



# **REPORT ON THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

Moldovan democracy threatened  
by bank fraud, corruption and distrust  
in the state institutions

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Diana ENACHI*



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The report is a product of the initiative "Supporting democracy, independence and transparency of key public institutions in Moldova". The initiative is implemented by the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul", in partnership with the Institute for Economic and Social Reforms in Slovakia (INEKO) and is financially supported by the Official Development Assistance Program of the Slovak Republic (SlovakAid). The initiative aims to inform the public about the development of democracy and the independence of key state institutions, as well as to improve the transparency and financial stability of local public authorities and state-owned enterprises in the Republic of Moldova.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of INEKO and SlovakAid.



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Institute for Economic and Social Reforms



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# Table of abbreviations

<b>ACUM</b>	– Electoral Bloc “ACUM Platforma DA si PAS”
<b>ANRE</b>	– National Agency for Energy Regulation
<b>NIA</b>	– National Integrity Authority
<b>BeCDM</b>	– Electoral Bloc “Democratic Convention of Moldova”
<b>BePSMUE</b>	– Electoral Bloc “Socialist Party and Movement Unitate-Единство”
<b>BeAFPCD</b>	– Electoral Bloc “Alliance of the Christian Democratic Popular Front”
<b>BePMDP</b>	– Electoral Bloc “For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova”
<b>NAC</b>	– National Anti-corruption Centre
<b>CEC</b>	– Central Electoral Commission
<b>ECtHR</b>	– European Court of Human Rights
<b>PCRM</b>	– Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova
<b>PSRM</b>	– Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova
<b>PLDM</b>	– Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova
<b>PDAM</b>	– Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova
<b>PPCD</b>	– Christian Democratic People’s Party
<b>PDM</b>	– Democratic Party of Moldova
<b>PL</b>	– Liberal Party
<b>EU</b>	– European Union

# Summary

The state of Moldovan democracy has been assessed by the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) “Viitorul” with the assistance provided by the Institute for Economic and Social Reforms (INEKO) under the initiative “Supporting democracy, independence and transparency of key public institutions in Moldova”. This initiative is implemented by IDIS “Viitorul” in partnership with INEKO with the financial support provided by the Programme for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic (SlovakAid). The initiative is aiming to raise public awareness about democracy developments and independence of key public institutions, as well as to improve transparency and financial sustainability of Moldovan local public authorities and public undertakings.

The Report on the state of democracy pursues the goal to assess the quality of Moldovan democracy in relation to political participation, independence of public institutions, civil liberties, scope of corruption, etc. The rule of law and the civil society are unthinkable without democracy, this being an inherent condition for their creation, enhancement and practical expression. The rule of law is a *sine qua non* for democratic governance, while an extremely weak rule of law leads profoundly to high levels of corruption.

The Republic of Moldova is currently seen as a country at the border of fragile and non-consolidated democracy. Expressing some of democracy attributions, it is stable in the short-term, but it is far away from the democratic ideal. Hence, our country is positioned amongst the states with hybrid governance, getting closer and closer to an authoritarian regime, where the Government political culture and functionality are underdeveloped. In economic terms, it paralyses investments, opportunities and competition. In political terms, the justice sector institutions are often seen as toolkits for their own interests. At the same time, the Moldovan Government efficiency is low, displaying an omnipresent and chronic issue. A continuous challenge for the Moldovan democratic governance is the lack of public accountability. To operate efficiently the Government shall meet citizens’ needs and become accountable for its actions.

After the declaration of independence, the first Parliamentary elections were conducted in the Republic of Moldova on 27 February 1994. Since then and up until now, nine Parliamentary elections have been conducted in our country: namely, six ordinary and three anticipated elections. Throughout the parliamentarism, ten political parties, eight electoral blocs, three independent candidates and other 20 political parties within electoral blocs acceded to the Moldovan Parliament. Over the period subject to review, the left-wing segment was characterised by a strong political party in place, while the right-wing segment was characterised by excessive fragmentation. Out of those eight electoral blocs, which acceded to Parliament, only one was a left-wing bloc. Amongst all blocs, only the bloc ACUM ruled for a five-month period, the remaining blocs being in opposition. Over those 26 years since the first Parliamentary elections were held, the Republic of Moldova was predominantly ruled by left-wing political parties.

According to the Report on the state of democracy, citizens (focus-group participants) perceive democracy differently, having most often associated it with the freedom of expression, a better

quality of life, as well as with chaos/disorganisation. The same applies to the assessment of the quality of democracy. While some people appraise the quality of Moldovan democracy at a middle level (scoring five out of ten), other people are inclined to rate it lower (scoring 1-4 out of ten). Some participants appraise the current state of democracy in our country with zero points or even negatively, having brought such arguments as: selective justice, mass migration of population and low standards of living.

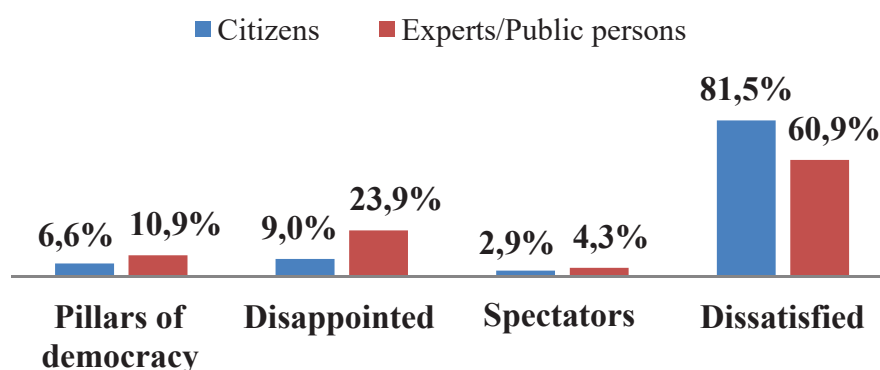
The majority of respondents consider that elections in the Republic of Moldova are free. In terms of truthfulness of elections held, the respondents' opinions are split. Some of them consider that the elections are fair, having argued that they worked for local electoral commissions and there are national and international observers in place who monitor the electoral process. Others, on the contrary, mention that the elections are not fair as different manipulation methods (media) are used, voters are corrupted (by giving them electoral gifts), blackmail/pressure is exercised (on the side of employers, the ruling political parties).

**Over the last ten years one can notice citizens' total disappointment with the level of democracy in the country.** The number of those who are considered to be the pillars of democracy declined dramatically from the average of 20-30% in 2005-2009 to less than 10% over the last decade. The survey outcomes show also direct correlation between the number of people who consider that the country is governed democratically (the elections are free and fair, while the country is governed as per the will of the people – the pillars of democracy) and the degree of citizens' trust in public authorities (Government and Parliament). Hence, the number of pillars of democracy increases when the Government and the Parliament enjoy the highest level of public confidence. And, vice versa, during the times of crises, as it was during the bank fraud, the level of public trust in state authorities reached the historical minimum level. People showed total disappointment in authorities, the confidence rate dropping to 4%.

When analysing the matrix of political stability we determine that the number of citizens who consider that the elections are free and fair, while the country is governed as per the will of the people, equals to only 6.6%, which is one of the lowest levels over the last 15 years. The 2014 bank fraud caused even a lower number. In sociology, these people are considered to be the pillars of democracy in a society. At the same time, there is an extremely large number of dissatisfied people who consider that the elections are neither free nor fair, while the country is not governed by the will of the people. The share of dissatisfied people reached maximum rates, amounting to 81.5%, which means poor legitimacy of governance. Therefore, the Index of political stability equals to -65.9.

When analysing the experts/public persons survey outcomes, the Matrix of political stability shows a more positive situation. Hence, the number of those who consider that the elections are free and fair, while the country is governed as per the will of the people, reaches 10.9% in comparison with 6.6% in the case of citizens. Similarly, the share of dissatisfied people, who consider that the elections are neither free nor fair, while the country is not governed as per the will of the people is also pretty high amongst experts (60.9%), but smaller in comparison with the matrix of political stability (citizens). In this case, the Index of political stability equals to -26.1, which is three times smaller in comparison with the survey of citizens.

## Pillars of democracy: citizens versus experts



*Figure 1. The Matrix of political stability (citizens versus experts/public persons)*

Source: National survey of citizens and experts/public persons

**Most Moldovan citizens (67.6%) believe that democracy in our country is determined by the quality of life.** People make direct relationship between the standards of living and the level of democracy in the country. The level of dissatisfaction of citizens with regard to democratic institutions is determined also by the low quality of life. **Concurrently, 43.1% of citizens think that the state of democracy is poor**, while 28.7% of citizens have a more or less positive impression in this regard.

Under the survey of diaspora, we identified the factors affecting the most the quality of Moldovan democracy, i.e. protecting human rights (+1.11 points); involving citizens in public affairs (+1.00 points); quality of NGOs (+0.92 points); and freedom of the media (+0.87 points).

To the question how democracy in the Republic of Moldova is seen in comparison with the neighbouring countries the outcomes show visible divergences in appraising the state of democracy by experts, diaspora and citizens. The Russian Federation is the point of discord. While the experts appraise the state of Russian democracy as extremely poor (-2.47 points), the citizens consider that Russia is doing far better than Moldova in terms of democracy (+0.22 points).

However, there are two clear consensuses amongst all categories of respondents, i.e. that Romania is the only country within the region that is positively appraised in terms of democracy by all groups of respondents. Hence, the citizens gave a score of +0.77 points, the experts were slightly reserved, giving +0.66 points, while the diaspora gave the lowest score (+0.28 points). Another consensus is the state of Moldovan democracy, which is considered to be poor by all three categories of respondents. The citizens have the most reserved opinion regarding the state of Moldovan democracy (-0.54 points). Both diaspora and experts believe that democracy in Moldova is poor, preceded only by Russia. In this area, diaspora is even more categorical (-1.66 points) than the experts (-1.15 points).



# Democracy overall background

The Republic of Moldova is a state with less and less democracy, being listed amongst the countries with a hybrid governance regime and reaching a new negative record under the **2019 Democracy Index**<sup>1</sup> carried out by The Economist. The study compares 60 indicators assigned to five large categories, i.e. the electoral process and political pluralism, Government functionality, political participation, democratic political culture and civil liberties. The rating of the Republic of Moldova reached 5.75 in 2019, which is the lowest level in its history, as the rating was 5.85 in the previous year.

The Republic of Moldova belongs to the group of countries with a hybrid governance regime, getting closer and closer to the features of an authoritarian regime. Hence, our country scored the worst in terms of political culture (4.38) and Government functionality (4.64).

According to the Freedom House Report titled “**Nations in Transit 2020**”<sup>2</sup>, the **Republic of Moldova scored 3.11 in terms of democracy**, which is by 0.7 more relative to the previous year, but still it scored less in comparison with the neighbouring countries, i.e. Ukraine (3.39) and Romania (4.43). Our country recorded some progress in terms of democratic governance and fighting corruption. Concurrently, Moldova scored the highest for the electoral process (4.0) and the civil society (4.75). The other categories such as independence of the press, justice sector, local or national democratic governance, as well as fighting corruption scored almost 3.00, which is barely half of the level on the scale of democratic progress. The “Nations in Transit 2020” assessed the state of democratic governance in 29 European and Eurasian countries during January – December 2019. The countries were subject to assessment on a scale varying from one to seven, where one was the lowest progress achieved in the area of democracy, and seven, respectively, was the highest progress. Over the last 25 years since the “Nations in Transit 2020” has prepared this report, the number of democracies is the smallest. Hence, out of 29 countries subject to assessment, 10 were considered as democracies, 10 – as hybrid regimes and nine – as authoritarian regimes. Over the last decade, the number of hybrid regimes tripled, while the number of democracies declined by one-third.

Nowadays, the Republic of Moldova is facing “crisis” of democracy, as shows the report prepared by the Cambridge University **Centre for the Future of Democracy**<sup>3</sup>. The Report used a unique data set of more than four million people. It combines over 25 international surveys covering 154 countries and the time range from 1995 through 2020, some of the information dating back to before 1973.

At the regional level, the outcomes of the **2017 Eastern Partnership Index**<sup>4</sup> show that the Republic of Moldova, jointly with Georgia and Armenia, recorded a **decline relative to the Democracy Index**. Concurrently, Ukraine and Belarus showed some progress to this end, and Azerbaijan failed to record any improvements at all. The Index presents the progresses achieved by the Eastern Partnership

1 [Democracy Index 2019](#)

2 [Nation in Transit 2020. Moldova](#)

3 [Global dissatisfaction with democracy at a record high](#)

4 [Eastern Partnership Index 2017](#)

countries towards sustainable democratic development and European integration. According to the Index, even if there was some progress achieved in fighting corruption, the Republic of Moldova is facing continuous slippages in terms of human rights, freedom of the press, independence of judiciary and sustainable development policy. As a result, our country no longer holds the leading position in terms of democratic development amongst those six countries of the Eastern Partnership. In terms of “approximation”, i.e. the extent to which the country implemented the EU key rules and international standards, the Republic of Moldova ranks the third, after Ukraine and Armenia, which ranked the first and the second. As for “relationships”, which covers the relations among the civil society, entrepreneurs and Government, the Republic of Moldova ranks the second, being excelled by Georgia. According to the 2015 – 2016 Index, the Republic of Moldova held the leading position for both indicators.

In terms of corruption, our country ranks the 120<sup>th</sup> among 180 countries in the 2019 “**Corruption Perceptions Index**”<sup>5</sup> (CPI) launched by Transparency International. With a score of 32 points, **the Republic of Moldova descended three positions in 2019** in comparison with 2018, when it ranked the 117<sup>th</sup>. The Corruption Perception Index is assessed on a scale from 0 to 100, where “0” means total corruption, while “100” means corruption free. In 2019, the Republic of Moldova ranked the 120<sup>th</sup> as compared to Georgia, which ranked the 44<sup>th</sup>, Romania – the 70<sup>th</sup>, Armenia – the 77<sup>th</sup>, Ukraine – the 126<sup>th</sup>, Russia – the 137<sup>th</sup>, Uzbekistan – 153<sup>rd</sup> and Turkmenistan – the 165<sup>th</sup>. The experts of IT-Moldova believe that in order to support the democratic rule of law in the Republic of Moldova, the EU Members States and those of the Eastern Partnership must develop and pass laws similar to Magnitsky Act, by applying movement restrictions and freezing the assets of grand-corruption.

Pursuant to **the 2019 Public Opinion Barometer**<sup>6</sup>, 65.9% of respondents consider that in our country the situation is evolving in the wrong direction. At the same time, 34.8% of participants in the national representative sociological survey assert they are not too satisfied or are dissatisfied by the way in which they live, while 36.4% have a neutral position, being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Moreover, the church enjoys both the highest and the lowest confidence, being followed by City Halls, President’s Office, Army and Media. Political parties, Parliament and Government, as well as Trade Unions, Justice, Prosecution, NAC, CEC are trusted the least.

The interest in politics is not marked very well. Out of the Moldovan power bodies, citizens trust the most the Border Police – more than 50% of respondents, followed by the General Police Inspectorate – circa 45%, the National Patrolling Inspectorate – 40%, and the Prosecution – circa 35%. Concurrently, the National Patrolling Inspectorate is the least trusted by citizens (more than 60%). In the opinion of citizens, the Moldovan authorities abuse the power they are entrusted with through the law enforcement agents to suppress the opposition. Hence, 21.4% of them think that suppressing the opposition is a continuous practice, while 56.7% of them contend it happens on a certain regular basis.

Likewise, the Public Opinion Barometer certifies that 17% of citizens consider that the Republic of Moldova is governed as per the will of the people, 28.9% think that the elections are free and fair, and 16.6% believe that the political situation is stable and very stable, while 40.7% of respondents think the current political situation is not stable at all.

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5 Corruption Perceptions Index 2019

6 2019 Public Opinion Barometer

# Political parties in Moldova: unity on the left-wing, diversity on the right-wing

Following independence, the first parliamentary elections took place in the Republic of Moldova on 27 February 1994. Since then and to date, nine parliamentary elections were conducted in our country: six ordinary and three anticipated elections. Each time, anticipated elections were caused by the Parliament failure to elect the President. The first anticipated elections were held on 25 February 2001, the second ones – on 29 July 2009, and the third ones – on 28 November 2010, which are the most recent anticipated elections.

Throughout the parliamentarism, ten political parties, eight electoral blocs, three independent candidates and other 20 political parties within electoral blocs acceded to the Moldovan Parliament. Creating electoral blocs was an often practice during the first parliamentary elections as they acceded to Parliament during the first four elections held before 2005. After 2005, four parliamentary elections were conducted when none of the blocs managed to overcome the electoral threshold, and it seemed that the era of electoral blocs was left in the history. However, in 2019, after a 15-year break, there was a new parliamentary bloc that successfully acceded to Parliament.

Overall, all parliamentary blocs have had a short life, existing just during a single parliamentary cadence. Hence, none of the blocs managed to last longer than a parliamentary cycle. Out of those eight blocs that acceded to Parliament, seven were created by the right-wing formations and only one (1994) was created by the left-wing formations. The left-wing segment was characterised by a strong political party in place, while the right-wing segment was characterised by an excessive fragmentation.

The Party of Communists (PCRM) is the formation that has been represented most often in Parliament in seven out of nine legislatures, save the year of 1994 when it was banned by law and, respectively, did not participate in elections. While in 2019, after 22 years of being in Parliament (and the ruling party for eight years), PCRM lost the parliamentary elections and did not accede to Parliament. As for the number of seats held in one legislature the record belongs to PCRM. Hence, over 2001-2005, PCRM had 71 seats in Parliament out of 101. Other three records belong also to PCRM, followed by the Democratic Agrarian Party which, in the 1994-1998 legislature, had 56 seats, subsequently having vanished from the Moldovan political stage. PSRM holds the 8<sup>th</sup> position in the 2019 legislature with 35 seats.

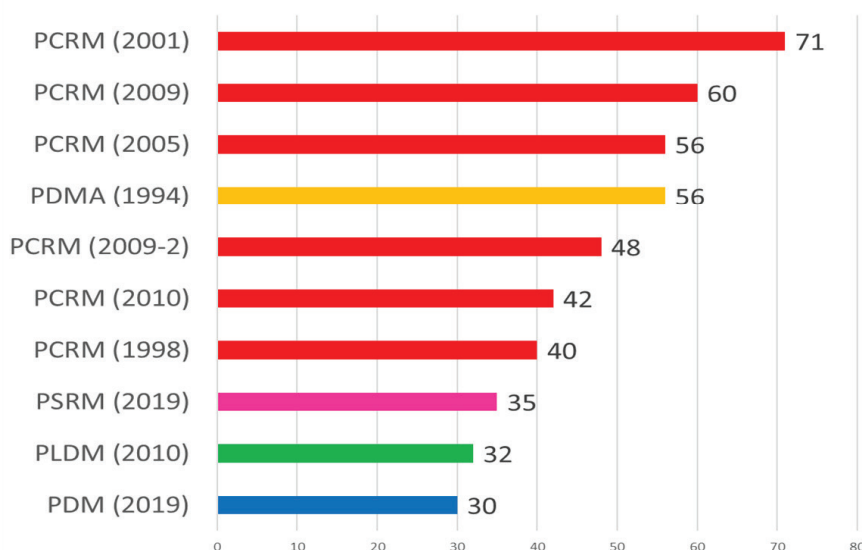
Out of the top eight formations having the largest parliamentary representation, six positions belong to PCRM, two – to PDAM and PSRM (left-wing formations), one – to PDM (centre-left formation with fluctuations towards centre-right), and only one position belongs to a right-wing formation (PLDM). Excessive fragmentation and split of the right-wing politics resulted in the absence of a strong and durable right-wing formation. Out of the right-wing political parties that acceded to Parliament, the Liberal Party (PL), the Christian Democratic People's Party (PPCD) and the Liberal Democratic Party

of Moldova (PLDM) have been the longest lived ones. The latter was also the largest right-wing political party in the history of Moldova, and the only right-wing party to rule for the longest timeframe.

The Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), which is a centre-left formation, acceded to Parliament six times: four times as a separate formation and twice within parliamentary blocs. Over the period it was represented in Parliament as a separate formation, PDM was the governing party, being in the opposition when it was part of electoral blocs. The Electoral Bloc “Democratic Moldova” was the largest electoral bloc, which gained 34 parliamentary seats in 2005. The second largest Electoral Bloc was the “Socialist Party and Movement Unitate-Единство” (BePSMUE) with 28 seats in 1994, being the only left-wing bloc out of eight. The third place is held by two blocs, 26 seats each, namely the 1998 Electoral Bloc “Democratic Convention of Moldova” (BeCDM) and the 2019 Electoral Bloc “ACUM Platforma DA si PAS”.

Out of those eight electoral blocs that acceded to Parliament, only one was left-wing. Amongst all blocs, only ACUM ruled for a five-month period, the remaining blocs were in opposition. Over those 26 years after the first parliamentary elections, the Republic of Moldova has been governed mostly by the left-wing political parties. The representation of political parties in Parliament is displayed in the Figure below.

### Top ten political formations with the largest number of Members of Parliament



*Figure 2. Top ten political formations with the largest number of Members of Parliament*

Source: Analysis developed by the authors based on the CEC data

# Research methodology

In order to develop this report we have made use of a methodology devised jointly with the Institute for Economic and Social Reforms of Slovakia (INEKO). The Methodology covered several research methods and toolkits applied during **January – April 2020**:

Research method	The number of participants/respondents
National representative public opinion survey <sup>7</sup>	1 384 people
Three citizens' focus-groups conducted in three regions of the country (Centre, North and South) <sup>8</sup>	28 people
Survey of diaspora	71 people
Survey of experts/public persons	47 people
One business community focus-group <sup>9</sup>	40 people

## The ratings used for appraisal

Rating	Meaning
(-3) – (-2)	Very bad/Absolutely not at all
(-2) – (-1)	Bad/Not as all
(-1) – (0)	Rather bad/Rather no
(0) – (+1)	Rather good/Rather yes
(+1) – (+2)	Good, yes
(+2) – (+3)	Excellent /To a great extent

<sup>7</sup> See Annex 1. Breakdown of the national survey sample of citizens.

<sup>8</sup> See Annex 2. Breakdown of citizens' focus-groups.

<sup>9</sup> The discussions were facilitated by the Experts of IDIS "Viitorul" during an event conducted jointly with the "Pro Vest" Institute.

# Core findings on the state of democracy in the Republic of Moldova

## Overall perceptions on democracy

**The focus-group participants perceive democracy differently.** However, as per the way democracy is associated, we have overall three groups of respondents:

- ✓ *freedom of expression* – preponderantly people with higher education, more active people;
- ✓ *a better standard of living/quality of life* – the largest number of respondents;
- ✓ *chaos, disorganisation, destruction* – associated mainly with the situation in the country after the 1990<sup>th</sup>, a period when according to the opinion of respondents, the country was ruled by democratic political parties.

On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all democratic, while 10 is very democratic, the ratings given to Moldovan democracy are mostly within the range of 1-4, some of the respondents mentioned they would rate it with zero or even below zero. Some focus-group participants rated democracy with an average (5), having provided the following arguments:

- Selective justice, case files lost at the ECtHR;
- Low standards of living;
- Migration of citizens;
- Corruption, etc.

The benefits brought by democracy, in general, cover: freedom of expression, changing the governance through elections, participation in demonstrations, protests. Some respondents did not agree that Moldovan people can openly and freely protest, having mentioned they are either constrained to participate in certain demonstrations or threatened to be fired if they attend. Likewise, few participants consider that, although they can freely express themselves, the fact that nothing happens/changes afterwards shows the lack of democracy and inability of ordinary people to influence certain things.

In the opinion of focus-group participants, there is no freedom of justice in our country, no equality before the law (as people affiliated with the ruling political parties are favoured, as well as those with relationships and/or high socio-economic status), corruption persists in public institutions, no confidence in the future (low income against large expenses, lack of jobs, poor quality of education and healthcare services).

The majority of people believe that politicians act in self-interest or in the interests of groups rather than in citizens' interests. During the election campaigns they just make promises to address citizens' issues. Nonetheless, some participants of the Centre Region think that there are politicians (referring mainly to those elected by them) who act in the interest of citizens.

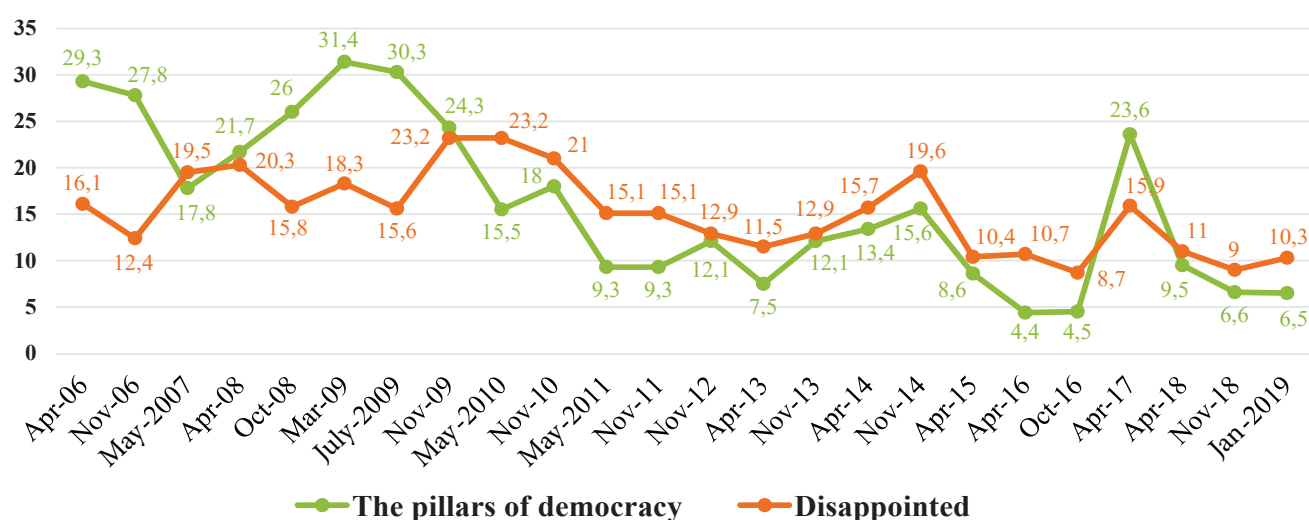


The majority of respondents consider that elections are free in the Republic of Moldova. As for the fairness in organising the elections, the opinions of respondents are split. Some consider that the elections are fair, bringing the reason that they worked for local electoral commission and there are national and international observers who monitor the electoral process. Others, on the contrary, mention that the elections are not fair as different manipulation methods (media) are used, voters are corrupted (by giving them electoral gifts), blackmail/pressure is exercised (on the side of employers, the ruling political parties). Tolerance is associated by many respondents with patience – “we are far too patient” or with homosexuality (North and South Regions). Respondents from the North Region insisted that they are imposed certain foreign (European) values, while some respondents from the South Region mentioned we were not a tolerant nation towards LGBT.

Entrepreneurs believe the business environment is directly influenced by the state of democracy in the country: according to them, the domestic producers are not supported in the Republic of Moldova; the state creates barriers, while the imposed taxes are too high. Likewise, the business environment representatives consider corruption as an effect of lacking democracy, while the state of affairs becomes clearer and more evident when compared with the situation in the neighbouring country, Romania. In their own words, the Romanian entrepreneurs do not pay certain taxes for a three-year period, thus, having the opportunity to grow, while in the Republic of Moldova the shoe is on the other foot, i.e. entrepreneurs barely have started their activity but they have to pay already certain amount to the state. Business people consider that in Romania the state takes care of entrepreneurs due to a more advanced democracy and adherence to the EU, while in our country, on the contrary, the state institutions put pressure on the business environment<sup>10</sup>.

## Political stability index in the Republic of Moldova

Over the last ten years, it is to be noted citizens' total disappointment in terms of democracy in the country. The number of those who are considered to be the pillars of democracy dropped dramatically from the average of 20-30% in 2005-2009 to less than 10% over the last decade.



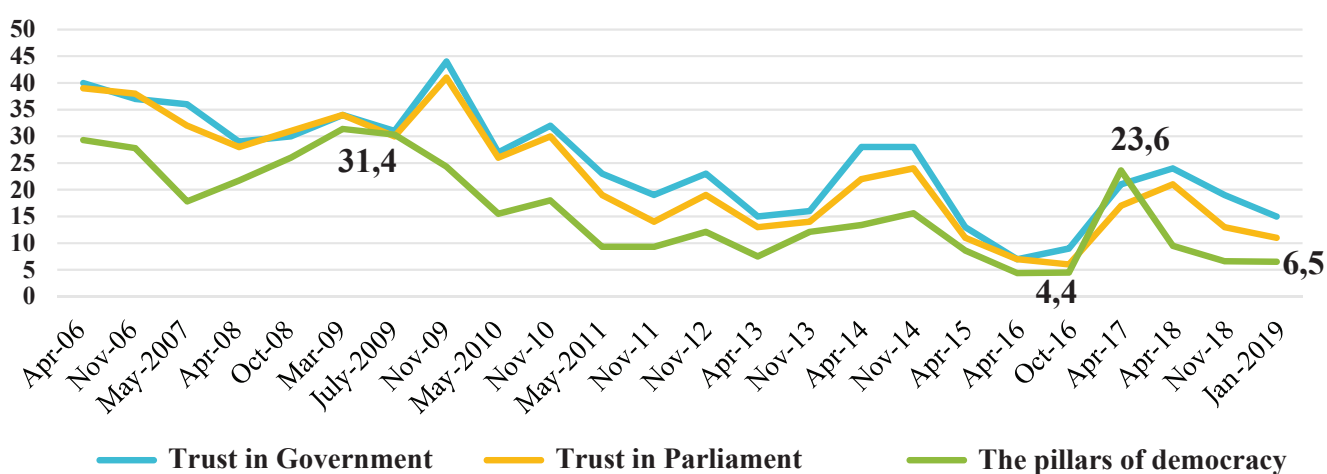
**Figure 3.** The share of pillars of democracy and of disappointed people in the society

Source: National representative survey of citizens

<sup>10</sup> Focus-group of business community representatives.

The survey outcomes show **direct correlation between the number of people who consider that the country is governed democratically** (the elections are free and fair, while the country is governed as per the will of the people – the pillars of democracy) and **the level of confidence of citizens in authorities** (Government and Parliament). Hence, the number of pillars of democracy increases when the Government and the Parliament enjoy the highest level of public confidence. And, vice versa, during the times of crises, as it was during the bank fraud, the level of public trust in state authorities reached the historical lowest level. **People showed total disappointment in authorities, the confidence rate dropping to 4%.**

This lack of confidence in such authorities as the Government and the Parliament has reduced the share and the number of those who believe that the country is governed by democracy to a minimum level. Confidence in Moldovan democracy correlates directly with the quality of governance and citizens' confidence in Government and Parliament.



*Figure 4. Correlation between the pillars of democracy and citizens' confidence in Government and Parliament*

Source: National representative survey of citizens

If one looks at the matrix of political stability, then he/she can ascertain that 6.6% of citizens consider that the elections are free and fair, while the country is governed as per the will of the people. This is one of the lowest levels recorded over the last 15 years. An even lower level was recorded in 2014 after the bank fraud. Particularly these people are considered to be the pillars of democracy in a society. At the same time, the number of dissatisfied people is huge. Such people consider that the elections are neither free nor fair, while the country is not governed as per the will of the people. The share of dissatisfied people reached peak levels, amounting to 81.5%, which means poor legitimacy of governance. Hence, the Index of political stability equals to –65.9.



**Table 1. Citizens: The Matrix of political stability**

		The country is governed as per the will of the people	
		Yes	No
Elections are free and fair	Yes	Pillars of democracy	Disappointed
		6,6%	9,0%
	No	Spectators	Dissatisfied
		2,9%	81,5%
Political stability index		– 65,9	

Source: National survey of citizens

The Matrix of political stability shows a more positive situation when one reviews the experts/public person's survey outcomes. Hence, the number of those who consider that the elections are free and fair, while the country is governed as per the will of the people, constitute 10.9% in comparison with 6.6% in case of citizens. Similarly, the share of dissatisfied people who consider that the elections are neither free nor fair, while the country is not governed as per the will of the people, is high amongst experts as well (60.9%), but smaller in comparison with the Matrix of political stability (citizens). Hence, the Index of political stability is -26.1, which is three times smaller than the index value as per the perception of citizens.

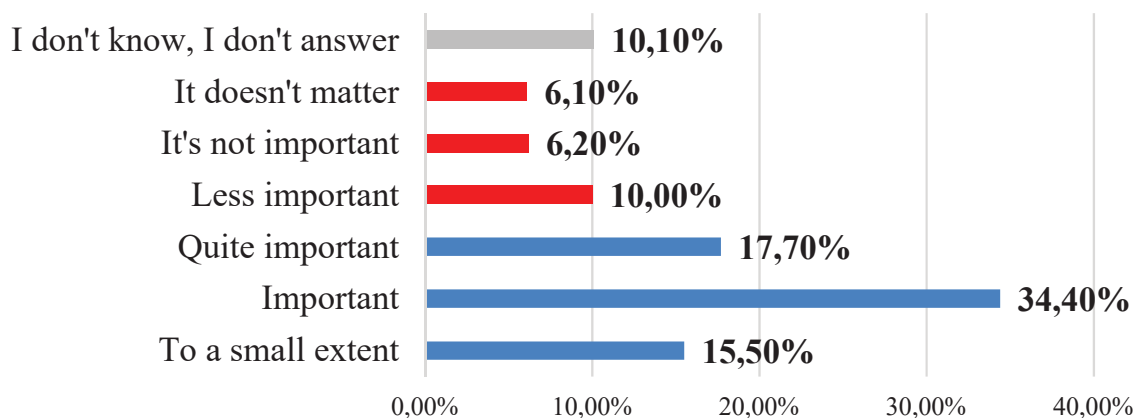
**Table 2. Citizens: The Matrix of political stability**

		The country is governed as per the will of the people	
		Yes	No
Elections are free and fair	Yes	Pillars of democracy	Disappointed
		10,9%	23,9%
	No	Spectators	Dissatisfied
		4,3%	60,9%
Political stability index		– 26,1	

Source: Survey of experts/public persons

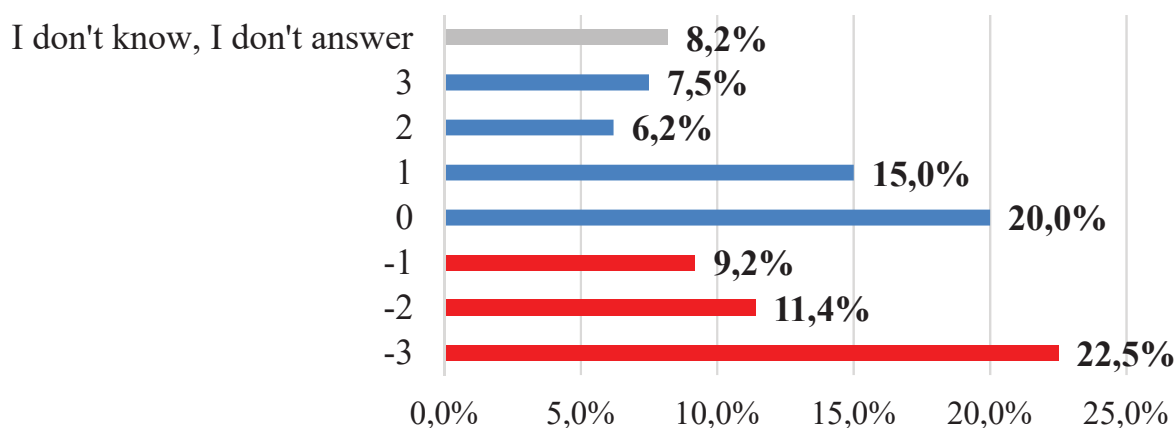
## Quality of democracy in the Republic of Moldova and in the neighbouring countries

In the Republic of Moldova, **the majority of citizens (67.6%) considers that democracy in the country is determined by the quality of life.** People link directly the standard of living and the level of democracy in the country. The level of dissatisfaction of citizens with regard to democratic institutions is determined also by the low quality of life.



*Figure 5. To what extent do you think that the quality of life of citizens affects the quality of democracy in the country? Score – (+0.92 points)*

Most respondents consider that in the Republic of Moldova the quality of democracy is extremely poor (22.5%), while others consider it to be poor (20.6%). Other 43.1% of citizens think that the state of democracy is poor against 28.7% of citizens who have a more or less positive impression.

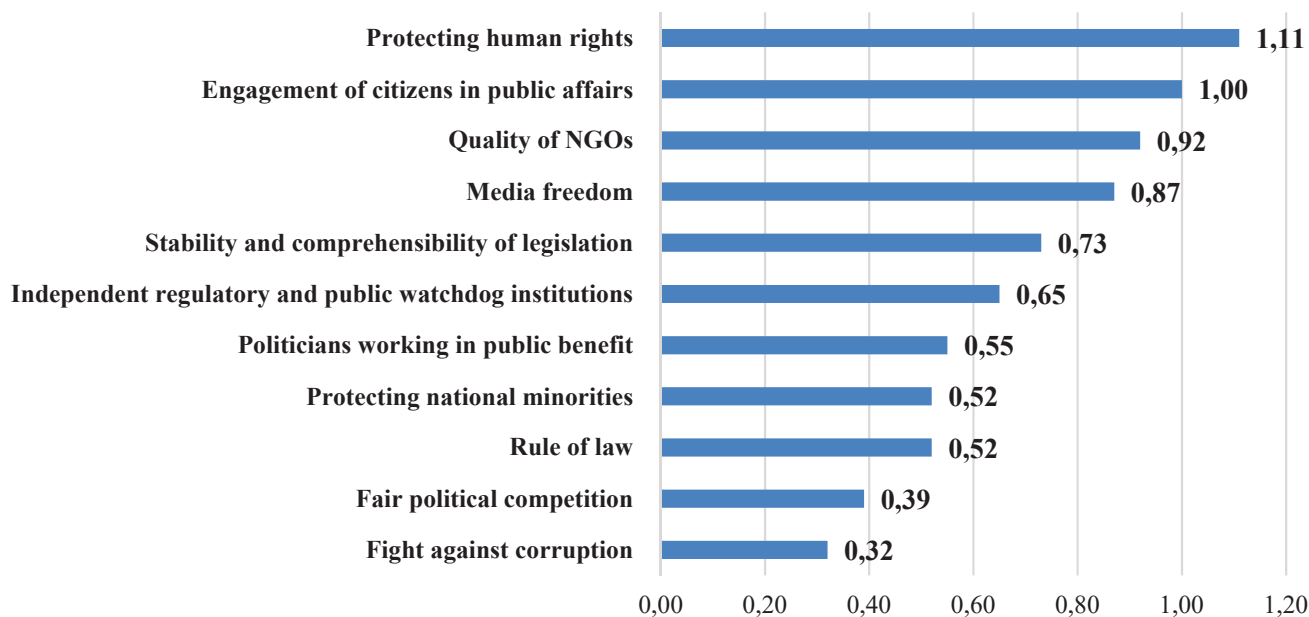


*Figure 6. How do you appraise the quality of democracy in the Republic of Moldova?*

The factors influencing the quality of democracy in the Republic of Moldova were identified under the survey of diaspora. The review of questionnaire outcomes revealed the following factors that have the most significant positive impact on the quality of democracy:

- Protecting the human rights (+1.11 points);
- Involving citizens in public affairs (+1.00 point);
- Quality of NGOs (+0.92 points);
- Freedom of media (+0.87 points).

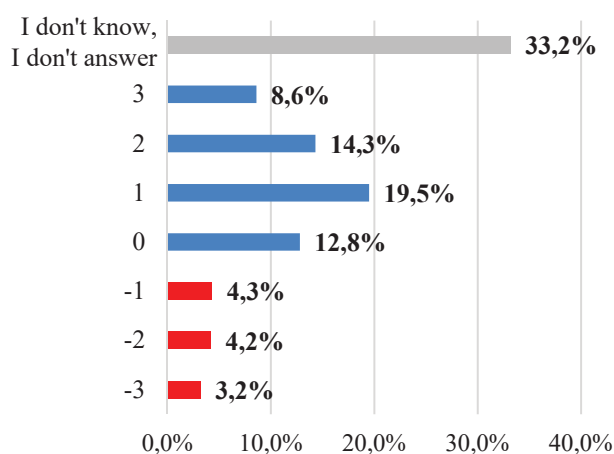
At the other extreme, the factors having the least impact on the quality of democracy are: fighting corruption (+0.32 points) and fair political competition (+0.39 points).



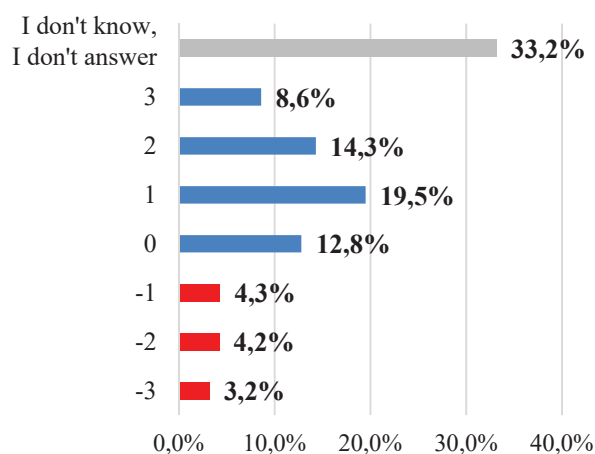
*Figure 7. Diaspora: What are the factors influencing the quality of democracy?*

Likewise, we assessed citizens' perception on the state of democracy in the neighbouring countries, i.e. Romania, Ukraine and the Russian Federation. In case of Romania, one third of respondents failed to give an answer to this question, while the majority of those who had an opinion mentioned that the state of democracy in Romania was good and excellent (24.6%), as compared to those (22.3%) who considered that the state of democracy in Romania was poor.

In case of Ukraine, the share of those who have no opinion in this regard is large (28.6%), although it is smaller than in Romania. The opinion of citizens with regard to the state of democracy in Ukraine is similar to the one in the Republic of Moldova, except for a slight difference, i.e. the number of those who are extremely dissatisfied in Moldova is much larger.

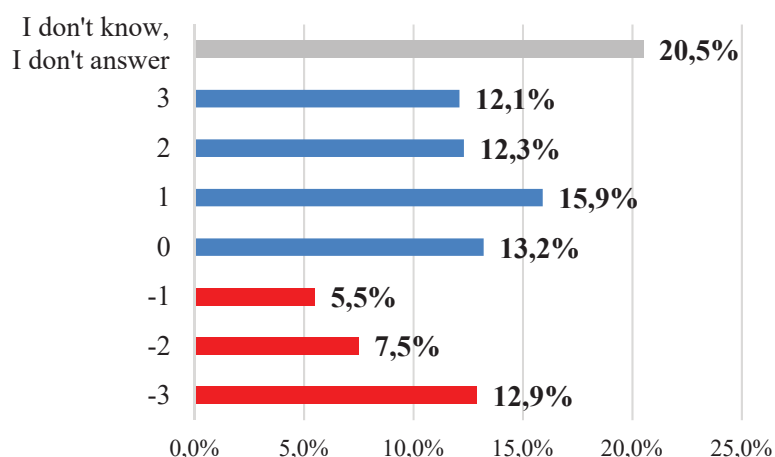


*Figure 8. Quality of democracy in Romania*



*Figure 9. Quality of democracy in Ukraine*

Amongst the neighbouring countries, the Russian Federation has the largest share of citizens who have an opinion. Hence, 80% of respondents answered the question, meaning that they are aware of the realities in the Russian Federation. The high degree of answers can be explained by the strong presence of Russian media within the Moldovan space, which is far stronger than the Romanian or Ukrainian presence.



*Figure 10. Quality of democracy in the Russian Federation*

Nonetheless, the most surprising fact in reviewing the state of Russian democracy is the citizens' answers, which enormously differ from the responses of experts/public persons or of diaspora. Hence, **the largest part of citizens considers that the state of Russian democracy is good and much better than the state of Moldovan or Ukrainian democracy.** The detailed analysis of this phenomenon is presented in the section below of the report.

## Benchmarking analysis of the state of democracy in Moldova, Romania, Ukraine and Russia

To the question how Moldovan democracy is seen relative to democracy in the neighbouring countries the answers show visible divergences in appraising the state of democracy by experts, Diaspora and citizens. The Russian Federation is the point of discord. While the experts appraise the state of Russian democracy as extremely poor (-2.47 points), the citizens consider that Russia is doing far better than Moldova in terms of democracy (+0.22 points).

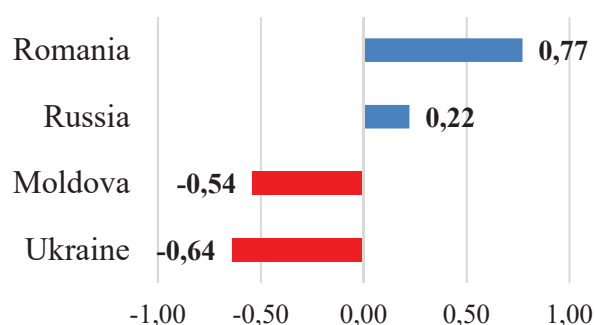
However, there are two clear consensuses amongst all categories of respondents, i.e. that Romania is the only country within the region that is positively appraised in terms of democracy by all groups of respondents. Hence, the citizens gave a score of +0.77 points, the experts were slightly reserved, giving +0.66 points, while the diaspora gave the lowest score (+0.28 points).

Another consensus is the state of Moldovan democracy, which is considered to be poor by all three categories of respondents. The citizens have the most reserved opinion regarding the state of Moldovan democracy (-0.54 points). Both diaspora and experts believe that democracy in Moldova is poor, preceded only by Russia. In this area, diaspora is even more categorical (-1.66 points) than the experts (-1.15 points).

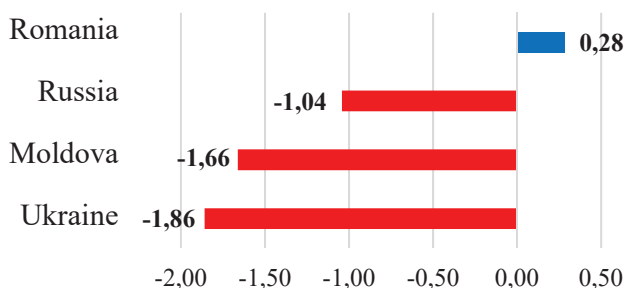
All respondents perceive Ukraine as a country with poor quality of democracy, which is comparable to Moldovan democracy. It is worth noting that the population is less categorical and perceives the situation much more positively than the experts and diaspora. Overall, citizens' appraisal is by 20% higher than the one provided by experts. Diaspora is the most categorical and dissatisfied by the state of democracy within the region, and granted the lowest rates to all countries.

Likewise, Focus-groups outcomes revealed that democracy in the Republic of Moldova is similar to the one in the neighbouring countries. However, **the respondents think that Moldova has got more democracy in comparison with Ukraine, but less in comparison with Romania.** In the respondents' opinion, chaos dominates in Ukraine, having brought examples of tense situation in the Parliament (beatings, curses). Romania, on the contrary, is seen as a country where justice is more functional than in the Republic of Moldova, the economy is more developed, and the education and healthcare services are of higher quality.

### Citizens' opinion



### Diaspora's opinion



### Experts' opinion

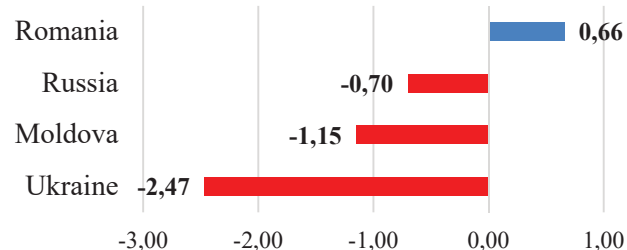


Figure 11. How do you appraise the quality of democracy in the following countries?

## Developments in Moldovan democracy over the last five years

### Citizens' survey

The respondents (28%) consider that over the last five years the state of democracy in the Republic of Moldova has remained unchanged. However, amongst those who have given either a positive or negative opinion, the share of those who consider that the state of democracy worsened (35.7%) is predominant as compared to those who consider that the state of democracy improved (29.3%).

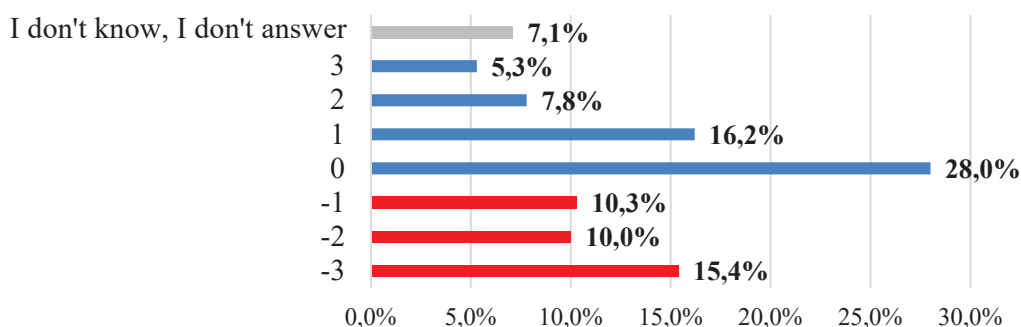
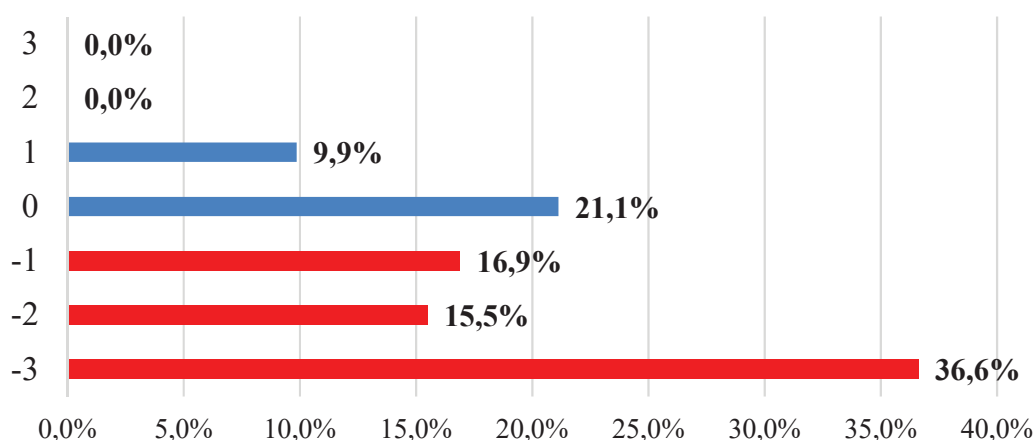


Figure 12. Citizens: What are the developments in the quality of Moldovan democracy over the last five years?

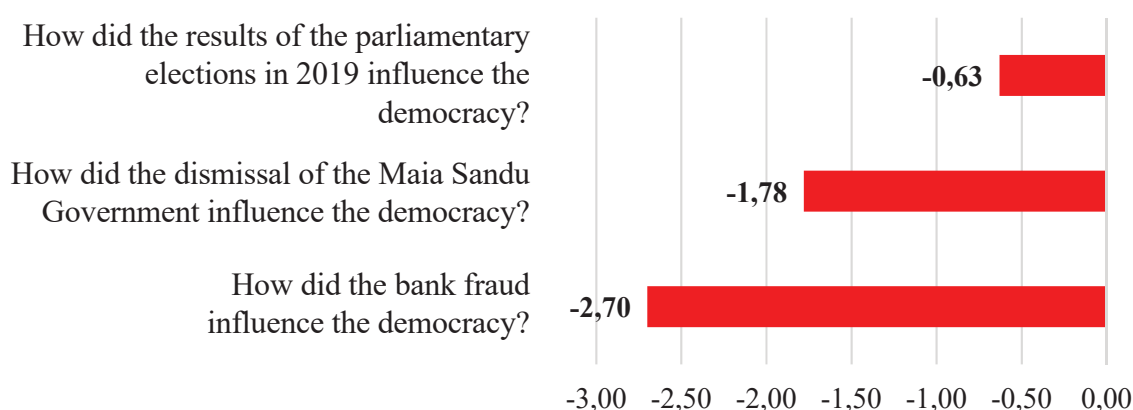
## Survey of diaspora

The events that occurred over the last five years have had a negative impact on the quality of Moldovan democracy. **The bank fraud is considered to be the event that affected the most the state of Moldovan democracy.** Most respondents rated it as the most negative impact, the score amounting to -2.7 points.

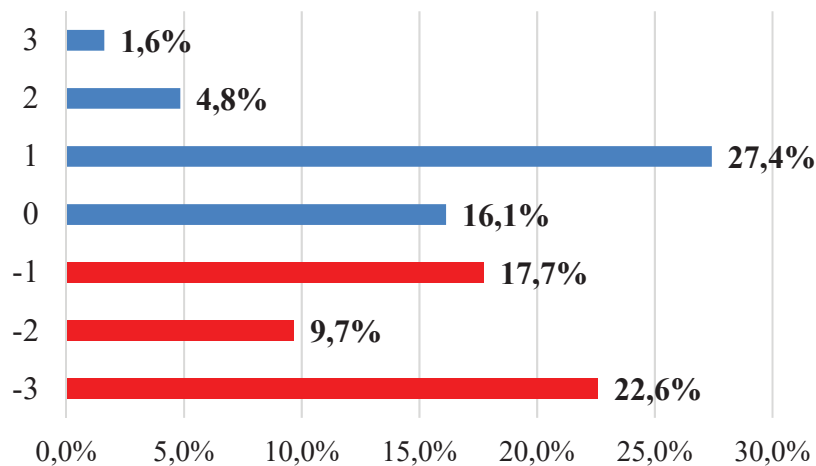
Resignation of Maia Sandu Government comes the second. Although there were some voices positively appraising the event, the majority of respondents considered it negatively influenced the quality of democracy in the country. The overall score is strongly negative (-1.77 points). The results of 2019 parliamentary elections are considered to have both positive and negative impacts. The positive appraisals are reserved as the majority of respondents gave the lowest positive rating (+1 point). At the same time, the number of those who provided an extremely negative appraisal is large. The overall score is slightly negative (-0.63 points).



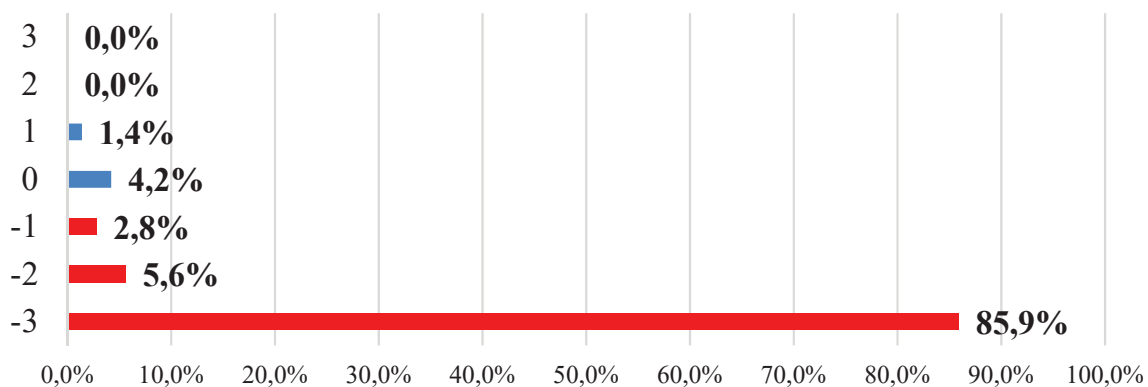
*Figure 13. Diaspora: What are the developments in the quality of Moldovan democracy over the last five years?*



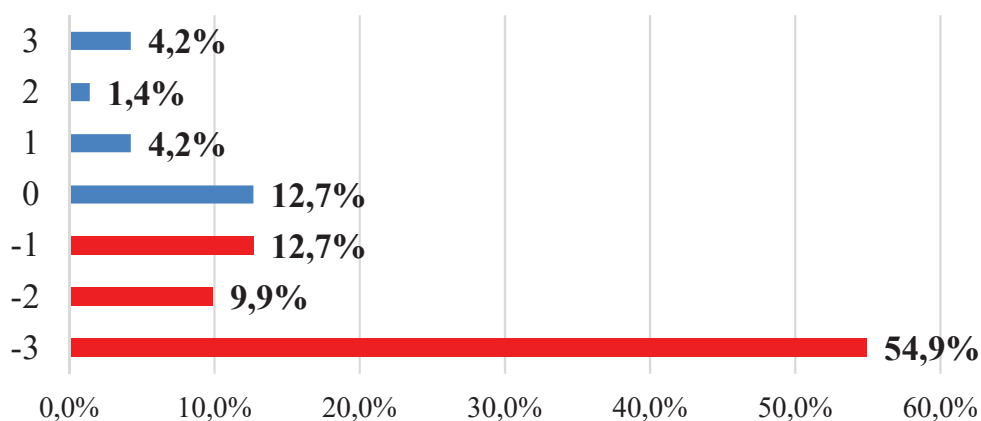
*Figure 14. Diaspora: How did the events, which occurred over the past five years, influence the quality of Moldovan democracy?*



*Figure 15. Diaspora: What was the impact of 2019 parliamentary elections on Moldovan democracy?*



*Figure 16. Diaspora: What was the impact of bank fraud on Moldovan democracy?*



*Figure 17. Diaspora: What was the impact of Government Sandu resignation on Moldovan democracy?*

## The role of state institutions in the promotion of democracy in the Republic of Moldova

In the opinion of citizens, most public institutions have an impact on the promotion of democracy in the country. Out of those nine designated institutions, only two are seen as promoters of democracy. Regarding the remaining seven institutions, citizens have a negative opinion in terms of institutions' role in the promotion of democracy. **The civil society is the leading promoter of democracy (+0.39 points), followed by media (+0.24 points). At the other end one can find the Courts (-0.72 points) followed by the Prosecution (-0.48 points).**

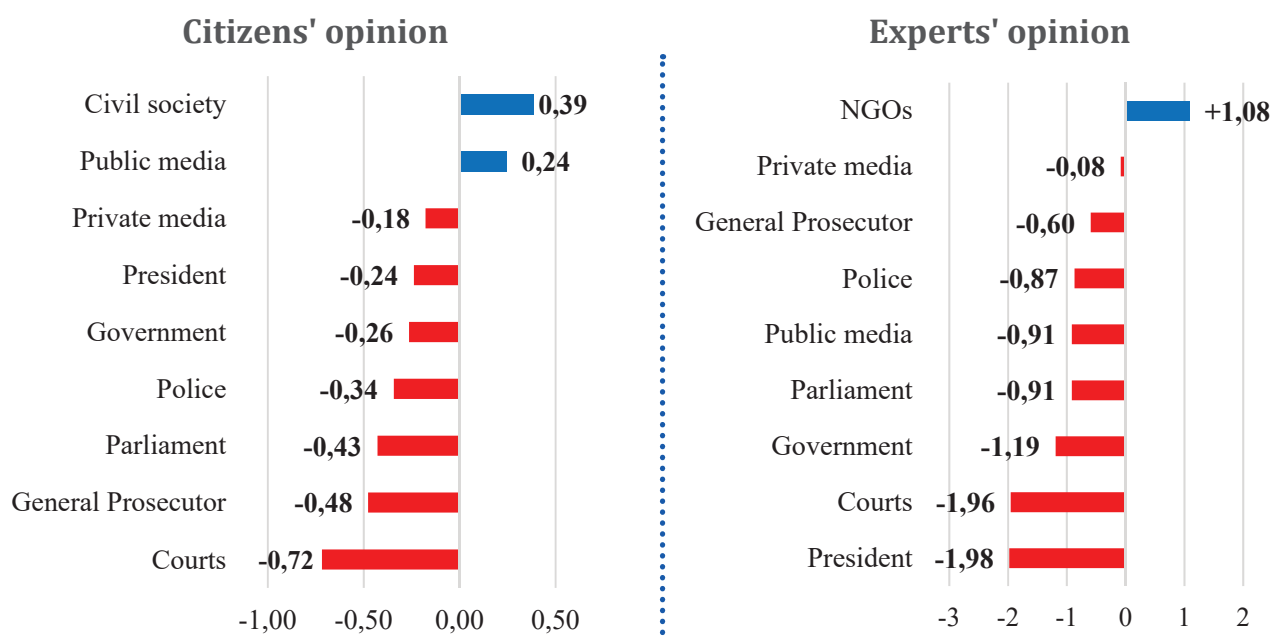


Figure 18. How do you rate the contribution to the quality of democracy of the following institutions?

Although the citizens' opinion regarding the Government role in the promotion of democracy is equally distributed, the number of those with negative opinions is slightly higher than the number of those with positive opinions. The perception in terms of the role of Parliament and President is similar.

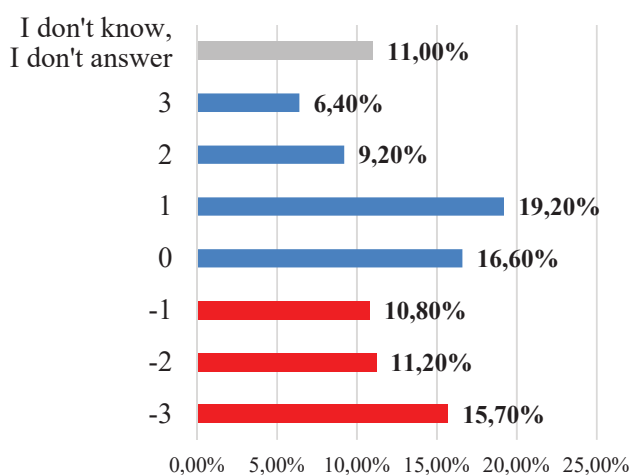


Figure 19. Contribution of Government

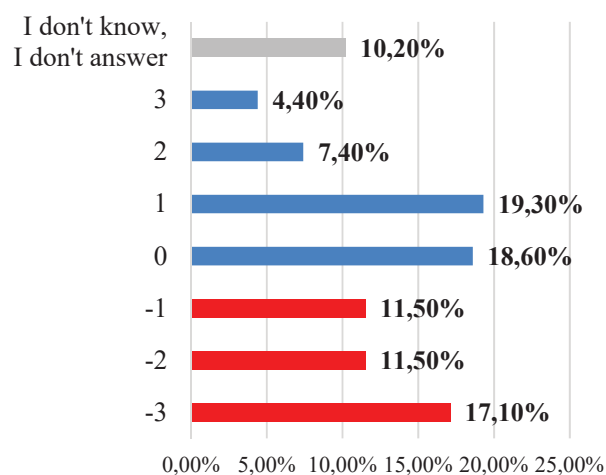


Figure 20. Contribution of Parliament



As for the General Prosecutor, most respondents have a neutral opinion, while the position of those with extremely negative opinion is pretty strong. Particularly, the large number of those who consider that the General Prosecutor plays an extremely negative role in the promotion of democracy has determined the overall negative score obtained by Prosecution. In case of Police the number of those with extremely negative opinions is pretty large (16.2%); however, due to the fact that the number of those with positive opinions is also pretty large (17.1%) overall, the Police score is not significantly negative in the citizens' opinion.

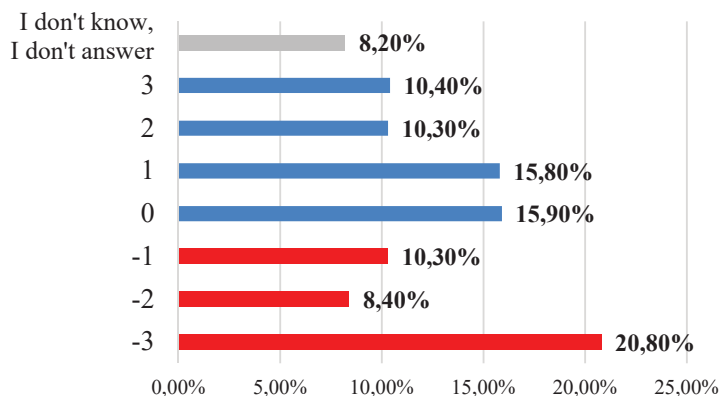


Figure 21. Contribution of President

**The courts are the institutions with the largest negative score as per the citizens' opinion on the state of democracy in the country.** Hence, 44.5% of respondents consider that the country courts play a negative role in the promotion of democracy – a record level amongst the country institutions.

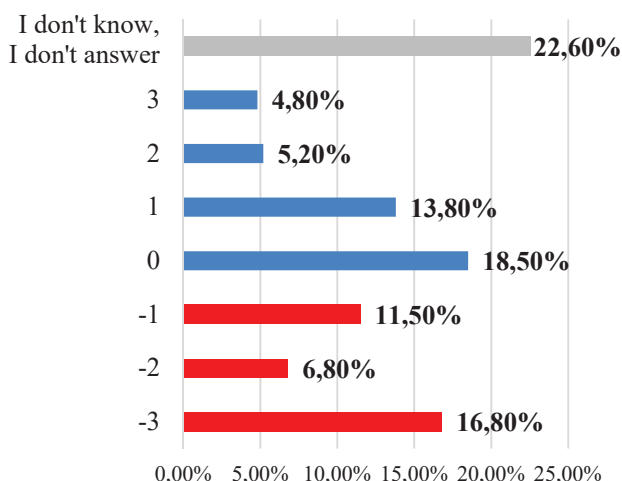


Figure 22. Contribution of the General Prosecutor

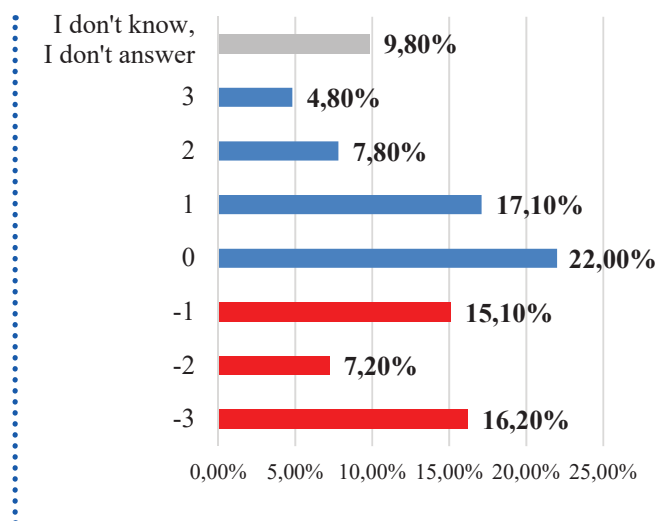


Figure 23. Contribution of Police

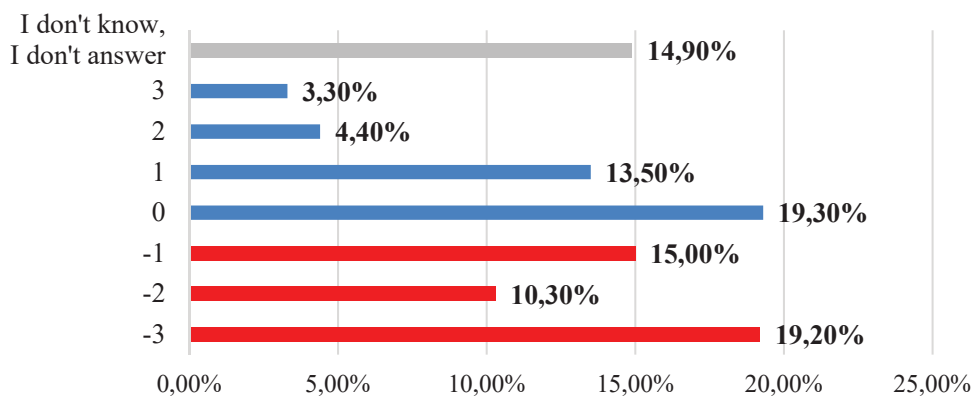
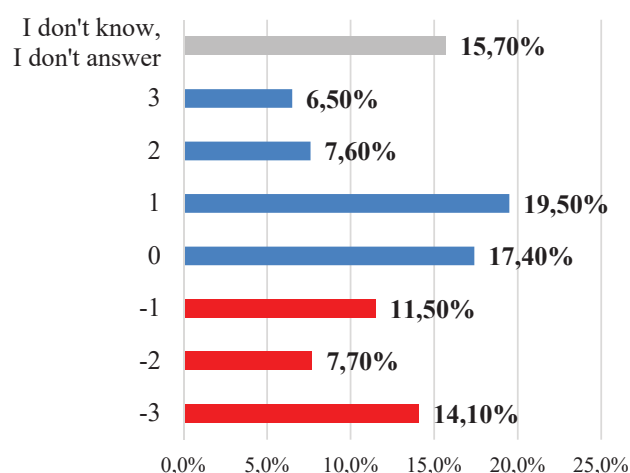
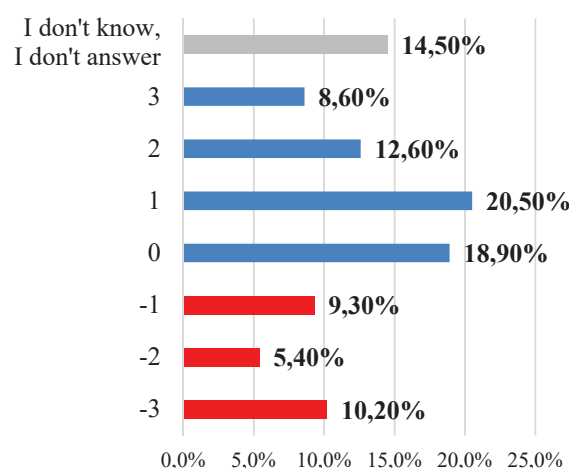


Figure 24. Contribution of Courts

Private media enjoys positive appraisal from 33.6% of respondents relative to 33.3% of those who have got negative opinions. Nonetheless, as per the survey respondents' view, private Media has a positive rather than a negative impact on the state of democracy in the country. On the other hand, in the citizens' opinion, public media is a much stronger promoter of democracy as the number of those with positive opinions amounted to 41.7%, a level that by far exceeded the ones with negative attitudes (24.9%).

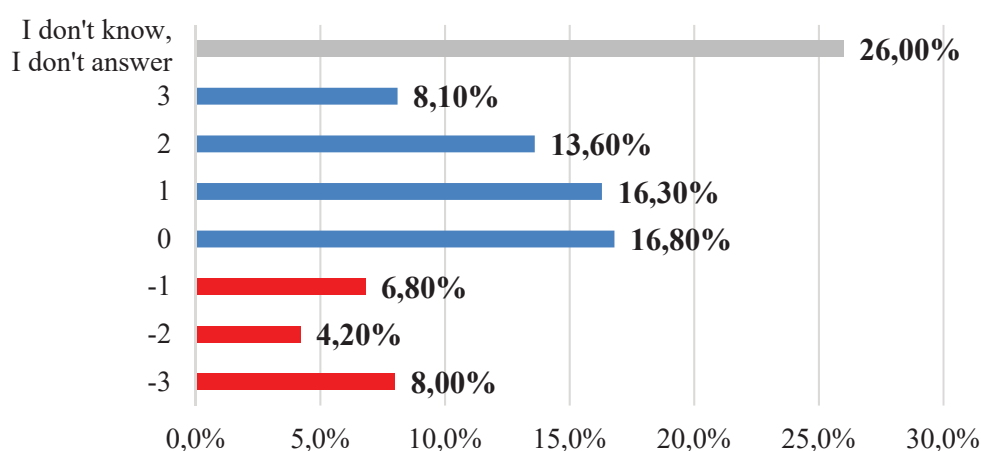


*Figure 25. Contribution of private media*



*Figure 26. Contribution of public media*

**The respondents consider the NGOs as institutions that contribute the most to the promotion of democracy in the country.** Concurrently, it is worth mentioning that many respondents failed to appraise the role of NGOs (this being the largest share of those who did not know what to say), meaning that NGOs for many citizens are Terra Incognita. Among the respondents who expressed their opinion, the positive answers (38%) outweighed the negative ones (19%). The NGOs have a smaller number of respondents who rated positively public Media; however, due to the fact that the number of respondents with negative opinions is also small, the NGOs are on the top of institutions promoting democracy in the country.



*Figure 27. Contribution of NGOs to the quality of Moldovan democracy*

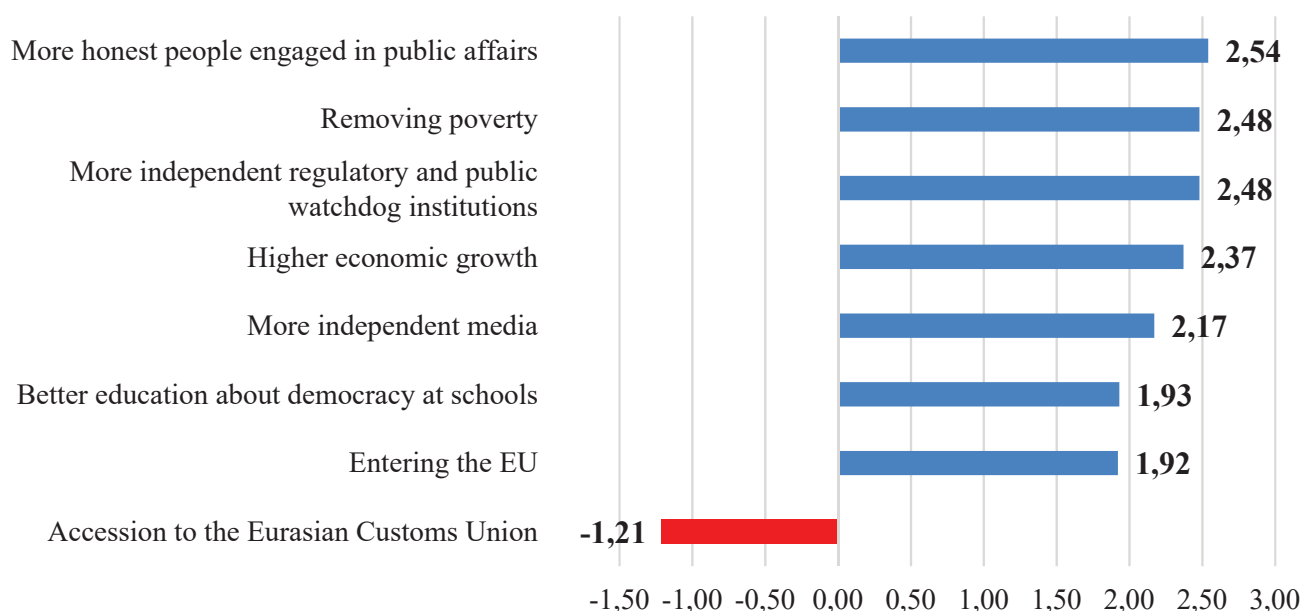
# Recommendations on democracy building

Citizens who participated in Focus-groups mentioned that the level of democracy in the Republic of Moldova will improve if the country is led by people who are preoccupied with citizens' needs. Others, however, consider that everybody has to bring his/her contribution to improve democracy in the country by carrying out their work with due diligence, as well as civic involvement when certain problems evolve. The majority of respondents think that the level of democracy, on the contrary, would decline in the following years to come as the situation is worsening as the young people leave for abroad. **In order to improve the quality of democracy in the Republic of Moldova, first of all, it is necessary to make the politicians more accountable, the laws to function better, corruption to be curbed, people to be more aware and more active.**

In the opinion of diaspora, the factors that may have a positive impact on the quality of Moldovan democracy in the long-run are as follows:

- More honest people working in the public sector (+2.54 points);
- Eradication of poverty (+2.48 points);
- Independent regulatory entities and law enforcement bodies (+2.48 points);
- Hither economic growth (+2.37 points).

At the same time, they identified one factor that would have a deep negative impact on the quality of Moldovan democracy, namely joining the Customs Union (-1.21 points).



*Figure 28. Diaspora: What are the factors that would have a positive impact on the quality of Moldovan democracy in the long-run?*

Against this background and based upon the society perception on the quality of democracy, the factors with negative impact and on Report findings, a series of proposals has been laid down for the core actors.

### **Government, Parliament and other public authorities:**

- Fight corruption through improving the authorities' ability to develop and implement measures aiming to prevent corruption and money laundering. In parallel, the activity of law enforcement bodies is vital, as well as holding people accountable for the committed fraud and corruption deeds. To enhance confidence in the law enforcement bodies and denounce the corruption deeds, citizens shall know that they will be protected and have access to fair and independent justice.
- Carry out a genuine reform of justice that would generate positive tangible changes in the society. This is in the context when the whole society has no confidence in justice, extremely reduced confidence in the act of governance, while the impact on business community is severe. Fair justice for all Moldovan citizens must be provided by having secured independence and transparency of the Judiciary, provide integrity evaluation of all judges, strengthening all mechanisms for holding the judges accountable, reforming the legal practice, etc.
- Improve the framework for assets recovery and the activity of the Agency for Recovering the Criminal Assets (ARCI) – a NAC subdivision specialised on parallel financial investigations and identification of criminal assets.
- Increase transparency and access to public information by having ensured that the data/information is published/presented in a clear, accessible manner, and is updated on a regular basis. At the same time, it is necessary to enhance transparency of state- and municipal-owned enterprises by supplementing the Law on access to information with a provision regarding the inclusion of state- and municipal-owned enterprises as providers of information, being bound to respond to citizens' requests for access to information.
- Ensure a process for filling the public offices that is based on principles of open competition, transparency, meritocracy and integrity.
- Develop and improve the business environment by reducing the administrative burden, improving the legal framework and removing unnecessary/redundant or repetitive regulations (clear, comprehensive rules, which do not generate discretion and ambiguous interpretation); ensuring a competitive healthy environment and sanctioning those that fail to comply with the legal principles of fair competition; making transparent and ensuring active participation of businesses and associations in decision-making at all levels (Government, Parliament).

### **Politicians and political parties:**

- Avoid the populist messages, which are seen as messages of leaders with authoritative trends, non-democrats. Populism is associated with the lack of democracy and with poverty. Sometimes, populism may cover a certain marginal segment of voters, but it undermines the democratic values in the society.
- Political parties must focus on their messages. Most political parties are seen as a factor with negative impact on the quality of democracy in the country. There is a perfect correlation between citizens' confidence in state authorities and the democratic values of the society. The quality

of service rendered by political parties determines the enhancement of citizens' confidence in democratic values, which, in their turn, contribute to the consolidation of a democratic and prosperous state.

- Ensure transparency and publish the information about political party funding sources and their use.
- Observe the freedom of the press and grant interviews, answers to any questions posed by journalists, regardless of what media they represent.

### NGOs:

- Focus their activity on the promotion of democratic values in the country. The positive image of NGOs shall not be used to promote pro-democracy agenda in the society.
- Bring the contribution through clear actions and messages aimed to combat populist trends of political leaders, which, as per the citizens' standpoint, are the strongest threat to democracy.
- Monitor transparency, efficiency and integrity of public institutions of all levels (Court of Accounts, Public Procurement Agency, ANSC, NAC; NIA, Competition Council, ANRE, Ministries, Local Public Authorities, etc.) on a regular basis.
- Seek transparency and contribution to enhance transparency through monitoring activities on how the public funds are spent (public budgets, local budgets, district budgets, public procurement, infrastructure projects implemented by the authorities, etc.).
- Monitor and assess transparency, accessibility and efficiency of public services at all levels and make public such outcomes and indicators to raise people's awareness about the differences in tariffs, quality and other indicators to prove the need to adjust some tariffs and correlate the quality and accessibility of certain services with the tariffs paid by citizens.
- Involve actively in decision-making at all levels by the means of proposals, expert's opinions and support to improve legislation, business environment, integrity and good governance in the public sector; strengthening the public budgets in parallel with the promotion of the best national practices (at the central and local levels), along with the best international practices (from different countries).

### Business community:

- A favourable business environment is strictly determined by the quality of governance. Accountable and efficient governance is indispensable from the rule of law with democratic principles and values in action. Supporting the pro-democracy ideas and leaders that are the key component of a favourable business climate.
- Associate the undertakings from different economic sectors to promote intensively and actively the improvement of business environment, democracy and changes necessary to this end (legislative, economic, fiscal, social, etc.).
- Ensure motivating and decent salaries for employees. Poverty is the enemy of democracy and of businessmen by the simple fact that it leads to degradation of democratic values and business environment. In a society with high levels of poverty, the employees show social apathy, being

discouraged to embark on public affairs. Hence, the rule of law based on democratic principles is devalued. While a state that lacks democratic values is an anti-business state. The welfare of employers/businesses is directly determined by the welfare of employees, who are the voters and supporters of democratic values.

- Remove (if any) the phenomenon of “wages in envelope”, which feeds corruption, discourages the employers to be promoters of integrity and democratic values. Moreover, this phenomenon has got other negative consequences as well, which have long-term knock-on effects, including the social system erosion; generation of social inequalities, shortages in the national budget receipts, social security and healthcare budgets, etc.

### Media:

- Raise citizens' awareness by using truthful, verified and full data. While exercising his/her profession, a journalist shall be free and independent, the main goal being to serve public interest, with no political or electoral propaganda activities.
- Address fairly and unbiasedly the political parties and politicians while selecting the opponents for electoral debates.
- Focus on raising public awareness about democracy functioning and role in a society, the negative effects and impact of poor democracy on the quality of life of each and every citizen and on the overall economic situation.
- Strengthen investigation journalism to address, understand profoundly and reveal certain complex systemic issues (social, political, economic), disclosing corruption deeds, fraud, abuses and unfairness in the functioning of human society.

### Citizens:

- Active involvement in public affairs, in decision-making; seeking observance of the right for access to information, as the country welfare and the wellbeing of every citizen is strictly determined by the quality of democracy in the country. Protection of core components of a state with high quality of democracy is the guarantee of welfare of each and every citizen.
- Avoid “traps” of populist and demagogue leaders, who tend to undermine democracy, which in turn, may affect the quality of life and welfare of each and every citizen.

# Annexes

## Annex 1. Representation of political forces, political parties and blocs in the Moldovan Parliament

	27.02.1994	22.03.1998	25.02.2001	06.03.2005	05.04.2009	29.07.2009	28.11.2010	30.11.2014	24.02.2019
<b>1. Political parties and blocs that have acceded to Parliament</b>									
Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova	56								
Electoral Bloc "Socialist Party and Movement Unitate-Единство" (BePSMUE)	28								
Electoral Bloc "Bloc of Peasants and Intellectuals" (BȚI)	11								
Electoral Bloc "Alliance of the Christian Democratic Popular Front" (BeAFPCD)	9								
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova		40	71	56	60	48	42	21	
Electoral Bloc "Democratic Convention of Moldova" (BeCDM)		26							
Electoral Bloc "For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova"/ Pentru o Moldovă Democratică și Prosperă (BepMDP)		24							
Party of Democratic Forces		11							
Electoral Bloc "Braghis Alliance"/ Alianța Braghiș (BeAB)			19						
Christian Democratic People's Party	BeAFPCD	BeCDM	11	11					
Electoral Bloc "Democratic Moldova" (BMD)				34					
Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova					15	18	32	23	
Liberal Party		BeCDM			15	15	12	13	
Alliance "Our Moldova"/ Moldova Noastră			BeAB	BMD	11	7			
Democratic Party of Moldova		BepMDP		BMD		13	15	19	30
Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova	BePSMUE		BeAB					25	35

Electoral Bloc "ACUM Platforma DA si PAS"									26
Șor Party									7
Independent candidates									3
<b>2. Political parties which have acceded to Parliament within electoral blocs</b>									
Movement of Volunteers of the Republic of Moldova	BeAFPCD								
Organisation of Christian-Democratic Youth	BeAFPCD								
Congress of Intellectuality of the Republic of Moldova (PFD)	BȚI								
Alliance of Free Peasants (PNȚCDM)	BȚI								
Christian Democratic League of Women of Moldova	BȚI								
Christian Democratic Party of Moldova	BȚI								
National Liberal Party	BȚI								
Movement for Equality in the Rights "Unitate-Единство"	BePSMUE								
Ecologist Party "Green Alliance" / Alianța Verde of Moldova (now PVE)		BeCDM							
Christian Democratic League of Women of Moldova		BeCDM							
Peasant Christian Democratic Party of Moldova (now PN)		BeCDM							
Civic Party of Moldova		BepMDP							
Movement "New Force" / Forța Nouă		BepMDP	BeAB						
Popular-Democratic Party of Moldova		BepMDP							
Movement of Professionals "Speranța-Надежда"			BeAB						
Labour Union (now FSM)			BeAB						
Centrist Union of Moldova			BeAB						
Social-Liberal Party				BMD					
Party "Action and Solidarity" / Acțiune și Solidaritate									ACUM
Party "Dignity and Truth Platform" / Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr									ACUM



## Annex 2. Breakdown of the national survey sample of citizens

		Number	%
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>1384</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Respondent's gender:</b>	<b>Male</b>	633	45.2%
	<b>Female</b>	751	54.8%
<b>Respondent's age:</b>	<b>18-29 years old</b>	168	16.9%
	<b>30-44 years old</b>	327	30.8%
	<b>45-59 years old</b>	323	23.9%
	<b>60 + years old</b>	566	28.4%
<b>Education:</b>	<b>Secondary incomplete education</b>	241	19.6%
	<b>Secondary education</b>	542	41.4%
	<b>Secondary vocational education</b>	265	17.2%
	<b>Higher education</b>	336	21.7%
<b>Occupational Status:</b>	<b>Economically active</b>	482	38.7%
	<b>Economically inactive</b>	902	61.3%
<b>Social and Economic Level:</b>	<b>Low level</b>	775	54.6%
	<b>Medium level</b>	452	34.2%
	<b>High level</b>	144	11.2%
<b>Area of Residence:</b>	<b>Urban</b>	731	42.9%
	<b>Rural</b>	653	57.1%

## Annex 3. Breakdown of citizens' focus-groups

	Category of Respondents	Number of Participants	Gender	Area	Locality
1.	21-73 years old, South Region	10	5 men 5 women	6 rural 4 urban	Cahul
2.	19-65 years old, North Region	11	6 men 5 women	4 rural 7 urban	Balti
3.	23-50 years old, Centre Region	7	3 men 4 women	2 rural 5 urban	Chisinau
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>28</b>			

