes) to posts by top issues 1.09 - 24.10.2020



The press release in pdf can be found here [press-release_final](#)

The preliminary report in pdf can be found here [preliminary-report](#)