



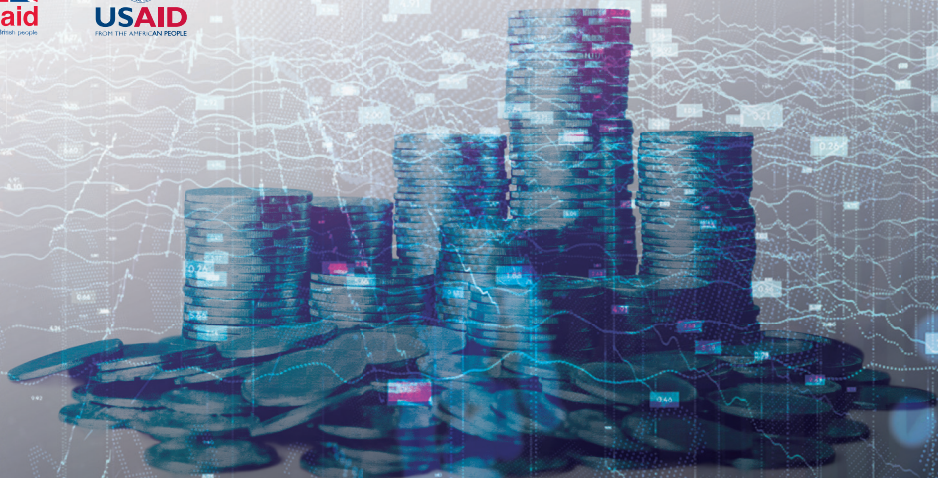
MONEY IN POLITICS

in the Era of Globalization and Digitalization

Money in Politics Regional Conference 2024

2-3 July 2024

Palatul Republicii,
Chisinau, Moldova



MONEY IN POLITICS REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2024

“Money in Politics in the Era of Globalization and Digitalization”

2-3 July 2024
Chisinau, Moldova

Concept Note

While money remains an essential resource for politics and voter outreach, globalization, and digitalization are changing how politicians run campaigns and how the public experiences and monitors this process. Recent regional trends show a rising role for online and social media in campaigns, increased use of digital technologies for political funding and monitoring, and increased attempts at foreign influence through the online space. Furthermore, the rapid use of artificial intelligence continues to add complexity to this already challenging field.

New trends first and foremost impact how political players spend money on campaigns. Online campaigns and digitization can lower the costs of voter outreach, allowing new players to enter politics and lead campaigns without relying on large, wealthy donors. This helps diversify political landscapes, enabling more open and inclusive public input and representation in decision-making. However, the online space also brings about a broad variety of risks including difficulty tracking spending for advertisements, the authenticity of online actors, micro-targeting voters, and other ways of influencing elections from behind the scenes.

The online space and technologies have become a go-to resource for spreading disinformation to influence voting decisions. While often such disinformation campaigns are backed by large amounts of funds, many online campaign technologies and tactics are inexpensive and do not violate basic political finance standards aimed at ensuring a level playing field for all contestants. These present a new set of issues that challenge the existing political finance regulatory frameworks and necessitate their reform.

The digitalization of the financial sector and the expanding significance of online financial transactions, in general, have a favorable impact on political finance, enabling political players to fund their campaigns more easily and effectively. This renders certain aspects of political finance more transparent

as it eases reporting and public disclosure. However, this is mostly applicable to formal/reported political finance, which is often just the tip of the iceberg. Large amounts of unreported campaign income and spending may remain hidden. In addition, globalization and digitization of the financial and media sectors further complicate the tracking of the origin of campaign funds.

One persistent challenge in protecting the integrity of political finance is a lack of effective regulation and state oversight. Legislators, oversight agencies and civic groups across the globe and in the region seek new, effective regulatory approaches that can ensure that campaigning in the online space is protected from disinformation and foreign interference and works to uphold the standards of equality of electoral contestants, free and fair voting, and transparency of spending. The EU's Digital Services Act, the Digital Markets Act and the Regulation on Transparency of Online Political Advertisement, adopted in the course of 2022-2024 champion these standards into the online space and are set to positively influence the regulatory frameworks in the EU candidate and associated countries.

This two-day regional conference will serve to share experiences and lessons in Eastern Europe, including member states of the European Union and beyond. Participants will review regional trends, and practices and will aim to identify effective solutions and transferable approaches in enhancing transparency, integrity, and accountability in political finance in the digital and in an increasingly globalized world.

The conference will bring together political finance oversight agencies, civil society monitors, political parties, international organizations, representatives of online platforms, and electoral, media, and political finance practitioners from across the Eastern European region and some EU member state countries. Electoral and campaign finance stakeholders from Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Ukraine are expected to attend, as well as the representatives of the co-hosting international organizations and experts.

The Conference will be held in Chisinau, Moldova on 2-3 July 2024 at the Palace of the Republic (Palatul Republicii).

The Conference is co-hosted by the Central Electoral Commission of Moldova, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the Council of Europe, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). The conference forms part of the series of Eastern Europe Money in Politics conferences held since 2016.

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AGENDA

DAY I. 2 JULY, 2024

10:30 – 11:00 **Registrations and Welcome Coffee**

11:00 – 11:30 **Welcoming Remarks**

SPEAKERS:

Mr. Igor Grosu, President of the Parliament of Moldova

Ms. Angelica Caraman, Chairwoman of the Central Electoral Commission of Moldova

Ms. Maaike Keizer, Deputy Ambassador, Netherlands Embassy in Chisinau, Moldova

Mr. Falk Lange, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Chisinau

Mr. Sam van der Staak, Director for Europe, International IDEA

11:30 – 11:45 **Group Photo (stairs)**

11:45 – 13:00 **Session I: Regional trends that endanger political finance integrity: foreign influence, disinformation, artificial intelligence, and illegal digital campaign activities**

Digitalization has revolutionized several facets of politics, including campaigning, in the last ten years. Although technology has opened up a lot of new possibilities, it has also put almost every part of the regulatory system to the test. Several emerging concerns, including expanding foreign influence, the dissemination of disinformation, and a range of illicit digital campaign tactics are putting election integrity at risk. This brings with it a number of challenges, such as difficulties associated with tracing the source and destination of political finance, the speed of digital innovations and the associated challenge of keeping regulations up-to-date, lack of capacity within regulatory bodies and oversight agencies, and weak inter-agency coordination.

This panel will review regional trends that endanger political finance integrity: foreign influence, disinformation, and illegal digital campaign activities. The discussion will explore both broad regional tendencies and more specific country-specific examples that exemplify these trends. In order to confront the new threats, this session will begin the debate about the existing and new challenges in the integrity of political financing and lay out the topics to be discussed during the conference.

MODERATOR:

Ms. Yuliya Shpylova, Programme Manager, Elections and Parliamentary Strengthening, International IDEA

SPEAKERS:

Mr. Yves-Marie Doublet, Expert of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), Council of Europe

Ms. Liliana Vitu-Esanu, Chairwoman, Audiovisual Council, Moldova

Mr. Stephen B. Nix, Senior Director Eurasia, International Republican Institute

Mr. Marcin P. Walecki, Senior Country Director, Ukraine, National Democratic Institute

Ms. Olha Snopok, Social Media Analyst, Civil Network OPORA, Ukraine

Ms. Ana Revenco, Director, Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation, Moldova

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 **Session II: The impact of emerging trends on political finance: the perspective of political parties**

Political parties and candidates use online technologies to reach a larger audience at a lower cost, target their messages more effectively, and increase transparency in political financing. Emerging opportunities for lowering campaign expenditures and promoting more open public debates enable new players to enter politics. At the same time, non-democratic regimes in the region and globally increasingly use online space and digital technologies to influence electoral campaigns to distort democratic processes, destabilize democratic systems and gain influence at national and international levels.

While some of the technologies may decrease the need for human and financial resource investments required for campaigning, they also enable the creation of disinformation materials such as fake news, deep fake images, audio, and video content.

This session will look at how political players and their campaign strategies are evolving in response to these recent and emerging trends, including legal and illicit practices, and how they affect political financing. The discussion will touch on the issue of sponsoring foreign interference in elections, as well as considerations for political parties in balancing national sovereignty and political freedoms.

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MODERATOR:

Ms. Nadejda Sacovici, Deputy Director, International Republican Institute, Moldova

SPEAKERS:

Mr. Victor Spînu, Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), Member of Parliament, Secretary of the Financial Commission, Moldova

Mr. Gaik Vartanean, Member of Parliament, Moldova

Mr. Krzysztof Lisek, Country Director, Moldova, International Republican Institute

Mr. Oleksii Zhmerenetskyi, “Servant of the People”, Member of Parliament, Ukraine

Mr. Volodymyr Ariev, “European Solidarity”, Member of Parliament, Ukraine

Ms. Natia Mezvrishvili, Political party “For Georgia”, Deputy Chair, Georgia

Mr. Martin Angeby, Country Director, Moldova, National Democratic Institute

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee Break

16:30 – 18:00 Session III: The impact of emerging trends on monitoring and oversight of money in politics

Digital technologies are becoming an essential tool for political finance monitoring and disclosure. They are increasingly being employed by both political finance oversight bodies and civil society organizations. Political finance oversight agencies throughout the world are gradually deploying various types of digital political finance reporting systems, continuously improving their functionality and analytical features, and enabling greater political finance monitoring. Some actors began to utilize digital tools for online and social media monitoring; nevertheless, the functionality of these tools and the methodology they employ are still evolving.

Emerging trends endangering political financing integrity provide new challenges for effective public monitoring and oversight. Foreign meddling in elections and politics, including sponsorship, is difficult to detect, prosecute, and suspend. Sponsoring the spread of disinformation may require significant resources, such as sponsoring trolls and bot farms or engaging third parties, or very limited resources,

such as producing fake news and deep fake content, posing significant challenges for detection and prosecution due to a weak regulatory framework, insufficient mandate, or capacity of state authorities. Even sponsorship of the use of online and social media for online campaigning is difficult due to the overall lack of transparency of online platforms and the ability to place ads outside of the country's jurisdiction. To successfully address these rising threats, robust inter-agency coordination and partnership with civil society actors are required.

The objective of this session will be three-fold: 1) to explore what and how digital and other tools may be used for monitoring political finance and online campaigning; 2) to examine methods of successful inter-agency cooperation and partnership with civil society for effective monitoring and oversight; 3) to analyze new challenges and successful practices to combat rising threats to political finance.

MODERATOR:

Mr. Magnus Ohman, Director of Regional Europe Office and Senior Political Finance Adviser, International Foundation for Electoral Systems

SPEAKERS:

Ms. Veronika Bilkova, Vice-president of the Venice Commission, Council of Europe

Ms. Lina Petroniene, Chairwoman of the Central Electoral Commission of Lithuania

Mr. Pavel Postica, Deputy Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission of Moldova

Mr. Sergiu Lipcean, Research Fellow at the Department of Comparative Politics, University of Bergen

Ms. Viktoriia Maksymova, Leading Analyst, CHESNO Movement, Ukraine

Mr. Ryszard Kalisz, Member of the National Electoral Commission of Poland

Ms. Carmen Raluca Voicu-Toader, Director of the Verification of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns Division, Permanent Electoral Authority, Romania

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DAY II. 3 JULY, 2024

09:30 – 10:00 Welcome Coffee

10:00 – 13:00 Session IV: Searching for new solutions to emerging trends that endanger political finance integrity (breakout sessions)

Following the discussion on the first day of the conference, participants will be divided into three groups to examine emerging challenges for political financing, efforts made by various stakeholders to tackle them, and best practices. Each breakout session will have a rapporteur who will take notes on the discussion and prepare a summary of significant findings and recommendations for the conference attendees in the next session.

10:00 – 13:00 Session IV – I: Searching for new solutions to emerging trends that endanger political finance integrity (political parties)

This sub-panel will bring together representatives from political parties and international assistance providers to discuss how political players adjust their strategies and fund campaigns in response to new trends. This sub-panel will provide an opportunity to examine how democratic parties might help avoid unlawful political funding activities. The discussion will also focus on strategies for inclusion, aimed at identifying and dismantling barriers impeding women's political financing and participation. During this session, participants will discuss potential legal regulations to balance national sovereignty and political freedoms, ensuring a level playing field and protecting election integrity. Participants will also explore ways to enhance the internal control mechanisms of political parties.

MODERATOR:

Mr. Marcin P. Walecki, Senior Country Director, Ukraine, National Democratic Institute

RAPPORTEUR:

Mr. Alexandru Demianenco, Senior Program Officer, Moldova, International Republican Institute

10:00 – 13:00 Session IV – II: Searching for new solutions to emerging trends that endanger political finance integrity (government agencies)

This sub-panel will bring together representatives from political finance oversight agencies, law enforcement, media monitoring state institutions, and international assistance providers to discuss the challenges posed by emerging threats for monitoring and oversight of political finances, as well as for the protection of electoral integrity. The discussion will focus on reviewing and assessing methodologies for political finance and media monitoring, mechanisms for prosecuting illicit practices, and measures to promote effective interagency coordination and partnership with civil society actors.

MODERATOR:

Ms. Francesca Bodgeri, Social Media Coordinator, Election Observation and Democracy Support (EODS)

RAPPORTEUR:

Ms. Nana Kalandadze, Programme Manager, Regional Europe Programme, International IDEA

10:00 – 13:00 Session IV – III: Searching for new solutions to emerging trends that endanger political finance integrity (civil society actors)

This sub-panel will bring together representatives of election observation and media monitoring groups, as well as international assistance providers, to explore the issues faced by rising threats to effective political finance and media/social media monitoring. The discussion will center on reviewing methodologies for political finance and media/social media monitoring, as well as ways to maintain successful collaboration with government authorities in charge of overseeing and prosecuting illicit activities.

MODERATOR:

Mr. Magnus Ohman, Director of Regional Europe Office and Senior Political Finance Adviser, International Foundation for Electoral System

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RAPPORTEUR:

Ms. **Jessica Keegan**, Senior Advisor on Electoral Integrity, Washington, D.C., International Republican Institute

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 **Session V: Searching for new solutions to emerging trends that endanger political finance integrity: findings and recommendations**

During this panel, rapporteurs from each breakout session will present key findings and recommendations from their groups, which will be discussed with the audience.

MODERATOR:

Ms. **Khushbu Agrawal**, Adviser, Money in Politics, International IDEA

SPEAKERS:

Rapporteur – Group 1

Mr. **Alexandru Demianenco**, Senior Program Officer, Moldova, International Republican Institute

Rapporteur – Group 2

Ms. **Nana Kalandadze**, Programme Manager, Regional Europe Programme, International IDEA

Rapporteur – Group 3

Ms. **Jessica Keegan**, Senior Advisor on Electoral Integrity, Washington, D.C., International Republican Institute

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee Break

16:30 – 17:00 Concluding Remarks

SPEAKERS:

Ms. Veronika Bilkova, Vice-president of the Venice Commission,
Council of Europe

Mr. Krzysztof Lisek, Country Director, Moldova, International Republican
Institute

Mr. Martin Angeby, Country Director, Moldova, National Democratic
Institute

Mr. Magnus Ohman, Director of Regional Europe Office and Senior
Political Finance Adviser, International Foundation for Electoral
Systems

Mr. Sam Van der Staak, Director for Europe, International IDEA

Ms. Angelica Caraman, Chairwoman of the Central Electoral
Commission of Moldova

