

# ASSESSMENT OF PROMOTION CAMPAIGNS

SPENDINGS ON META PLATFORM DURING  
JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 28, 2025

AUTHOR :                    ANDREI RUSU, WATCHDOG.MD  
CO - AUTHORS :    ANDREI CURĂRARU, CĂTĂLINA BUDURIN

2025



## Summary

Between January 31 to February 28, the Russian Federation, through its fugitive oligarchs, changed its strategy of sponsoring disinformation through Facebook and YouTube platforms. Fugitive Ilan Shor abandoned the sponsorship of ads through anonymous pages and those directly associated with him. Shor's new tactic is to promote the image of politicians Victoria Furtuna, Vasile Tarlev and Irina Vlah, who were supported by the oligarch in the presidential elections. At the same time, Shor continues to actively promote, via Facebook, the TV station "MD24," launched in Moscow in the context of the presidential elections, to manipulate public opinion.

Veaceslav Platon continues to promote manipulative posts on his personal page and through former journalist Natalia Morari, with whom he has a child.

Both Ilan Shor and Veaceslav Platon have significantly reduced their budgets for promoting posts aimed at manipulating public opinion. They have also shortened the duration of ad campaigns - from 7 days to 2-3 days or even a few hours. During the monitored period, we found that Ilan Shor considerably increased the number of advertisements compared to last year. At the same time, Veaceslav Platon reduced the number of sponsorships on Facebook. Also, on YouTube he stopped advertising once the presidential election campaign ended.

In addition to the two oligarchs, former Prime Minister Vlad Filat has also started to promote various manipulative posts for a fee. Through sponsored posts, Filat launches attacks on the current government, the European Union, civil society and the independent press. After monitoring, it was found that the advertisements on Filat's page are modeled after those on the page of Victoria Furtuna, a former [anti-corruption prosecutor](#) suspected by the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office of leaking information from investigations. In some cases, posts were promoted from both pages at the same time and with a similar budget, manipulating public opinion on the subject of USAID grants.

All the ads analyzed had disclaimers for political and social issues. This allowed us to partially identify the investment in the ads placed on META. Transparency of these expenditures is only possible if the page follows META rules and uses the required disclaimer for political and social ads. Ads that run without a disclaimer disappear from the META Ads Library, and while they are running, the amount paid and the period for which they were sponsored are not publicly disclosed.

### **The main narratives sponsored by the fugitive oligarchs and Vlad Filat between January 31 and February 28:**

- **"Only PAS and NGOs benefited from USAID money":** It is suggested that USAID grants have been used by independent media and NGOs to whitewash the image of the government.
- **"PAS has artificially created the energy crisis":** It is claimed that the PAS government is to blame for the energy crisis, not Russia.

- **"The EU is no longer a democracy"**: the idea that the European Union has lost its democratic values is being promoted, with the annulled elections in Romania cited as an example.
- **"Western partners have betrayed Ukraine"**: it is suggested that Ukraine's fate has been decided between the US and Russia and Moldova should not support Kiev.
- **"EU puts Moldova in debt"**: €1.9 billion in EU aid is presented as a financial burden imposed on citizens. It is suggested that the government will steal from this aid.
- **"PAS government militarizes Moldova"**: the idea is being promoted that the modernization of the National Army is, in fact, a preparation for an eventual war against Russia.

These campaigns are aimed at undermining Moldova's pro-European course, destabilizing the political climate and eroding trust in state institutions. As a consequence, the poor communication of the authorities and pro-European parties is contributing to a loss of confidence in the country's European direction. In the context of the parliamentary elections to be held in 2025, the authorities, in cooperation with civil society, must step up their efforts to combat disinformation by actively informing the public and asking digital platforms to prevent electoral interference.

## Introduction

The Russian Federation continues to develop new hybrid technologies to derail this year's parliamentary elections. The tactics of sponsoring disinformation through advertisements on Facebook and YouTube have undergone significant changes following the presidential elections in the fall of 2024. The main financiers of disinformation remain the fugitive oligarchs Veaceslav Platon and Ilan Shor.

The first change observed after the conclusion of the presidential elections is a considerable decrease in the amounts of money spent on advertisements. We assume that these savings are intentional, with the financial resources likely to be used for a potential massive attack on the eve of the parliamentary elections.

Veaceslav Platon has reduced the number of sponsorships on his Facebook page, and on YouTube, he stopped promotions after the presidential elections. Still, he continues to support the content of Natalia Morari on YouTube and Facebook.

Ilan Shor has abandoned the use of anonymous pages to sponsor disinformation on Facebook. This action appears to be temporary and could resume closer to the parliamentary elections. Currently, Ilan Shor indirectly sponsors the advertisements of politicians Irina Vlah, Victoria Furtuna, and Vasile Tarlev, who were supported by oligarchs during the presidential elections.

The publication *"Ziarul de Garda"* proved in an investigation that [Victoria Furtuna](#) was openly supported by the criminal network Shor in the presidential elections. According to the sources of *"Ziarul de Garda"*, on the day of silence, the [Shor network](#) received instructions to vote for Vasile Tarlev or Irina Vlah, in case Victoria Furtuna was excluded from the presidential race.

The publication "Cu SENS" has shown in another investigation how the criminal network Shor organized meetings for [Vasile Tarlev](#) with paid sympathizers to attend events with this candidate.

All three candidates have established parties with which they intend to participate in the parliamentary elections this year:

- **Party "Future of Moldova"**, led by Vasile Tarlev. The party advocates for close relations with the Russian Federation and criticizes Moldova's European path. It also promotes the idea that "Moldova is losing its traditional values to the West".
- **Republican Party "Heart of Moldova"**, 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 Moldova's neutrality by occupying the Transnistrian region.
- **"Moldova Mare" Party**, led by Victoria Furtuna. The party claims to have a "European vocation", although Furtuna criticizes the European Union and has advocated against Moldova's accession to the EU.

In addition to the three politicians, Ilan Shor sponsors the page of the propaganda TV station "MD24", launched in Moscow [last year](#). The station provides a media platform for Kremlin agents in Moldova, including the three politicians mentioned above. All interviews published on the station's website and social networks are recorded online via videoconference. Last year, the Moldovan Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova [blocked](#) the website through which this TV station was broadcasting.

The two oligarchs are not the only ones sponsoring attacks against democracy and the pro-European path of the Republic of Moldova. Former Prime Minister Vlad Filat has become a useful tool for Moscow in discrediting the European Union in the Republic of Moldova, as well as, more recently, civil society and the independent press.

All the analyzed advertisements included a disclaimer stating that they were political ads. This allowed us to identify only a portion of the expenses published on META. Advertisements running without a disclaimer disappear from the META Ad Library, and during their airing, neither the amount paid nor the sponsorship period is disclosed.

For example, the "Simple Overkill" page, which promoted members of the criminal group Shor, ran advertisements without a disclaimer. Thus, the ads run by this page did not appear in the META Ad Library.



Fig. 3 - The page "Simple Overkill" sponsored a clip without disclaimer with the member of the criminal group Shor, Tudor Shoilita, who launched the falsehood that "the diaspora votes massively for PAS by mail and that nobody verifies this process". The ad can no longer be identified in the META Ad Library.

## Spending on META platform during January 31 - February 28, 2025

The fugitive oligarch Ilan Shor spent approximately 3,900 euros between January 31 and February 28 to place 164 advertisements on Facebook. The pages financed by him belong to politicians

[Vasile Tarlev](#), [Victoria Furtuna](#), as well as the TV station [MD24](#). Shor stopped the financing of anonymous pages that actively promoted him, as well as parties directly or indirectly affiliated with him. Compared to the period of August 1-30, 2024, when Shor spent the most money on advertisements (according to monitoring), the allocated budget has decreased by approximately 8.5 times.

### The evolution of the number of advertisements sponsored by Ilan Shor on Facebook

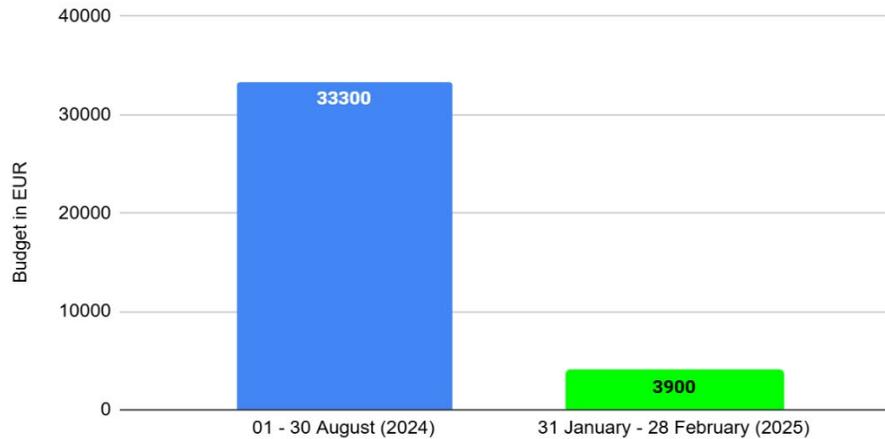


Fig.1 – The Evolution of the number of advertisements sponsored by Ilan Shor on Facebook from August 01 - August 30 (2024) compared to January 31 - February 28 (2025).

Although the budget allocated for sponsoring disinformation is smaller, the number of advertisements is increasing. Compared to the period of July 1-30, 2024, when the highest number of identified ads was recorded, the **current number is 60 higher**.

### The evolution of the number of advertisements sponsored by Shor's pages

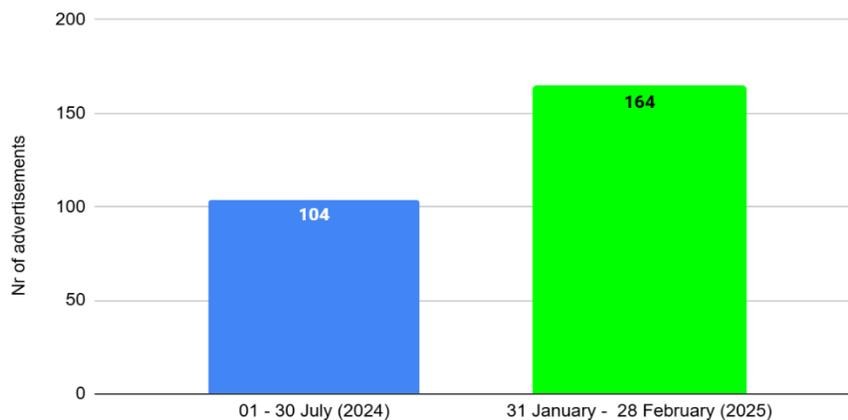
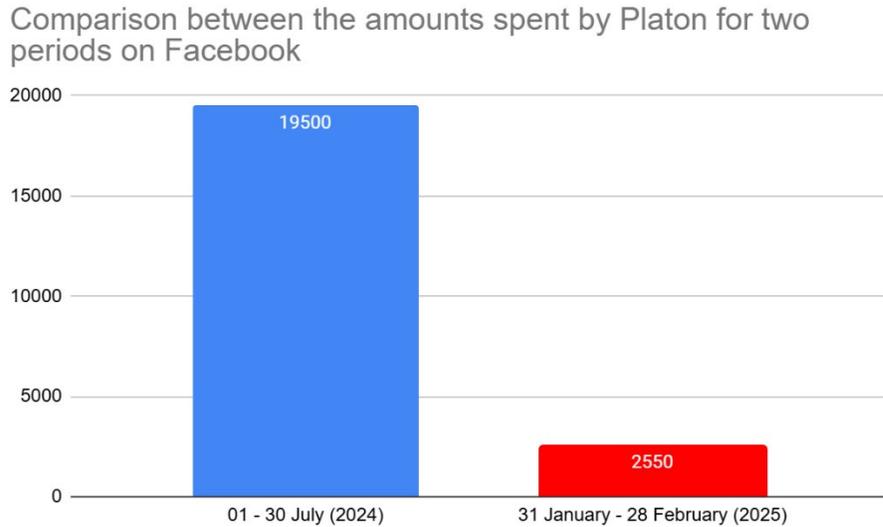


Fig. 2 - Evolution of the number of advertisements sponsored by the pages affiliated to the Shor group in July 01 - July 30 (2024) compared to January 31 - February 28 (2025).

In the case of Veaceslav Platon's sponsorships, the amounts allocated for advertisements have dropped by approximately 7.5 times compared to the period of July 1–30, when he spent more money on promotion. The main page investing the most in Facebook ads is affiliated with Natalia Morari, a former journalist with whom Platon has a child. Between January 31 and February 28 alone, Natalia Morari's page spent approximately **2,260 euros**.



*Fig.3 - The evolution of the amounts spent on advertisements sponsored by pages affiliated with Veaceslav Platon on Facebook from the period of July 1-30, 2024, compared to the period of January 31–February 28, 2025.*

The number of sponsored ads on Facebook is also decreasing, almost halving from July 1-30, 2024. Natalia Morari's Facebook page sponsored 41 ads, while Veaceslav Platon's page - only 6.

The evolution of the number of advertisements sponsored by Platon on Facebook.



Fig. 4 - The evolution of the number of ads sponsored by Veaceslav Platon's affiliated pages from July 01 to July 30 (2024) compared to January 31 to February 28 (2025).

Another major player promoting disinformation is the former Prime Minister Vlad Filat. He spent about €1,045 on 47 advertisements between January 31 and February 28. Comparing the spending of the three political actors, oligarch Ilan Shor continues to fund the most manipulative Facebook posts, followed by Veaceslav Platon.

Comparison of the expenses made by the three political actors

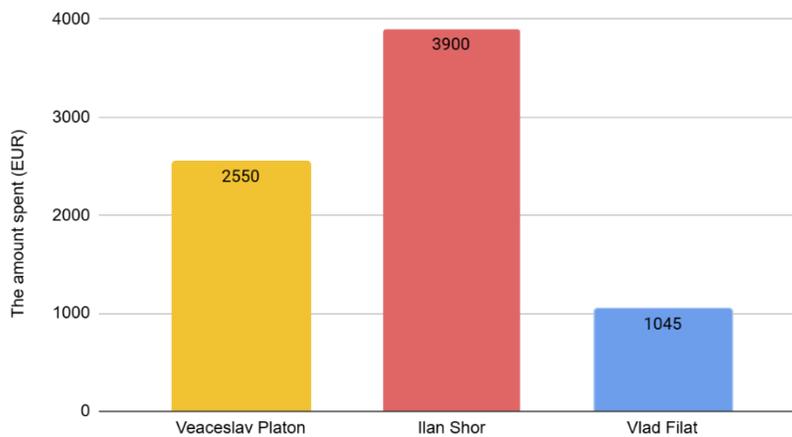


Fig. 5 - Comparison of expenses for sponsored Facebook ads of Veaceslav Platon, Ilan Shor and Vlad Filat.

In terms of number of sponsored advertisements, the leader remains the oligarch Ilan Shor. Even if we add up the ads sponsored by Veaceslav Platon and Vlad Filat, their total is lower than the number of ads sponsored by Shor.

Comparison of the number of advertisements sponsored by political actors

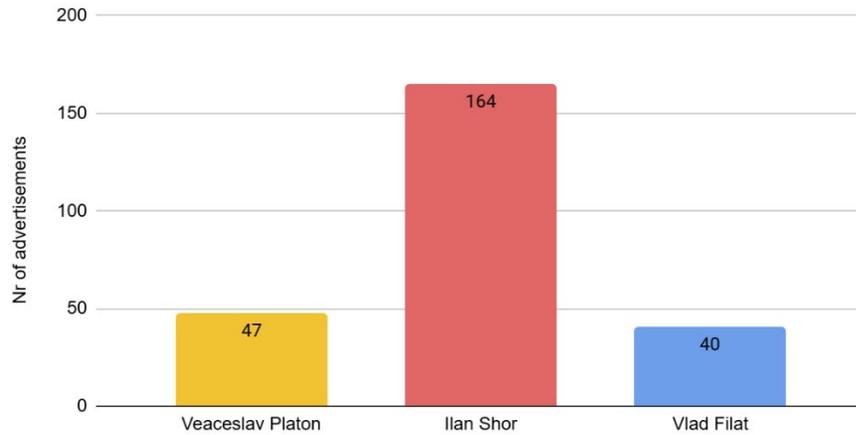


Fig. 6 - Comparison of the number of ads sponsored on Facebook by Veaceslav Platon, Ilan Shor and Vlad Filat.

## Promoting misinformation on YouTube

On YouTube, only Natalia Morari, Irina Vlah and Victoria Furtuna still promote videos. Fugitive Veaceslav Platon stopped sponsoring ads on YouTube after the presidential elections. Also, the number of ads promoted by Natalia Morari on YouTube is considerably lower than last year.

The evolution of the number of sponsored ads by Platon on YouTube.

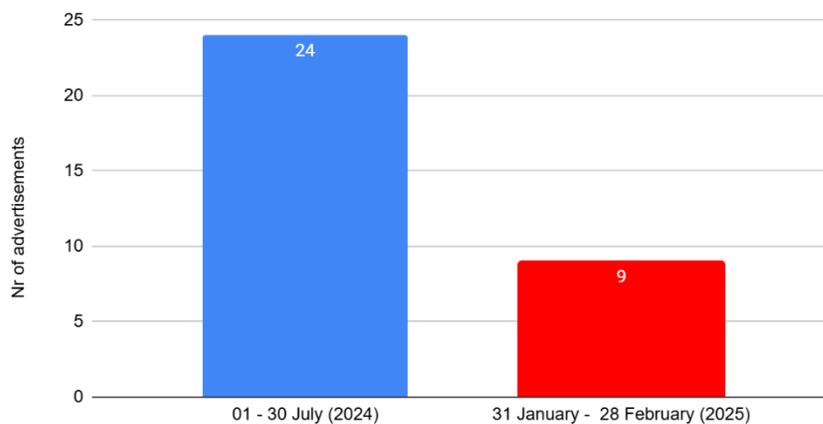


Fig. 6 - Evolution of the number of ads sponsored on YouTube by Veaceslav Platon's affiliated accounts from July 01 - July 30 (2024) compared to January 31 - February 28 (2025).

Irina Vlah sponsored 5 ads during the monitored period, while Victoria Furtuna sponsored only one. In the case of Irina Vlah, her ad account could be identified in Google Ads Transparency, whereas for Victoria Furtuna, it is missing, despite her having sponsored ads. This is due to the inefficiency of Google's transparency mechanism, which adds video ad sponsors to the ad library with a delay. Once they are added, previously promoted videos no longer appear in Google Ads Transparency.

Unfortunately, Google Ads Transparency does not provide information about the amounts spent on ads or their broadcast period. This is because Google has not activated the political ads category in the Republic of Moldova, which would offer data on budget, duration, and the number of views.

This situation is due to the incompetence of the Moldovan authorities, [who did not negotiate](#) with Google to activate this transparency mechanism when re-launching YouTube ads. Thus, videos with political content are erroneously categorized as "animals", "banking services" or other social themes.

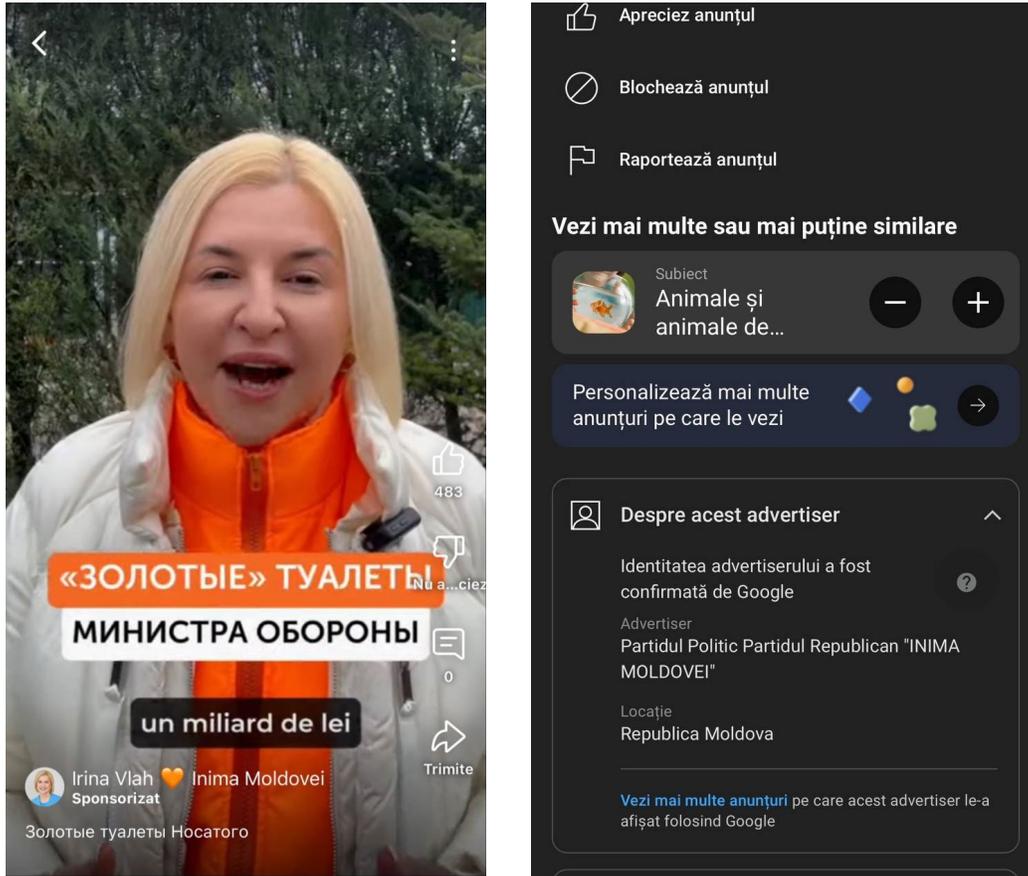


Fig. 7/8 - Video clip sponsored by [Irina Vlah](#), criticizing the decision of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova to allocate money for the repair of sanitary blocks under the management of the institution. The subject of this ad was selected by the sponsor as "animals and pets" and not a political one, as Google does not allow political ads to run in Moldova.

# New disinformation sponsorship tactic on the META platform

## Sponsorship on the "MD24" page

"MD24" applies a different strategy compared to the anonymous pages previously sponsored by Ilan Shor. While in the case of anonymous pages Shor paid large sums for a smaller number of ads that ran over a longer period, with the "MD24" page, he sponsors a larger number of ads with a smaller budget.

The duration of the ads ranges from a few hours to a maximum of two days. This tactic appears intentional, aimed at avoiding rapid detection by META's algorithms and delaying the potential blocking of the page.

Anonymous Page Campaign	MD24 Campaign
Status: Inactivă	Status: Inactivă
ID bibliotecă: 1152849455953343	ID bibliotecă: 1179161273581501
Perioadă: 17 iun. 2024 - 19 iun. 2024	Perioadă: 17 mar. 2025 - 19 mar. 2025 · Durată totală de afișare 20 h
Platforme: Facebook, Instagram	Platforme: Instagram
Categorii: [icon]	Categorii: [icon]
Mărimea estimată a audienței: >1 mil.	Mărimea estimată a audienței: 500 K - 1 mil.
Suma cheltuită (EUR): 300 € - 399 €	Suma cheltuită (EUR): <100 €
Afișări: 200 K - 250 K	Afișări: 1 K - 2 K
<p><b>Moldova pentru fiecare zi</b></p> <p>Sponsorizat · Plătită de Moldova pentru fiecare zi</p> <p>ID bibliotecă: 1152849455953343</p> <p>Confruntarea dintre blocul „Victorie” și PAS</p> <p>Potrivit echipei lui Ilan Ș., PAS i-a înlăturat pe ultimii deputați independenți din parlament, lăsând doar pe cei care susțin regimul. Deputaților blocului „Victorie” le este interzis să participe la ședințe, ceea ce, în opinia lor, încalcă drepturile și libertățile cetățenilor.</p>	<p><b>MD24</b></p> <p>Sponsorizat · Plătită de MD24</p> <p>#moldova #md24 #219</p>

Fig. 9/10 - Comparison between campaigns sponsored by an anonymous page and the "MD24" page. We observe that the campaign period and budget for the anonymous page campaign are much larger than the campaign on the "MD24" page.

Unlike the anonymous pages, the "MD24" page is not part of any Southeast Asian network. At the same time, in the descriptions of sponsored video clips, the "MD24" page uses only hashtags or short phrases. This sets it apart from anonymous pages, which promoted posts or video clips accompanied by long texts. As a result, the campaigns are configured to appear exclusively in Reels on Facebook and Instagram, and not in the usual feed of a user's personal page.

**Inactivă**  
 ID bibliotecă: 1871286476628795  
 12 iun. 2024 - 16 iun. 2024  
 Platforme   
 Categorii   
 Mărimea estimată a audienței: >1 mil.   
 Suma cheltuită (EUR): 800 € - 899 €   
 Afișări: 300 K - 350 K

**Moldova pentru fiecare zi**  
 Sponsorizat • Plătită de Moldova pentru fiecare zi  
 ID bibliotecă: 1871286476628795

Victoria va fi de partea „Victoriei”!  
 În acest videoclip sunt cele mai interesante episoade ale congresului blocului de la Moscova!

\*\*\*  
 Победа будет за «Победой»!  
 В этом видео самые яркие эпизоды съезда блока в Москве!

**Inactivă**  
 ID bibliotecă: 1126127799225007  
 28 feb. 2025 - 2 mar. 2025  
 Platforme   
 Categorii   
 Mărimea estimată a audienței: 500 K - 1 mil.   
 Suma cheltuită (EUR): <100 €   
 Afișări: 40 K - 45 K

**MD24**  
 Sponsorizat • Plătită de MD24  
 ID bibliotecă: 1126127799225007

#moldova #md24 #167

Fig. 11/12 - The anonymous page "Moldova for every day" promoted a long text post that appeared in Facebook and Instagram users' feed, and the page "MD24" promoted a video clip with hashtags, which appeared only in the reels segment on Instagram.

In some cases, the "MD24" page promotes two campaigns for the same video clip. Each campaign targets only one platform: either Facebook or Instagram. The budget for these campaigns is set at a maximum of 100 euros, but when combined, the amounts can exceed this threshold. This represents another method to trick META's algorithms, which more easily identify ads that allocate large sums for short-term airing.

<p><b>Inactivă</b>        ID bibliotecă: 599272363009207        27 feb. 2025 - 1 mar. 2025        Platforme         Categorii         Mărimea estimată a audienței: &gt;1 mil.         Suma cheltuită (EUR): &lt;100 €         Afișări: 15 K - 20 K </p> <p>Vezi detaliile reclamei</p> <p><b>MD24</b>        Sponsorizat • Plătită de MD24</p> <p>Люди бегут от режима</p>	<p><b>Inactivă</b>        ID bibliotecă: 2933407960142244        27 feb. 2025 - 1 mar. 2025        Platforme         Categorii         Mărimea estimată a audienței: &gt;1 mil.         Suma cheltuită (EUR): &lt;100 €         Afișări: 35 K - 40 K </p> <p>Vezi detaliile reclamei</p> <p><b>MD24</b>        Sponsorizat • Plătită de MD24</p> <p>Люди бегут от режима</p>
---	--

Fig. 13 - Video sponsored by the "MD24" page through two campaigns for the Facebook platform. Both campaigns ran for the same period of time, and with a budget of less than 100 euro.

### Sponsorships on the pages of politicians Victoria Furtuna and Vasile Tarlev

The pages of politicians Victoria Furtuna and Vasile Tarlev sponsor campaigns simultaneously on Facebook and Instagram, unlike "MD24", which promotes each campaign on a single platform, either Facebook or Instagram.

Campaign Sponsor	Platform	Period	Budget (EUR)	Reach (Views)	Estimated Audience
Vasile Tarlev	Facebook & Instagram	28 dec. 2024 - 30 dec. 2024	<100 €	8 K - 9 K	>1 mil.
MD24	Facebook	28 feb. 2025 - 2 mar. 2025	<100 €	8 K - 9 K	>1 mil.

Fig. 14/15 - Comparison between the campaigns sponsored by Vasile Tarlev's page and the "MD24" page. Vasile Tarlev sponsored one campaign on Instagram and Facebook platforms, while "MD24" sponsored two campaigns only on Instagram.

If we compare the budgets allocated by the Victoria Furtuna and Vasile Tarlev pages, they are less than 100 euros, unlike the anonymous pages which allocated several hundred euros for a single campaign. Also, as with the anonymous pages, campaigns are set to run on both Facebook and Instagram.

Campaign Sponsor	Platform	Period	Budget (EUR)	Reach (Views)	Estimated Audience
Victoria Furtună	Facebook & Instagram	3 feb. 2025 - 6 feb. 2025	<100 €	45 K - 50 K	>1 mil.
Moldova Live	Facebook & Instagram	3 aug. 2024 - 6 aug. 2024	400 € - 499 €	350 K - 400 K	>1 mil.

Fig. 16/17 - Comparison between the budgets allocated by Victoria Furtuna's page and the anonymous page "Moldova Live". For a period of three days, the "Moldova Live" page allocated around €500 for advertising, while Victoria Furtuna allocated less than €100 for the same period of time. Both pages set a single campaign for Facebook and Instagram platforms.

## Sponsorship on Vlad Filat's page

The advertising sponsorship strategy on Vlad Filat's page is similar to the one used on former prosecutor Victoria Furtuna's page. As in her case, Filat sponsors a single campaign running on Facebook and Instagram, with a budget of less than €100 and for a short period of time. In some cases, Filat's and Furtuna's campaigns are synchronized in duration and deal with the same topic.

Vlad Filat	Victoria Furtună
<p><b>Inactivă</b></p> <p>ID bibliotecă: 598579962879008</p> <p>3 feb. 2025 - 6 feb. 2025</p> <p>Platforme </p> <p>Categorii </p> <p>Mărimea estimată a audienței: &gt;1 mil. </p> <p>Suma cheltuită (EUR): &lt;100 € </p> <p>Afișări: 50 K - 60 K </p> <p><a href="#">Vezi detaliile reclamei</a></p>	<p><b>Inactivă</b></p> <p>ID bibliotecă: 632703425798786</p> <p>3 feb. 2025 - 6 feb. 2025</p> <p>Platforme  </p> <p>Categorii </p> <p>Mărimea estimată a audienței: &gt;1 mil. </p> <p>Suma cheltuită (EUR): &lt;100 € </p> <p>Afișări: 20 K - 25 K </p> <p><a href="#">Vezi detaliile reclamei</a></p>
<p><b>Vlad Filat</b> Sponsorizat • Plătită de Vlad Filat</p> <p>E dimineată, din nou, în Moldova! Стеняюсь спросить: где деньги и кто, на самом деле, хожи și bandiții? Как-то подозрительно замолчали оаменii onești. Где прокурорii сиражоși и judecătorii cinstiți, которые бы посадили всю эту гнилую банду за разворывание денег американских налогоплательщиков?...</p>	<p><b>Victoria Furtună</b> Sponsorizat • Plătită de Victoria Furtună</p> <p>Întrebare către prezenta guvernare, totuși cine reprezintă interesele grupărilor criminale?</p> <p>Se pare ca Maia Sandu și partidul PAS ar trebui să ofere careva răspunsuri societății! Este o lovitură sub centură pentru membrii grupului criminal organizat aflați la guvernare! ...</p>

Fig. 16/17 - Comparison between the campaigns set up on Vlad Filat's and Victoria Furtuna's pages. Both campaigns manipulate on the subject of USAID funding, and accuse the government of being a criminal group. We also note that these campaigns have been set to run in synchronization for the period February 3-6 and with a budget of less than 100 euros.

The number of views for Vlad Filat's ads is higher than in the case of Victoria Furtuna because he has more followers on his Facebook page. Thus, META algorithms display Filat's sponsored ads to a wider audience.

## Main narratives promoted between January 31 and February 28

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

- **Only PAS and NGOs have benefited from USAID money** - Former Prime Minister [Vlad Filat](#) has accused NGOs IPRE, CRJM and WatchDog.MD "*of taking most of the money from USAID*" since PAS has been in government. [Victoria Furtuna](#) accused the government of being a criminal group financed by USAID. She used in her rhetoric the statements of billionaire Elon Musk, who claimed that "*USAID is a criminal institution*". [Natalia Morari](#) accused the independent media and NGOs of "*taking money from USAID to launder the image of the government*".
- **The energy crisis was artificially created by PAS** – [Vasile Tarlev](#) accused the government of artificially creating the energy crisis in Moldova, including in the Transnistrian region. Former Prime Minister [Vlad Filat](#) also manipulated the Transnistrian energy crisis. According to Mr. Filat, "*the government did nothing to prevent the energy crisis in the region*", even though it knew that Ukraine would stop gas to Transnistria. At the same time, Filat accused the government of "*hindering Russia in the process of procuring gas for the Transnistrian region through a Moldovan company*". The "MD24" page accused the government of "*not preparing for the energy crisis and lying to the population that the price of gas and electricity will not increase*". The video does not mention that Russia artificially created the energy crisis.
- **The EU is no longer a democracy** - [Victoria Furtuna](#) has accused "*NATO and the EU of cancelling the elections in Romania*" because a candidate was allegedly supported by Russia and Iran. At the same time, Furtuna criticized "*NATO for sponsoring the independent press in Moldova, thus influencing the country's domestic politics*". The fugitive, [Veaceslav Platon](#), promoted a clip from a speech by US Vice President J.D. Vance, in which he criticized the authorities in Bucharest for cancelling the presidential elections and the European partners for "*having a weak democracy*". Platon ironized on the basis of this speech and said that Maia Sandu would have suffered a heart attack from the statements of the American vice-president.
- **Western partners have betrayed Ukraine** - [Natalia Morari](#) argues that Western partners have betrayed Ukraine and the current government needs to be careful what decisions it takes in relation to Russia. In the same video clip promoted by Morari, Gheorghe Gonta argues that politicians in Kiev from day one should have talked to Putin, because Putin would not have had time to "*play*" with them. In a clip by the MD24 website, the idea promoted was that "*Moldova should not be a harem to big powers but should know its place*".

- **EU puts Moldova in debt** - According to [Victoria Furtuna](#), the €1.9 billion in EU aid will put Moldova in debt. She claims that "*Moldova will have to sell its land, neutrality and sovereignty in order to repay the loan*". Furtuna says the aid "*will be stolen entirely by the current government and Moldovans will not see any benefit from this EU support*".
- **PAS government militarizes Moldova** - [Irina Vlah](#) claims that the current government is arming Moldova and preparing it for war. According to the former governor of Gagauzia, the current government "*spends billions of lei on military objectives and accepts gifts from NATO*". The "MD24" website has promoted a clip in which the current government is accused of being a [co-interested in the continuation of](#) the war in Ukraine, as a truce would lead to PAS losing power.

## Findings

**Against the backdrop of this year's parliamentary elections, the Kremlin is stepping up its rhetoric to divide Moldovan society.** Through local actors, Russia is trying to discredit civil society and the independent media, which are perceived as obstacles to the recapture of institutions by pro-Russian forces. This information offensive is coupled with a recalibration of online sponsorship mechanisms and the testing of a parallel electoral propaganda ecosystem.

### 1. Changing sponsorship tactics

**Data collected between January 31 and February 28 confirms a clear change of tactics:** fragmented budgets, an increase in the volume of ads, and deliberate avoidance of digital platforms' transparency mechanisms. Fugitive oligarchs have drastically reduced funding for anonymous pages and shifted to directly supporting affiliated politicians, including through their own media channels, such as MD24.

### 2. Budget fragmentation and micro-targeting

Ilan Shor sponsored 164 ads with approximately 3,900 euros, averaging just 24 euros per ad. The strategy: many ads, short duration, small sums, and precise targeting. In parallel, Platon's network has been consolidated through Natalia Morari's page, with 41 ads and a budget exceeding **2,200 euros**. These campaigns aim to avoid reporting in public election spending registers.

### 3. Exploiting the regulatory vacuum

**The ads are distributed through semi-official pages, without being marked as political.** The *Simple Overkill* page ran electoral content without a disclaimer, and Google does not classify the spots of Irina Vlah, Natalia Morari, or Victoria Furtuna as political. The lack of a coherent regulatory framework creates a tactical advantage for pro-Russian actors.

#### **4. Synchronizing narratives and reusing themes**

**USAID grants, indebtedness to the EU, militarization through NATO** - these are recycled themes adapted to the electoral context in new formats. The synchronization between Filat's and Furtuna's pages on the USAID topic is deliberate. Narratives are amplified through affiliated media networks and delivered in video formats on Facebook, YouTube, and Reels.

#### **5. Parallel political infrastructure**

The formation of parties like "Future of Moldova", "Great Moldova", and "Heart of Moldova" aims to simulate pluralism and fragment the pro-European vote. Propaganda is masked as civic or social content, such as "criticism of the Ministry of Defense's spending". The goal is to create confusion and raise mobilization costs for pro-reform parties.

## **Recommendations**

These findings are supported by concrete data: ad volumes, budget structures, distribution methods, and message synchronization. They point to the existence of an adaptive and coordinated disinformation system that combines political propaganda, technological opacity, and weaknesses in the regulatory framework.

Without firm intervention and advanced technical monitoring, the Republic of Moldova risks losing control over its informational arena during the electoral campaign. To limit the effects of these disinformation tactics and protect the integrity of the electoral process, we propose the following measures:

#### **Regulating the legal framework to streamline digital transparency**

- The State Chancellery to organize a working group with META and Google for early notifications and to request expanded access to the ad libraries.
- Develop a national legal framework obliging digital platforms to publish data on sponsorship of political content, including outside official election campaigns.
- Introducing a separate public register of sponsored advertising, containing details of the amounts spent, the audiences targeted and the source of funding.

#### **2. Strengthening institutional capacity**

- Urgent training of CEC, SIS and NAC staff on the monitoring of sponsored advertisements, using freely available tools.
- Establish an operational communication line between CEC, SIS and NAC to validate suspicious campaigns within 24 hours and draft joint public alerts.
- Equip CEC, SIS and NAC with digital tools for real-time monitoring of sponsored content.
- The creation of an inter-agency rapid response unit able to document and sanction attempts of electoral interference through social networks.

### **3. Support for civil society**

- Additional funding for online disinformation monitoring activities, especially in the context of the 2025 parliamentary elections.
- Rapid implementation of a Telegram civic reporting channel, coordinated by a coalition of NGOs, with the support of the authorities to prevent the escalation of serious cases.
- Create an official civic alert mechanism where citizens can report suspicious sponsored content.

### **4. Interventions in education and media**

- Start an information campaign with short videos (under 60 seconds) explaining how to recognize a fake political ad.
- Facilitating collaboration between local newsrooms and OSINT experts for rapid investigations into the sources of election-related sponsored content.
- Support local investigative journalism that documents the funding networks of pro-Russian actors.