

Election Monitoring of Online Media

June 15 – July 15, 2013

In connection to the Presidential elections of 2013, the Civic Development Institute (CDI) has renewed its media monitoring within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project “Professional Media for Elections”. The monitoring is taking place from June 15, 2013 until November 15, 2013 and covers 12 most highly rated Georgian websites that are of a news portal type: netgazeti.ge, droni.ge, politico.ge, liberali.ge, news.ge, presa.ge, civil.ge, tabula.ge, garbonline.tv, for.ge, dfwatch.net, palitratv.ge. This report contains the media monitoring results from June 15 until July 16, inclusive.

Following key findings were identified during the monitoring of online media:

- ⌚ Compared to the monitoring of parliamentary elections of 2013, positive changes are observed in the online media in regards to the adherence to the journalism standards and ethical norms.
- ⌚ We need to especially point out droni.ge, which has significantly improved its modus operandi in regards to observing the ethical norms of journalism.
- ⌚ Improvement of the ethical norms of journalism is also observed on news.ge.
- ⌚ Journalism standards and ethical norms are regularly violated on the websites presa.ge and for.ge.
- ⌚ Presa.ge, for.ge and droni.ge are distinguished with their unbalanced and relatively biased coverage of events.

- ⌚ All the media outlets selected for the monitoring are actively covering the political events taking place in the country.
- ⌚ While covering the political events, main emphasis is laid on political parties and not on presidential candidates.
- ⌚ There is prevailing information about the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

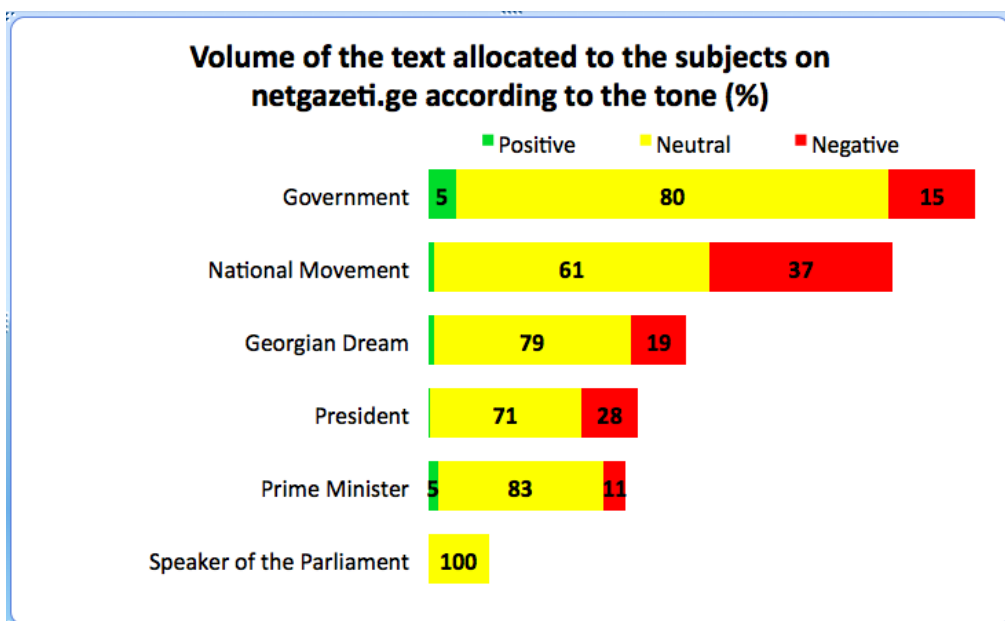
netgazeti.ge

Articles prepared by netgazeti.ge are mostly balanced and impartial. We often encounter the opinions of representatives of various political forces. During the monitoring period there was no subjective approach to any of the presidential candidates during the monitoring period. However, activity of the presidential candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili, as a Minister of Education, was quite intensively covered.

This monitoring period coincides with several high-profile detentions; correspondingly, the website quite intensively covers the issues related to justice – high-profile detentions, opinions regarding the discovery and distribution of covert recordings. Hence the prevalence of topics related to the activity of the Ministry of Internal affairs on the website.

Among the monitoring subjects, the highest indicator of negative tone was observed while covering the activities of the National Movement (37%), the President (28%) and the government (15%).

As a key finding, we should point out that the website quite actively covers the ongoing political events of the country several times a day. Facts provided in the articles are corroborated with relevant evidences and arguments, and we do not see any information obtained based on anonymous sources, or deliberate distortion of facts anywhere. Journalism standards and ethical norms are observed while writing the articles published on the website.



Droni.ge

Compared to the monitoring performed during the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2012, a sharp change is observed on droni.ge in regards to the observance of journalism standards and ethical norms. We almost no longer come across with discriminating and insulting terminology in the journalists' texts, which used to be a usual characteristic feature for droni.ge. Positive attitude towards the President and the National Movement, but on the other hand, the negative attitude towards the Prime Minister, the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream are clearly seen on the website. However, it should be highlighted that a certain politician in most cases is criticized by observing the norms of journalism ethics. While criticizing the subjects, droni.ge no longer uses abusive terminology or nicknames, etc.

The National Movement was the most intensively covered one among the monitoring subjects (46%). Likewise, the activity of the Prime Minister (19%) and the Government (19%) were also intensively covered.

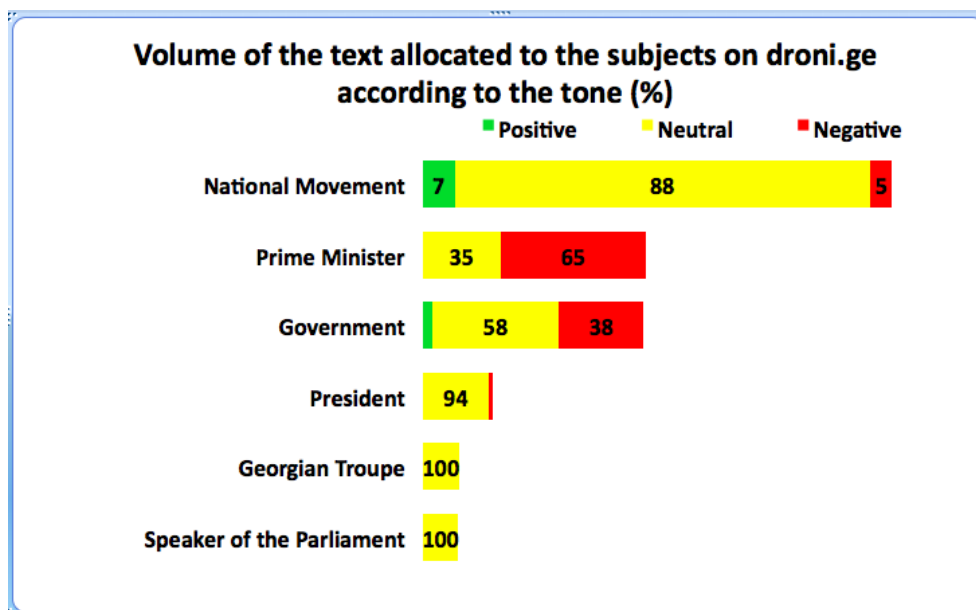
The highest indicator of negative tone was observed while covering the activity of the Prime Minister (65%), Coalition Georgian Dream (45%) and the government (38%).

During the monitoring period, droni.ge was not distinguished with diversity of topics. Mostly the activities of political parties and those of the presidential candidates and

government members were covered, together with the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as well (detention, interrogations, discovery of covert recordings, etc.).

Compared to the election monitoring of 2012, there is a reduction in regards to the number of articles prepared based on the information provided by anonymous and less reliable sources. It should be pointed out that droni.ge covered the comments of representatives of not only the parliamentary minority, but also the parliamentary majority.

We can conclude as the result of the monitoring that there is a sharp improvement observed on droni.ge in regards to adherence to the journalism standards and ethical norms. However, the website remains quite biased: clearly, on one hand there is a positive attitude to the President and the National Movement, and on the other hand there is a negative attitude towards the Prime Minister, the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream.

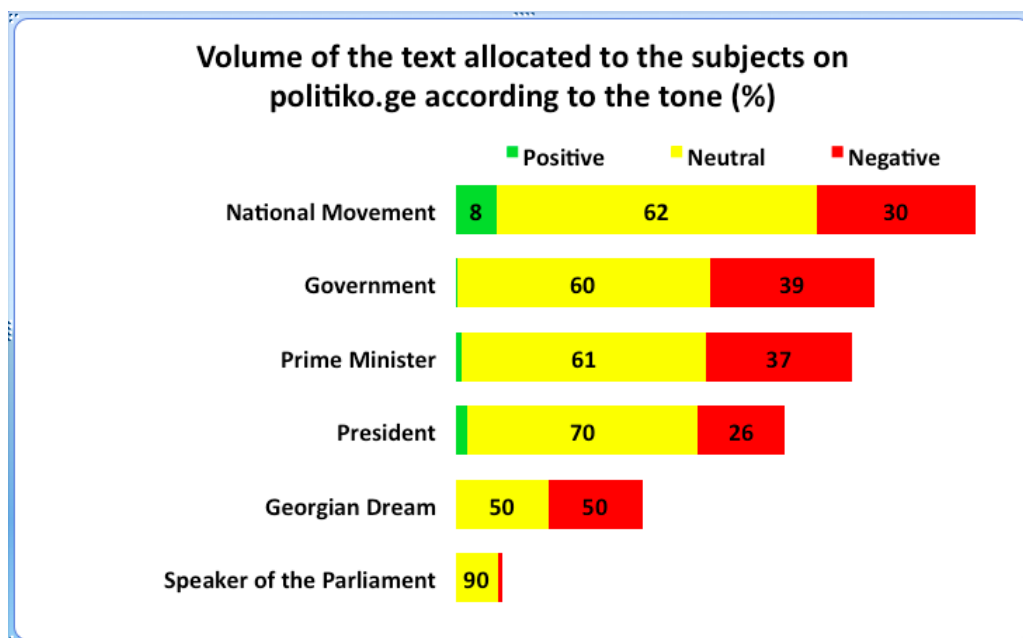


politico.ge

We came across mostly with brief news on the website during the monitoring period. Politico.ge is distinguished with its diversity of topics, but it should be pointed out that there are frequent cases of using unverified facts. Besides, scarcity of sources of information is observed in the articles. The published materials are often based on one official source and seldom does it provide different opinions regarding the issue. Frequently, each speech of officials is divided into several brief news, and only the excerpts

are posted on the website, which provides possibility for the editorial board to lay particular emphases. The materials are always accompanied with photos and often the videos that are taken from various TV channels. Politico.ge often publishes the materials of various outlets.

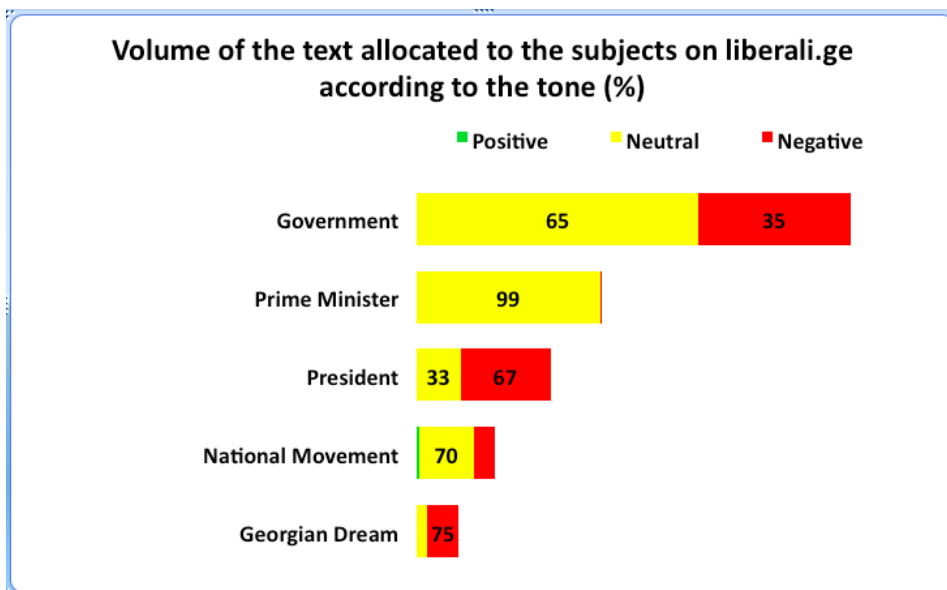
In regards to the volume, activities of the United National Movement (25%) and those of the government (20%) are most intensively covered. The high rate of negative tone was reported for the Coalition Georgian Dream (50%), the government (39%) and the Prime Minister (37%). Positive tone was revealed while covering the activity of Giorgi Margvelashvili (9%). It should be pointed out therein that while making his speeches, Bidzina Ivanishvili often mentioned Giorgi Margvelashvili in a positive context, and this factor has partially found its reflection in a 9% indicator.



liberali.ge

While covering the ongoing political events of the country, liberali.ge is distinguished with a little number of materials during the monitoring period. In some cases the main topics are not covered exhaustively. The materials are of small sizes and mostly are based on one official source only. The website is quite impartial and objective while covering important events. Besides, the journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed.

As for the quantitative viewpoint, the activity of the government was most intensively covered (48%). Highest portion of negative tone was allocated to the: Coalition Georgian Dream (75%), the President (67%) and the government (35%). However, the positive tone has been revealed only towards the United National Movement, with 4%. Majority of materials posted on liberali.ge is accompanied with photo-materials – the illustrations are neutral. The headlines are diverse and less biased.



news.ge

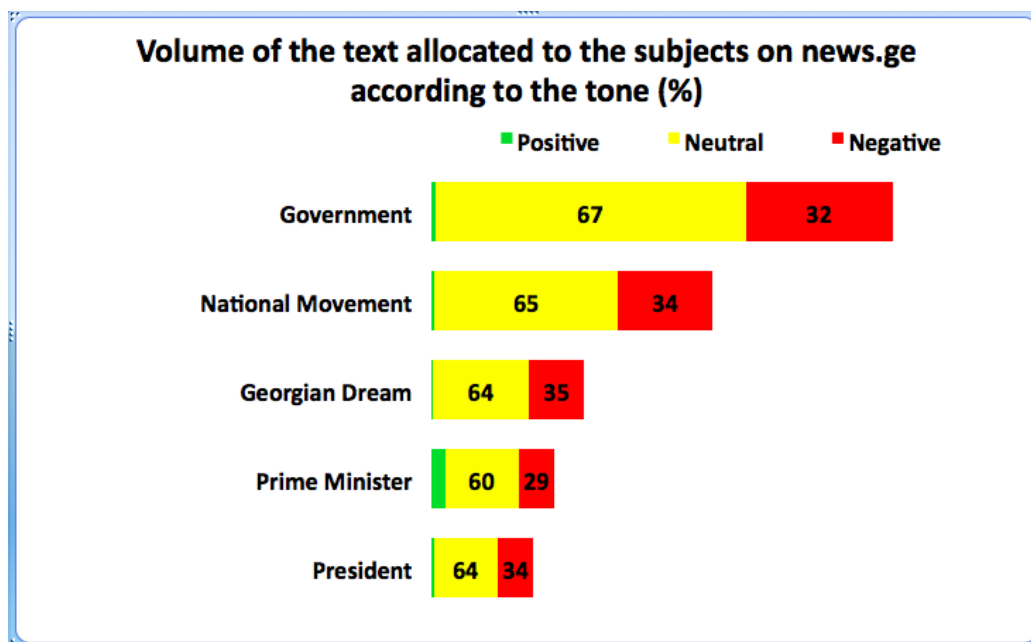
During the monitoring period, news.ge covered almost all the topics of current significance, including the political, social and cultural issues. The website mostly publishes small articles that look like comments, which seldom represent a position of various sides, correspondingly, the balance among the sources of information is rarely observed. However, diversity of sources is observed in general. In addition, information spread in the social networks is often used as a source of the article.

The government has the highest indicator of coverage on the website, and the National Movement comes second. The Coalition Georgian Dream and the Prime Minister have almost the same indicators. It is noteworthy that unlike other websites, news.ge is one of the rare sites, which actively covers other subjects with a relatively more intensity, but the government, the United National Movement, the Georgian Dream and the Prime Minister. During the monitoring period, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the government were

covered most negatively on the website. Almost the same indicator was reported for the National Movement as well.

The website tries to be impartial, but during the monitoring period we still encountered several articles, where certain violations were observed. These violations were often reflected in the subjective reasoning of authors. For example, there was a following headline for the article, which read that according to the opinion of Tina Khidasheli, release of Lado Bedukadze was a wrong decision: “Tina Khidasheli Confronting Archil Kbilashvili” (01.07). Although Tina Khidasheli is criticizing this decision in the article, she does not say anywhere that she is confronting the prosecutor, but the article’s author decided to draw this conclusion and to select the headline herself.

Compared to the monitoring carried out during the parliamentary elections of 2012, it is possible to say that the coverage style of news.ge has improved relatively, because we see a little or no violations, such as the abusive terminology, clearly negative tone expressed by the author, ungrounded reasoning, etc.



presa.ge

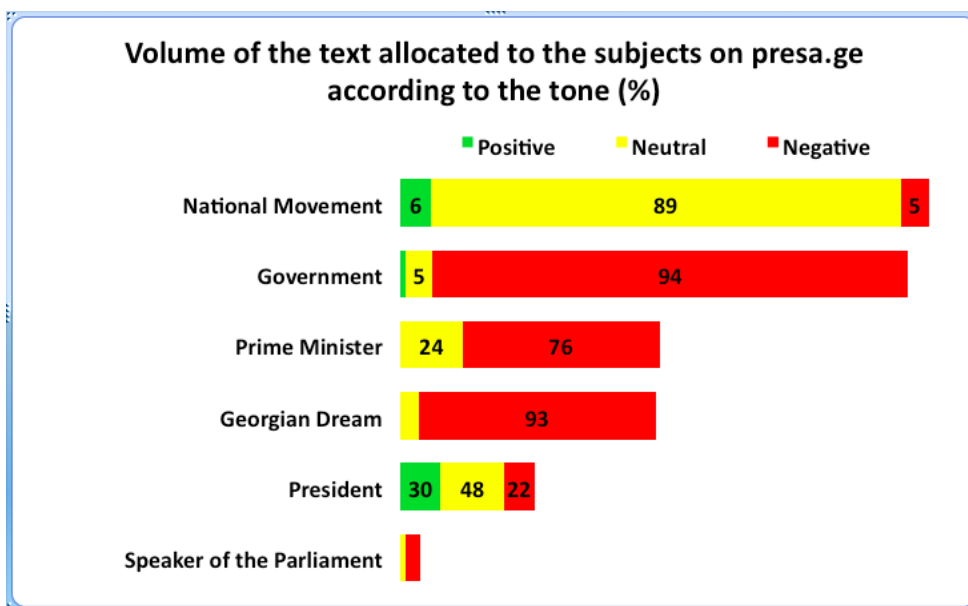
During the monitoring period, presa.ge covered basically only those topics, that were related to the Coalition Georgian Dream or the National Movement. Other topics were covered with less intensity, or were not covered at all on this website. There was no

diversity of sources observed during the monitoring period and often one and the same respondents were shown repeatedly regarding one and the same topics. There were cases when a certain event or opinion did not have a source and was based only on personal evaluations of the author. Besides, the anonymous or less reliable sources, also the information spread within social networks were often provided in the articles as sources of information.

Especially negative tone is clearly observed on presa.ge towards the Coalition Georgian Dream and the government. This is evidenced by the quantitative data obtained during the monitoring. Besides, mostly the neutral tone is observed in regards to the United National Movement, and the dynamics of president coverage is somewhat equally divided among the negative, positive and neutral tones in terms of percentage indicators.

During the monitoring period, authors of presa.ge were not reluctant to use non-ethical terminology in their texts. There were phrases or terms such as: 'dreamers' (19.07), 'Bidzina openly and explicitly shows disrespect to him, sometimes offers political flicks to him and sometimes - demotion', 'Nobody will let Alasania get closer to the position of a Prime Minister. However, this self-respectless starchild is still dreaming of grandeur...' (19.07), 'Khukhashvili's favorite is an 'own-goal-scorer' Kaladze' (19.07), etc. Besides, it is also noteworthy that in its articles the website uses photos that bear certain implications beyond the article, and represents an instrument to manipulate with a reader. Likewise, same thing can be applicable to the headlines. We very often see the headlines on the website, which are provided in a question form, with a question mark in the end, and which assert a certain opinion with their context, or does not represent a question, but emphasizes the truth of a particular subjective opinion from the very beginning; e.g. 'MIA is not resolving the case of Jihad Video?' (21.06); 'Why does not Gharibashvili investigate the case of Jihad Video?' (25.06); 'Political witch-hunt continues – majority of Sakrebulo members detained' (27.06), etc.

Monitoring results let us conclude that presa.ge covers the ongoing political events in a quite unbalanced and biased way. Positive disposition towards the President and the National Movement, and on the other hand the negative disposition towards the Prime Minister, the Government and the Coalition Georgian Dream are clearly observed. Journalism standards and ethical norms are regularly violated on the website.



civil.ge

During the monitoring period, civil.ge was covering the political events taking place in the country in a quite balanced and impartial way. No explicit positive or negative attitude is observed on the website towards any political force. Journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed.

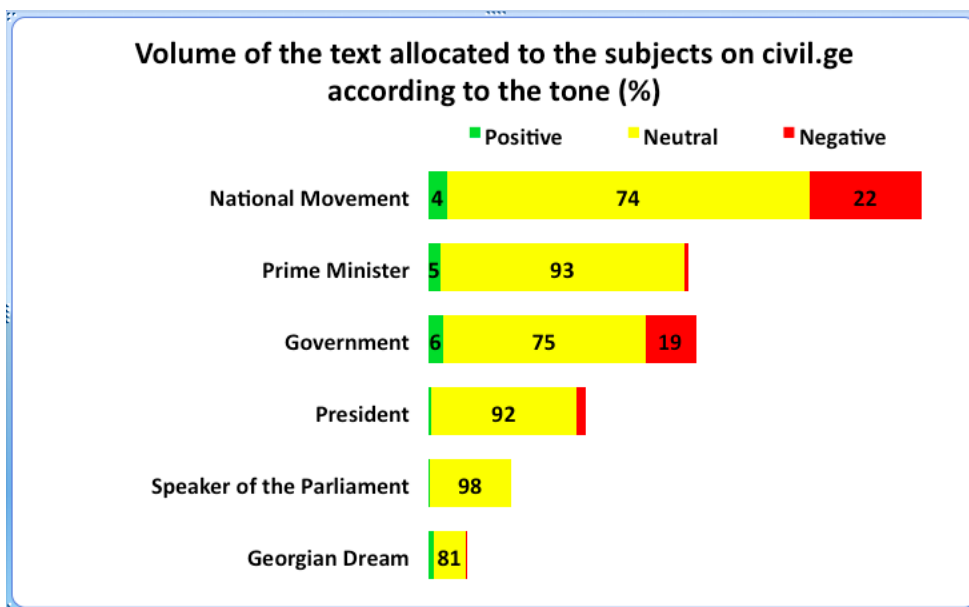
Out of the monitoring subjects, the activities of the National Movement (37%), the government (20%) and the Prime Minister (19%) were most intensively covered on civil.ge.

While covering the subjects, civil.ge is distinguished with high indicators of neutral tone. The highest indicator of negative tone was observed while covering the activities of the National Movement (22%) and the government (19%).

During the monitoring period, the website was regularly covering the political events happening in the country. We encounter short articles of the news format, also lengthy letters.

Civil.ge is also distinguished with the diversity of sources of information. We encounter opinions of representatives of various political forces on the website.

Monitoring results let us conclude that civi.ge quite impartially covers the events taking place in the country. Journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed.

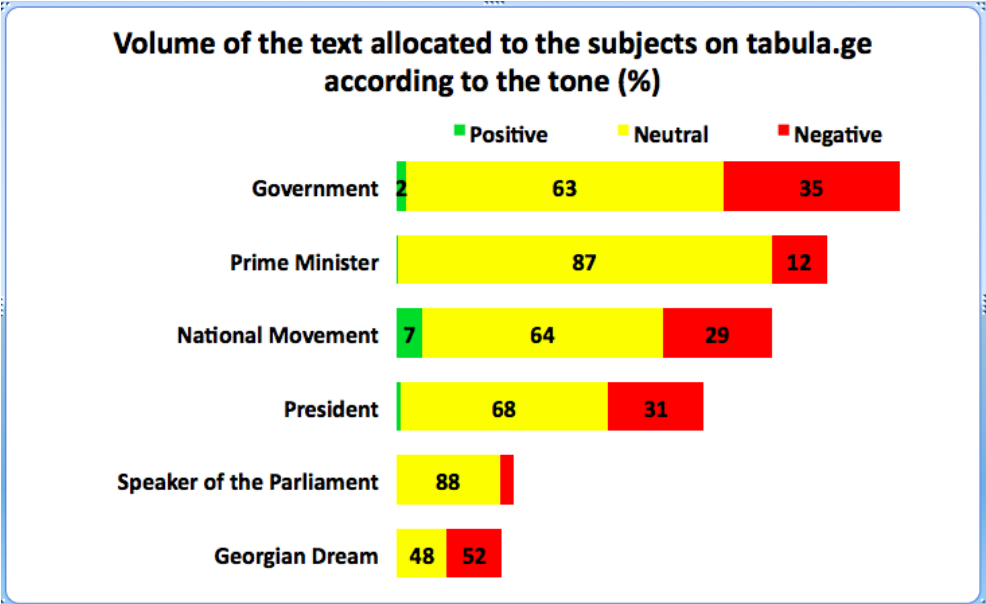


tabula.ge

During the monitoring period, tabula.ge has been offering mostly the brief news materials on its updated website. The news posted on tabula.ge are accompanied with neutral photos. Quotations of officials are often used as headlines on the website. Violations of journalism standards or ethical norms are not observed.

Judging from the viewpoint of context, the materials are diverse, and the website tries to provide coverage of all the significant events. The editorial board mostly uses a neutral tone to cover the activities of politicians, but in some cases the high rate of negative tone is also revealed – for the Coalition Georgian Dream (52%), the government (35%), the President (31%) and the United National Movement (29). It is noteworthy that on the background of the balanced information, the editorial board lays emphasis on international statements and foreign media, where the negative tone and criticism towards the government is prevailing. This can be evaluated as an expression of covert bias.

The materials are mostly based on one official source, but during a day the editorial board tries to show the opinions of other sources as well, which cannot provide exhaustive information about a particular event – in total, the issues are presented in a scattered, but balanced way. Majority of materials posted on the website is based on the comments and statements of officials. During this monitoring period, there is no activeness observed from the side of presidential candidates. Among the monitoring subjects, the most intensive coverage was provided for the Government (27%), the Prime Minister (23%), the National Movement (20%) and the President (16%). Quantitative research revealed one subject covered with a positive tone: Giorgi Margvelashvili (14%). However, it is worth noting that a certain share of this rate is due to the positive mentioning of a Presidential Candidate and the Minister of Education in the Prime Minister’s speeches.

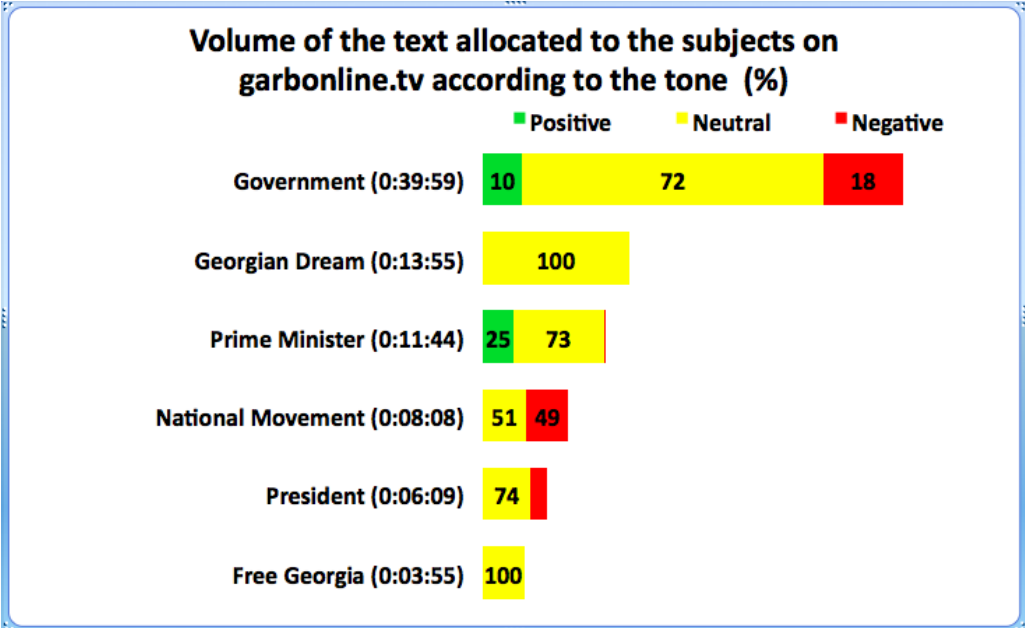


garbonline.tv

During the monitoring period, garbonline.tv covered not only the regional news, but also the political events taking place throughout whole Georgia. The videos depicting the activities of politicians or state officials are mostly shown as short videos on the website, and mostly represent fragments of materials shot at press-conferences. Journalist’s comments or reasoning are rare. It should be pointed out that the journalists’ texts have been written observing the high journalism standards and ethical norms. The website covers the political events in a quite impartial way and there is no positive or negative disposition observed towards this or that political force.

Among the political subjects, the website provided the most intensive coverage for the activities of the government (47%). Highest indicator of negative tone was observed in regards to the National Movement (49%), the President (26%) and the government (18%). We need to point out that the positive or negative tone towards this or that subject was observed from the side of respondents and not the journalists.

Monitoring results let us conclude that the garbonline.tv provides quite impartial coverage of the events taking place in the country. We see opinions of representatives of various political forces on the website. There is a high rate of observance of journalism standards and ethical norms. Besides, we need to point out that little number of materials is observed on the website and thus, it does not comprehensively reflect all the political events taking place in the country.



for.ge

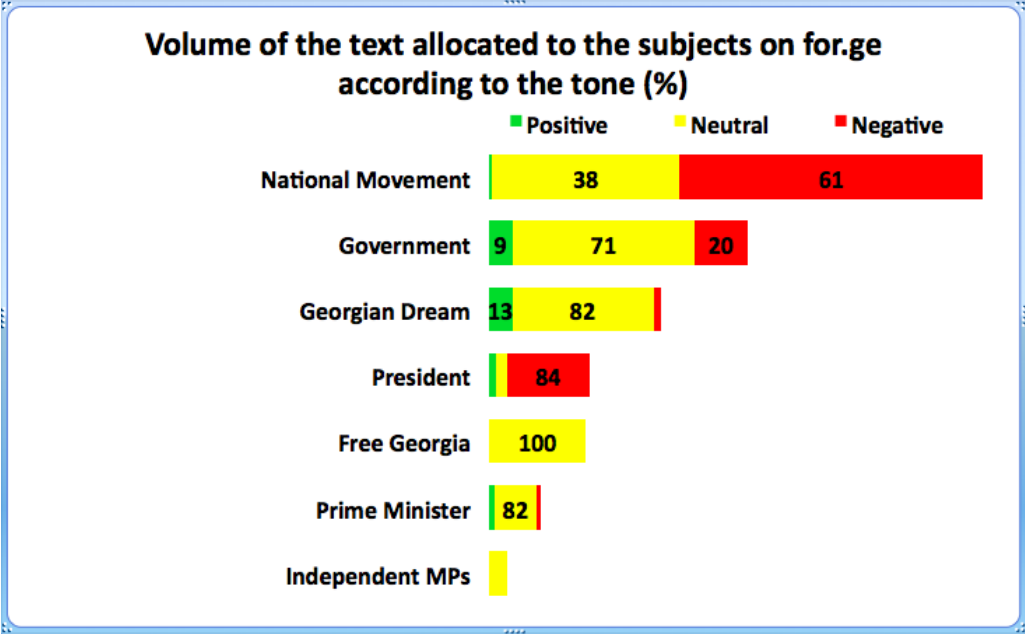
During the monitoring period, we mostly encountered quite large articles on the website, majority of which were the interviews. We need to point out that the majority of respondents expressed negative, and we can even say - hostile disposition towards the President and the National Movement. Prevalence of such interviews provides grounds for us to conclude that the website's editorial board is quite biased while covering the political

events of the country. Moreover, we should also point out the high rate of negative tone while covering the activities of the President (84%) and the National Movement (61%).

We encounter cases of gross violation of ethical norms of journalism on the website. It is noteworthy that the abusive terminology is used not only towards the former authorities, but also towards the persons in their close surroundings.

Quotations of respondents were often used as headlines for articles, which contained quite grave accusations of a certain politician; e.g.: ‘Gia Krialashvili killed under Saakashvili’s order’ (26.06). Although the quote is shown with quotation marks in the headline, this statement contains quite grave accusation and the journalist should bear more responsibility for selecting such a quote for the article’s headline.

We may conclude as the result of the monitoring that for.ge covers the events going on in the country in a quite unbalanced and biased way. Journalism standards and ethical norms are often violated.



dfwatch.net

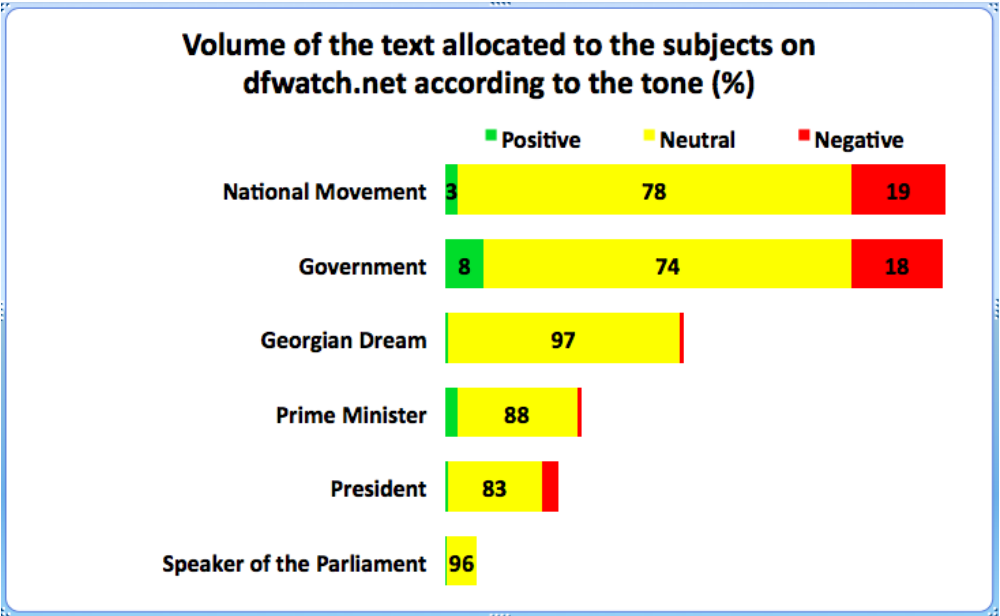
During the monitoring period we encounter short articles in the form of brief news, also quite broad letters on the website. Often the articles published on the website provide quite

extensive information and in-depth reasoning about the political events going on in the country. dfwatch.net provides quite a balanced and impartial coverage of activities of politicians and various public agencies. The website is distinguished with its thematic diversity – the news is actively covered, and also often big letters of various politicians and experts are posted about the current events taking place in the country. The journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed. Opinions of representatives of various political forces are covered on the website.

During the monitoring period, the website provided almost an equal coverage of activities of the National Movement (33%) and the government (32%). Besides, there was a relatively intensive coverage of the activities of the Coalition Georgian Dream (16%) and the Prime Minister (9%).

While covering the monitoring subjects, dfwatch.net is distinguished with a high indicator of neutral tone. The highest indicator of negative tone was observed while covering the activities of the National Movement (19%), the government (18%) and the President (15%).

Monitoring results let us conclude that dfwatch.net provides quite an impartial coverage of political events taking place in the country. Besides, the journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed.

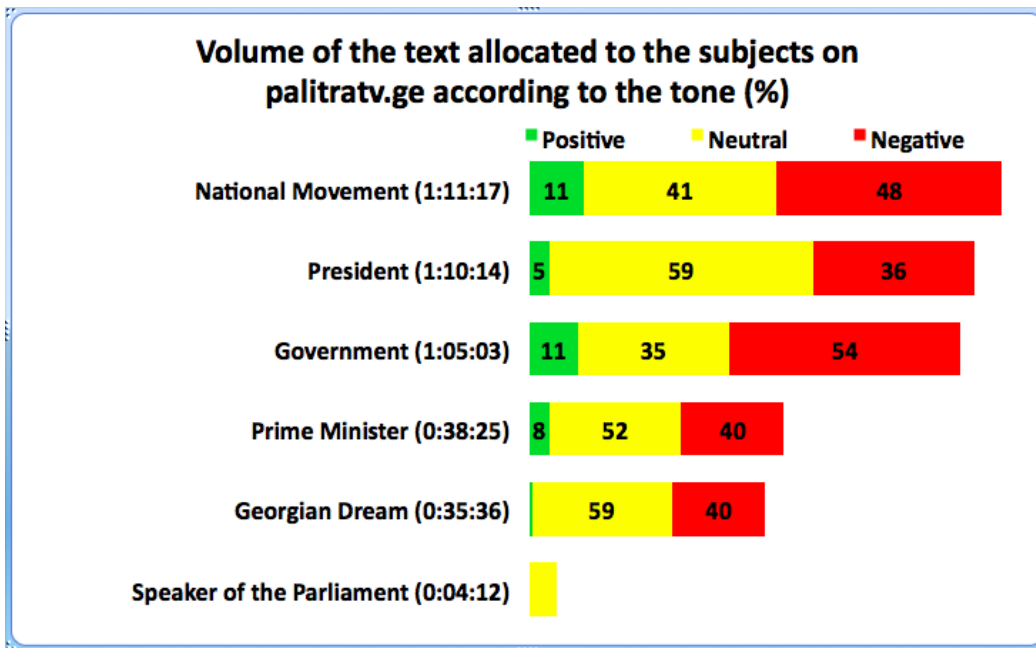


palitratv.ge

During the monitoring period, coverage by palitratv.ge included the video materials related to almost all the high-profile events. We seldom or almost never see the facts in the video-reports posted on the website, where the statement of any political side would be followed up with the comment of another side. This is at certain level caused because the website often cuts out specific sections from the news programs of TV-channels, and uploads them on its own website. Consequently, due to the lack of the journalists' texts, the indicator of neutral tone is low on the website.

Despite thematic diversity, it was the President's activity that was most intensively covered during the monitoring period, and also it was the government – with a similar indicator. However, the government was covered in a more negative tone than the President. This was facilitated by the fact that whenever the President made statements on TV, palitratv.ge would always upload such TV-broadcasts on its website almost fully. However, the President often gave negative evaluation to the activity of the government, which somehow contributed to the high rate of negative tone towards the government on the website. As for the negative coverage, here the National Movement ranks second. It is also interesting that Giorgi Margvelashvili, presidential candidate of Coalition Georgian Dream, to whom a very little share of overall coverage was dedicated, has been covered mostly with neutral and partially positive tone.

As far as the website seldom presents the material with analysis prepared by the editorial board, which would be specifically made for palitratv.ge, it is less possible to evaluate how the authors are observing the ethical norms. In a nutshell, we can say that the website tries to provide impartial coverage of political events happening in the country. We encounter the comments of representatives of various political forces with almost equal frequency. Journalism standards and ethical norms are observed.



Conclusion

During this monitoring period, the political events taking place in the country were quite intensively covered in the Georgian online media. We should point out that the main emphasis was laid on political parties and not on Presidential candidates during this period. Information about the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is prevailing – detentions, detection of covert recordings, etc.

As general trends, the cases of violating the ethical norms of journalism – namely the discriminatory and abusive terminology - decreased in the online media. We should especially point out droni.ge that has radically changed its working style.

Brief and superficial coverage of the news, also the lack of sources of information, remains to be a major problem in the online media.

Presa.ge and droni.ge were distinguished with regular criticism of the government, the Prime Minister and the Coalition Georgian Dream, and for.ge – with its regular criticism of the President and the National Movement.