[MD] Central Election Commission now vets public advertising before election

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According to the "Regulation on the procedure for the dissemination and broadcasting of political and electoral advertising and messages of public interest", adopted by the Central Election Commission of Moldova (CEC) on 4 August 2023, during the 90-day election period, no public institution or non-commercial organization (NCO) shall distribute, and neither shall the media publish, any such messages without prior approval from the CEC. This was anticipated by the new Statute on Advertising (part 2 of Article 17), which defines such messages as "advertising, the subject of which is the promotion of values, ideas and/or goals of public or community significance, distributed in order to raise awareness, change attitudes and social behaviour, prevent and counteract social vices" (Article 3 of the statute).

A long list of topics of public interest is provided in the statute (Article 12); this allows such messages to embrace a wide range of advertising topics on subjects such as "renewable energy sources and/or the integrity of energy resources"; "promoting the consumption of domestic products"; and "the linguistic, cultural and historical heritage of the Republic of Moldova".

According to the regulation, the Chair of the CEC forms an *ad hoc* commission, which has three days to approve any public message from any authority or NCO. Then the CEC has three more days to vet the message for dissemination through the media or otherwise. Failure to comply leads to an administrative penalty for violation of the Statute on Advertising or (for the media) the Audiovisual Media Code.

The next election in Moldova will be held on 5 November 2023 meaning that the election period started on 7 August.

Decision approving the Regulation on the provision, distribution and dissemination of political and electoral advertising and messages of public interest.

Lege cu privire la publicitate

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Statute on advertising, No. 62, 17 March 2022.

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