



Election Monitoring of Online Media

October 27 –November 15, 2013

In connection to the Presidential elections of 2013, the Civic Development Institute (CDI) has continued 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 (up to September 18), liberali.ge, news.ge, presa.ge, civil.ge, tabula.ge, garbonline.tv, for.ge, dfwatch.net, palitratv.ge (from September 18). The report contains the media monitoring results from October 27 until November 15, inclusive.

The following key findings have been identified during the monitoring of online media:

- Online media was pretty active in covering the presidential Election Day.
- Frequency of coverage of various presidential candidates in online media decreased, while coverage of the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili significantly increased.
- Majority of the websites were more or less impartial in covering presidential elections and following events.
- Journalism standards and ethical norms were still regularly violated on the websites presa.ge, droni.ge and for.ge.
- Shallow attitude towards the issues, lack of critical analysis and shortage of sources of information in certain articles still remained the main challenge of online media during the fourth period of monitoring.

netgazeti.ge

As compared to the previous periods, the fifth period of monitoring was characterized by absolutely different topics discussed on the webpage. In post-election period netgazeti.ge had been paying particular attention to coverage of new government candidates. Therefore, activity of the Government was covered most intensively (30%) over the given period. Frequency of the Prime Minister coverage (9%) decreased substantially compared to the previous periods.

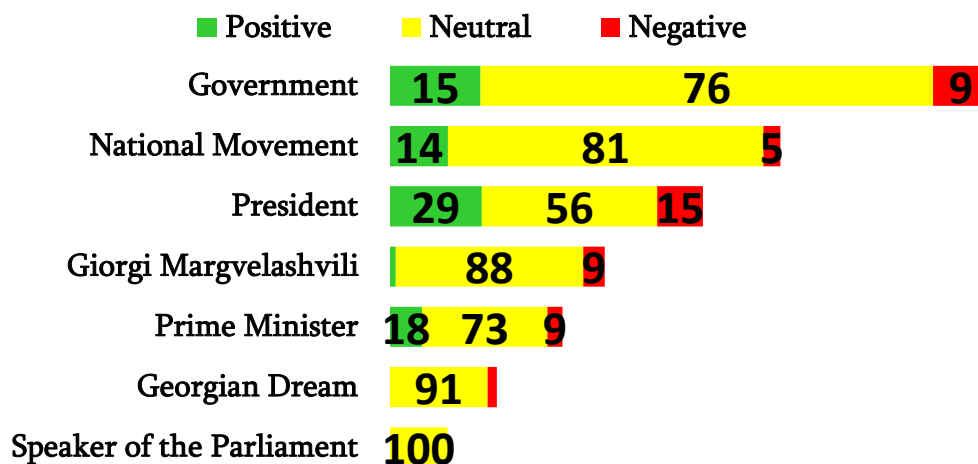
After the elections the website covered activity of the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili (11%) pretty intensively. Within the given period of monitoring netgazeti.ge actively covered issues related to the inauguration of the President; also congratulations of Georgian and foreign politicians addressed to the winning candidate. The website also intensively covered post-election activities of the “United National Movement” (20%) and the President (16%). It shall be noted that no particularly positive or

negative attitude towards any political power was registered on the website within the given period of monitoring.

netgazeti.ge was pretty active while covering presidential elections; during the day the website was publishing information disseminated by various NGOs and the Central Election Commission.

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that netgazeti.ge covered the presidential Election Day and following events pretty objectively and impartially. Cases of serious violation of journalism standards and ethical norms were not registered on the website within the given period of monitoring.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on netgazeti.ge according to the tone (%)



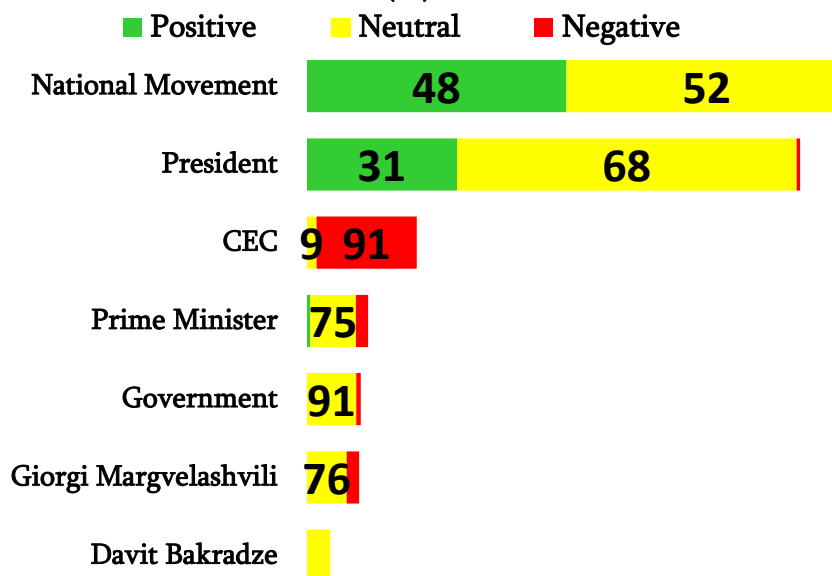
droni.ge

As compared to the previous period of monitoring cases of journalism standards and ethical norms violation on droni.ge further decreased. Nevertheless, positive attitude towards the President and the “United National Movement” was still visible on the website. This trend became obvious as a result of the quantitative analysis, since positive tone was registered in 48% of cases while covering the “United National Movement” and 31% - the activities of the President.

The activities of the “United National Movement” (39%) and the President (36%) were covered most intensively among the monitoring subjects. Frequency of covering the Government (4%) and the Prime Minister (4%) decreased within the given period of monitoring. It shall be mentioned that during the fifth period of monitoring negative tone rates while covering the activities of the Government, the Prime Minister and the presidential candidate of the coalition “Georgian Dream” Giorgi Margvelashvili significantly decreased as compared to the previous periods of monitoring.

Alike the previous periods of monitoring droni.ge still covered ongoing political events of the country rather unobjectively. However, cases of violating journalism ethical norms on the website were substantially decreased. Positive attitude towards the “United National Movement” and the President was obvious on the website.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on droni.ge according to the tone (%)



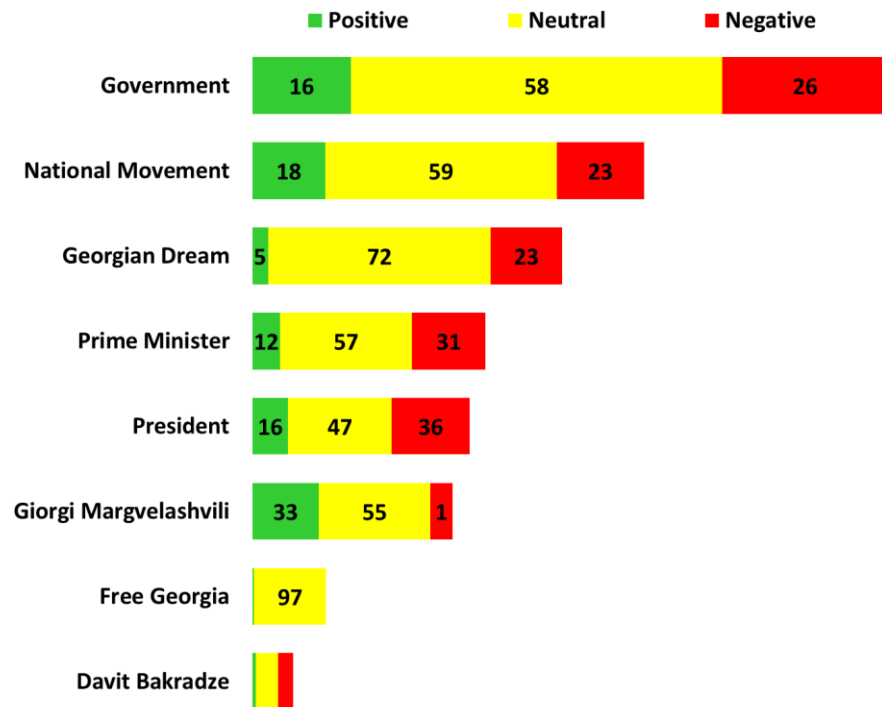
During the fifth period of monitoring pirveliradio.ge was covering ongoing political events of the country pretty actively. The Election Day and following events were covered actively.

There was no especially positive or negative attitude towards any political power registered within the given period of monitoring. However, one article was published on the website on the Election Day, where a rather serious accusation was put against supporters of the presidential candidate Nino Burjanadze without any justified evidences: a journalist wrote in the article “An incident in Zugdidi – a car of the “Georgian Dream” coordinators was damaged (October 27): “Based on unverified information, the cars were damaged by Nino Burjanadze’s activists”. The article does not provide for reliability of that information neither is a comment made by a relevant agency provided. The journalist should have demonstrated more responsibility while covering information containing negative content related to a presidential candidate (or her supporters) without any proof, especially on an Election Day. It shall be noted that apart from the above article no other cases of violating journalism standards were registered on the webpage within the given period of monitoring.

Among the monitoring subjects the activities of the Government (28%), the “United National Movement” (17) and the coalition “Georgian Dream” (13%) were covered most intensively. On the Election Day the website actively covered evaluations made by various politicians and voting procedures. There were no especially high rates of positive or negative tone registered while covering the monitoring subjects within the given period of monitoring. A relatively high rate of positive tone shall be mentioned while covering the winning presidential candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili (33%) that was mostly conditioned by active coverage of congratulations expressed by Georgian and foreign politicians.

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that pirveliradio.ge covered the Election Day and the following events pretty actively and objectively. Apart from the article reviewed in this report no other cases of violating journalism standards and ethical norms were registered whatsoever.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on pirveliradio.ge according to the tone (%)



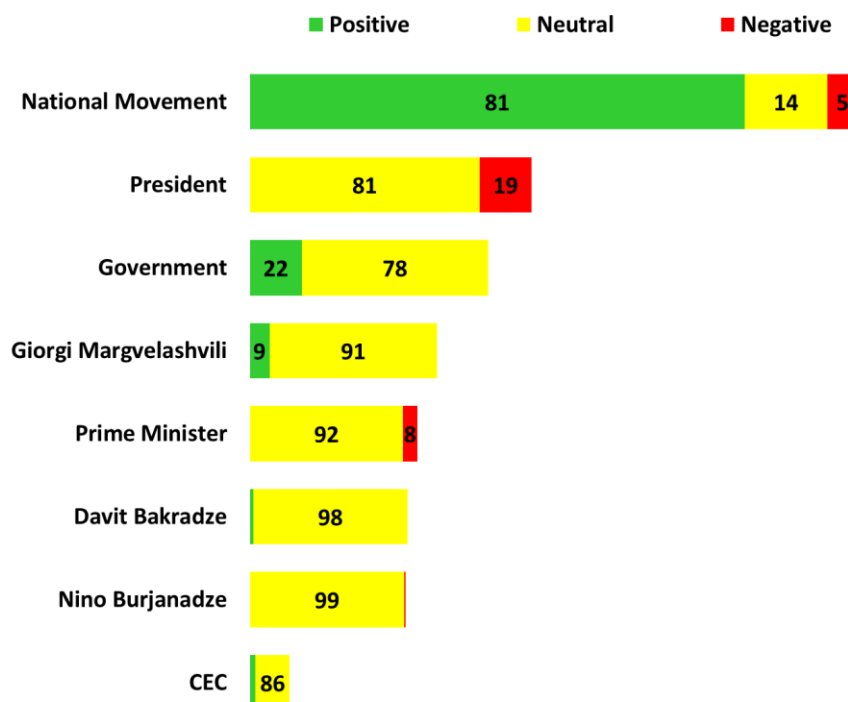
liberali.ge

The website was covering the presidential Election Day pretty actively. During the Election Day liberali.ge was actively publishing information disseminated by various NGOs and the Central Election Commission. Evaluations made by various politicians and voting procedures were also covered.

Among the monitoring subjects activities of the “United National Movement” (33%), the President (15%) and the Government (13%) were covered most intensively. It shall be noted that within the given period of monitoring frequency of coverage of presidential candidates Giorgi Margvelashvili (9%), David Bakradze (8%) and Nino Burjanadze (8%) has significantly increased. Extremely high rate of positive tone should be highlighted in case of the “National Movement” (81%) coverage that was conditioned by publication of extensive letters by the President of Georgia, where he described achievements and stressed innocence of Bacho Akhalaia (for instance, “The President showed mercy to Bacho Akhalaia”, November 3).

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that liberali.ge covered the Election Day and the following events pretty objectively and impartially. There were no cases of serious violation of journalism standards and ethical norms registered within the given period of monitoring. As compared to the previous periods of monitoring thematic diversity of the covered issues had been observed on the website.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on liberali.ge according to the tone (%)



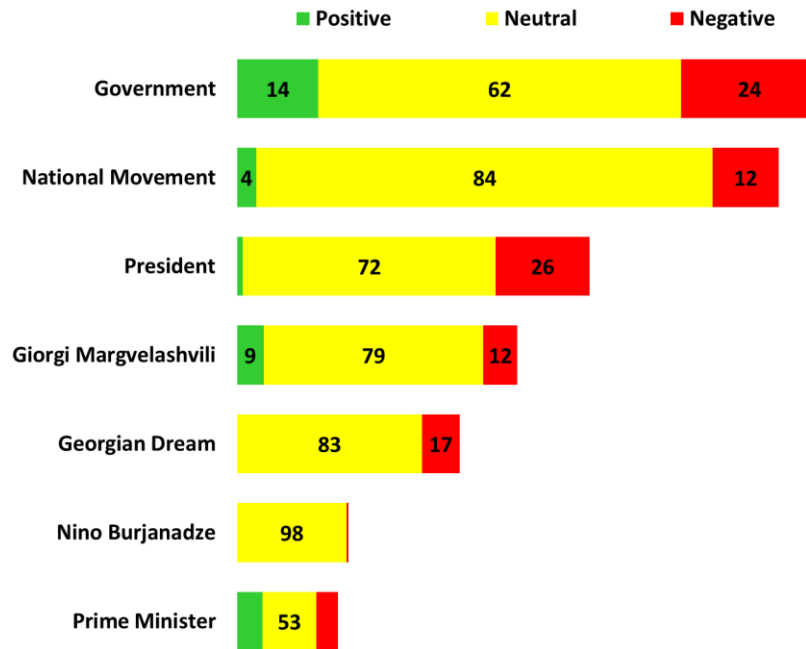
news.ge

The website was pretty active while covering the presidential Election Day. It shall be noted that comments provided by the “National Movement” members have prevailed during the day. Also, news.ge was paying a special attention to passiveness of regional voters and elections related violations.

In a post-election period elections related comments provided by the “National Movement” members were still dominating on the website. Activity of the presidential candidate from the “National Movement” David Bakradze, however, was covered rather poorly (1%). Among the monitoring subjects, the activities of the Government (23%) and the “National Movement” (22%) were covered most intensively. Frequency of coverage of the winning presidential candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili (11%) has significantly increased. It is noteworthy that among presidential candidates the highest rate of negative tone has been registered in case of the Giorgi Margvelashvili (12%).

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that news.ge covered the Election Day and the following events more or less objectively. Comments provided by the “National Movement” representatives clearly prevailed while covering important ongoing events of the country. The website more or less followed journalism ethical norms, however, there were cases, when news.ge published unethical statements made various subjects.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on news.ge according to the tone (%)



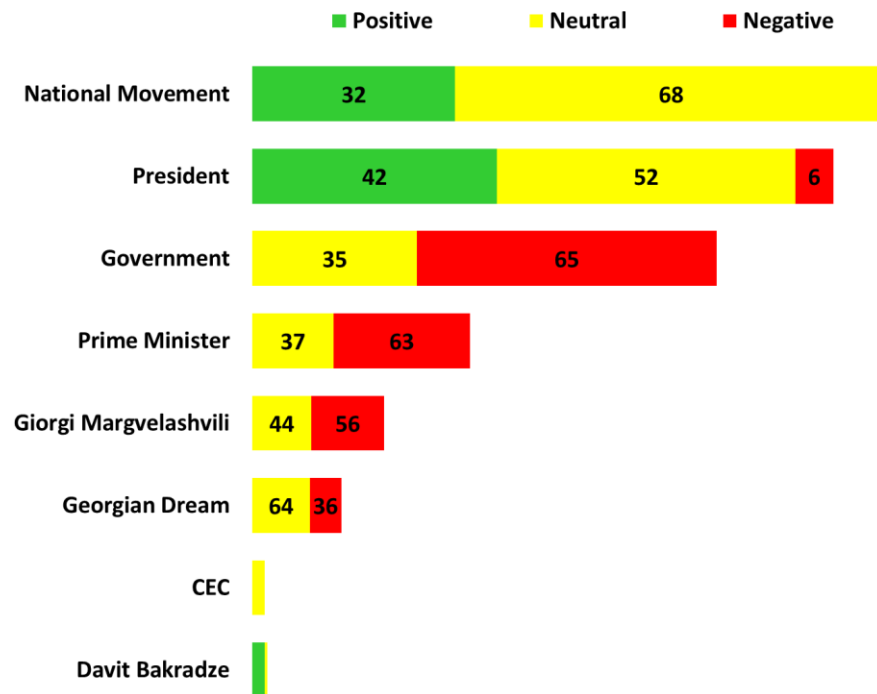
presa.ge

Within the fifth period of monitoring, similar to the previous periods, journalism standards and ethical norms had been regularly violated in presa.ge articles. Positive attitude towards the “National Movement” on one side and extremely negative attitude towards the Government, the coalition “Georgian Dream” and its presidential candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili – on the other was still explicitly visible. The website journalists still used abusive and discriminatory language addressed to those subjects.

On an Election Day presa.ge has been actively covering comments and evaluations provided by the “National Movement” representatives. Within the given period of monitoring the activities of the “National Movement” (29%) and the President (27%) were covered most intensively. It is noteworthy that the “National Movement” (32%) and the President (32%) enjoyed the highest rate of positive tone during coverage. On the other hand the Government (65%), the Prime Minister (63%), Giorgi Margvelashvili (56%) and the coalition “Georgian Dream” (36) received high rates of negative tone during coverage.

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that presa.ge still covered ongoing political events of the country in an extremely unbalanced and nonobjective way. Almost all journalism standards were regularly violated on the website.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on presa.ge according to the tone (%)



civil.ge

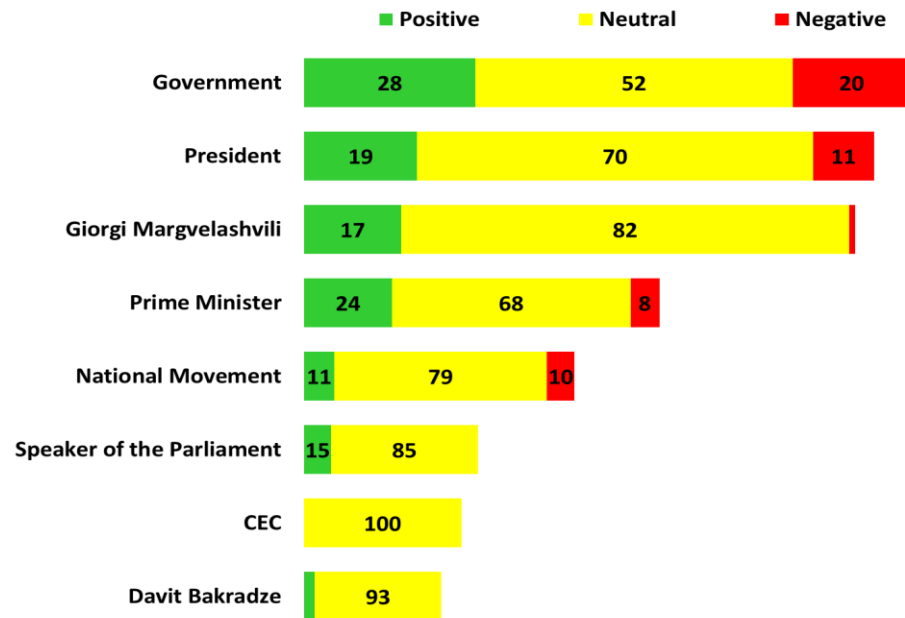
Within the fifth period of monitoring, as in the previous periods, civil.ge had been covering ongoing political events of the country pretty objectively. The presidential Election Day – evaluations made by politicians, “exit poll” results etc. – was covered actively.

After the elections the website actively covered issues related to inauguration of the President as well as nomination of the new Prime Minister. There was still no sign of especially positive or negative attitude towards any particular politician within this period of monitoring. In most of the cases balance of information sources was followed in articles. We would highlight the article „Politicians comment on Garibashvili’s nomination as PM” (November 2), which presented evaluations made by various politicians in relation to Irakli Garibashvili’s nomination as PM.

Among the monitoring subjects the activities of the Government (19%) and the President (18%) were covered most intensively. It is noteworthy that the website paid a rather significant attention to coverage of the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili (17%). There was no particularly high rate of positive or negative tone towards any monitoring subject registered on the website within the given period of monitoring.

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that civil.ge covered the Election Day and the following events pretty objectively. Alike the previous periods of monitoring no type of bias towards any politician or political team was registered on the website. Journalism standards and ethical norms were followed at a highest level.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on civil.ge according to the tone (%)



tabula.ge

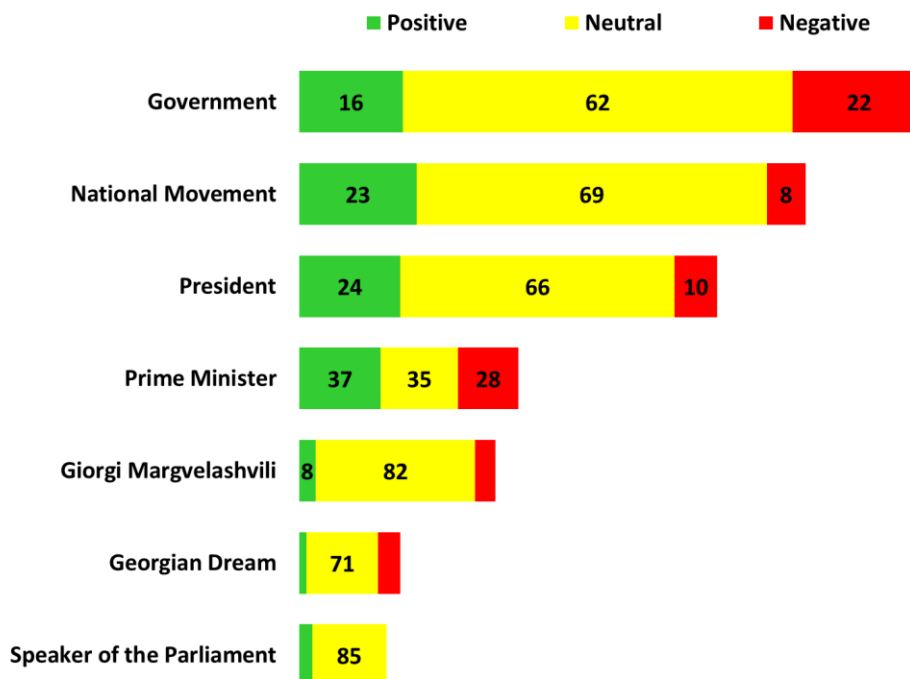
The website covered presidential elections pretty actively and objectively. During the day tabula.ge had been covering statements of the Central Election Commission and evaluation of the election process made by various politicians.

Within the fifth period of monitoring tabula.ge covered the ongoing political events of the country pretty objectively. However, within the given period of monitoring, comments and political evaluations made by representatives of the “National Movement” were covered most intensively. Numerous articles were dedicated to litigation involving Bacho Akhalaia and Vano Merabishvili, where they were presented mainly from positive standpoint. The issue related to Bacho Akhalaia’s mercy done by the President was also actively covered. On the other side issues related to nomination of Irakli Gharibashvili for the position of the Prime Minister was mostly covered in a relatively negative context.

Among the monitoring subjects the activities of the Government (27%), the “National Movement” (22%) and the President (18%) were covered most intensively on the website. It is noteworthy that the highest rate of negative tone was registered while covering the Prime Minister (28%) and the Government (22%).

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that tabula.ge actively covered the presidential elections and following events. Journalism standards were followed in certain articles most of the time. The qualitative analysis revealed relatively positive attitude towards the “National Movement”, although in general it might be said that the website tried to follow journalism standards and often managed to provide readers with balanced and objective information. The website is also characterized by thematic diversity and critical approach towards the issues.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on tabula.ge according to the tone (%)



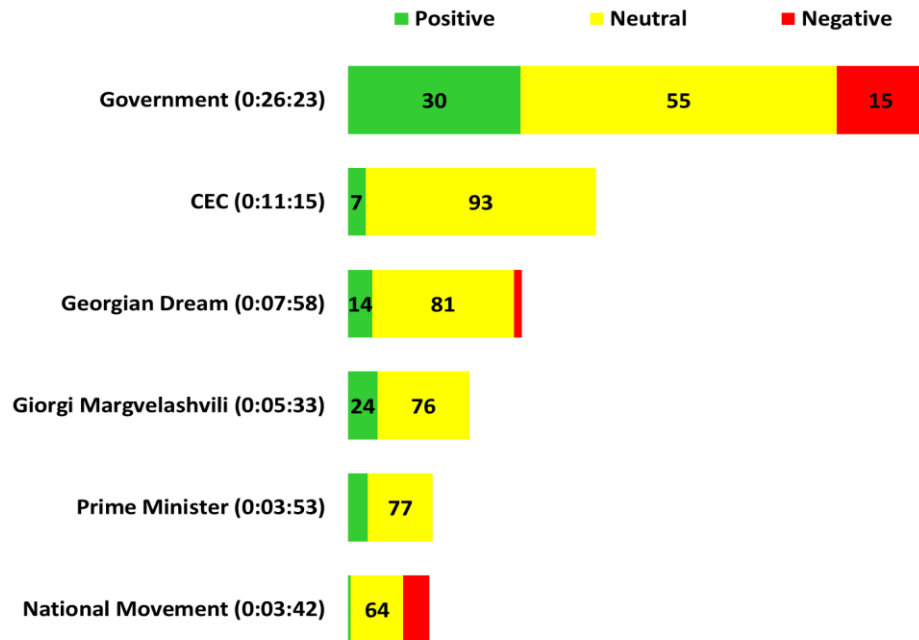
garbonline.tv

The website covered presidential elections pretty actively. The information concerning processes taking place in the capital city and regions had been published during the Election Day. In general, the quantity of materials published on garbonline.tv increased over the given period of monitoring.

Among the monitoring subjects the activities of the Government (38%), the Central Election Commission (16%) and the coalition “Georgian Dream” (11%) were covered most intensively. Activity of the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili (8%) was covered with a rather significant frequency. There were no particularly high rates of positive or negative tone towards any subject registered within the given period of monitoring. Relatively high rate of positive tone (30%) was addressed to the Government that was conditioned by the fact that within the given period of monitoring garbonline.tv had been mostly publishing statements made by the Government members without any evaluation.

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that garbonline.tv covered the Election Day and the following events pretty objectively and impartially. There were no cases of serious violation of journalism standards and ethical norms registered within the given period of monitoring. The quantity of materials published on the website increased as compared to the previous periods.

Time allocated to the subjects on garbonline.tv according to the tone (%)



for.ge

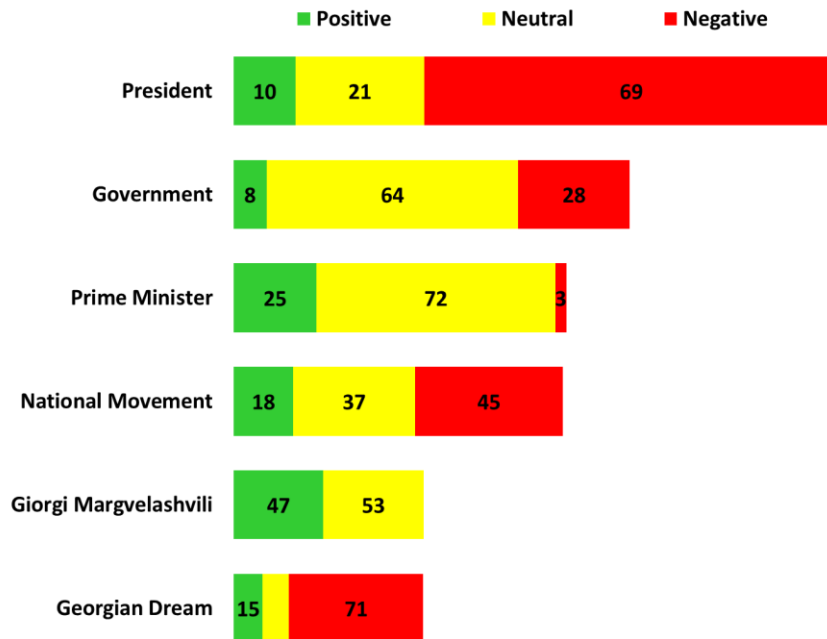
Within the fifth period of monitoring, as well as the previous periods, the journalism standards and ethical norms were systematically violated on the website. for.ge was still distinguished by extremely negative attitude towards the President and the “National Movement”. Subjective judgments of journalists and subjective conclusions made without any reference to actual facts were often the case on the webpage. Also the quantity of articles prepared on the basis of information supplied by anonymous sources had increased (for instance, “Nodar Khaduri may be soon fired”, November 14).

Among the monitoring subjects activities of the President (29%), the “National Movement” (16%) and the Prime Minister (16%) were covered most intensively. High rate of negative tone was registered while covering the President (69%) and the “National Movement” (45%). It shall be noted that criticism towards the Government (28%) and the coalition “Georgian Dream” (71%) significantly increased within the given period of monitoring. The criticism of the ruling party by various respondents was mainly registered while reviewing the topic related to “cohabitation”. Pretty high rate of positive tone was registered while covering the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili (47%) and the Prime Minister (25%).

The website has dedicated numerous articles to review of Mikheil Saakashvili’s presidency period. In such articles the activity of the President was described in an extremely negative tone (for instance, “Notables of Misha’s era”, October 27; “Bush and Saakashvili: an example of how not to act”, November 2).

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that for.ge kept covering ongoing political events of the country in an unbalanced way. Journalism standards and ethical norms were systematically violated on the website.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on for.ge according to the tone (%)



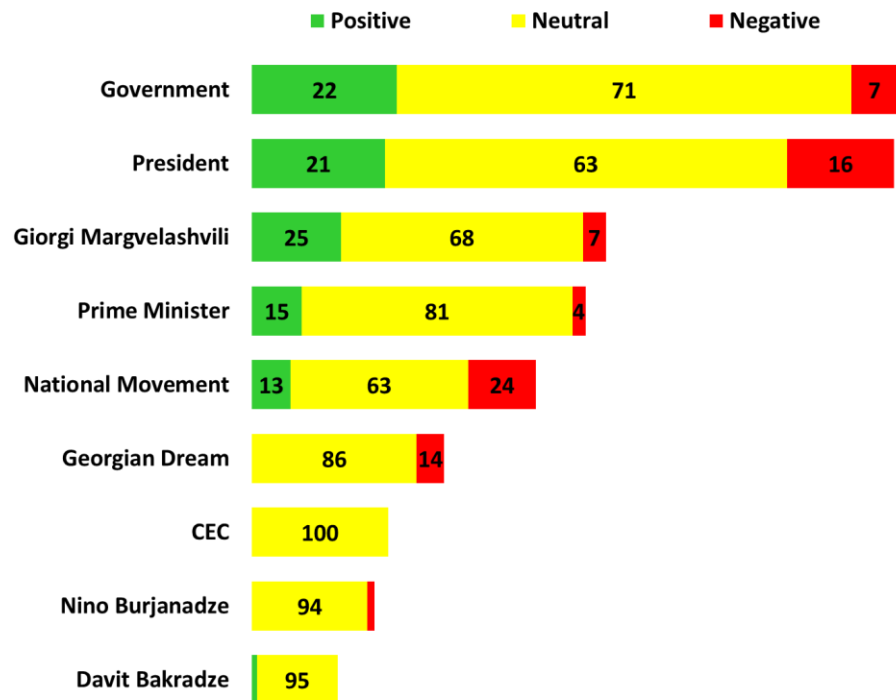
dfwatch.net

The website covered the Presidential Election Day and the following events pretty objectively and impartially. Within the given period of monitoring, as in the previous periods, there was no positive or negative approach towards any political force registered on dfwatch.net. Journalism standards and ethical norms were followed on the website at a high level.

Among the monitoring subjects activities of the President (22%), the Government (22%) and the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili (16%) were covered most intensively. The highest rate of positive tone was registered while covering Giorgi Margvelashvili (25%) that was conditioned by the fact that the website actively covered congratulations expressed by foreign and Georgian politicians in his address. There was no particularly high rate of positive or negative tone registered on the website towards other monitoring subjects.

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that dfwatch.net covered the presidential elections pretty objectively. There were no serious violations of journalism standards and ethical norms registered within the given period of monitoring.

Volume of the text allocated to the subjects on dfwatch.net according to the tone (%)



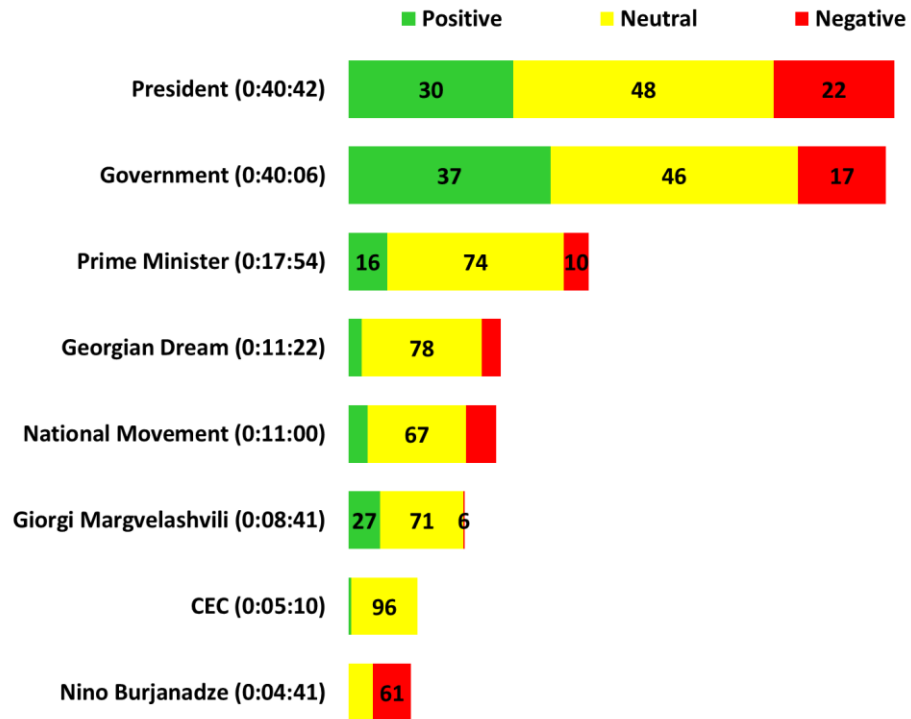
palitratv.ge

Palitratv.ge covered the presidential elections pretty actively. Evaluations made by different politicians and voting procedures had been covered on the website during the whole Election Day. The website also dedicated numerous stories to the statements and evaluations made by the Central Election Commission. Positive or negative attitude towards a political force was not observed during the presidential elections coverage.

Among the monitoring subjects the activities of the President (27%) and the Government (27%) were covered most intensively. Within the given period of monitoring the website actively covered issues related to Irakli Garibashvili's nomination for the position of a Prime Minister. Percentage indicators of a positive tone prevailed while covering the subjects on the website that was conditioned by the fact that palitratv.ge mostly published politicians' statements without comments and evaluations.

As a result of the monitoring we may conclude that palitratv.ge was pretty active and objective while covering the presidential elections. Percentage indicators of a positive tone prevailed on the website, however, as a result of a long-term observation there was no type of bias towards any political team registered on palitratv.ge.

Time allocated to the subjects on palitratv.ge according to the tone (%)



Conclusion

Georgian online media covered the Presidential Election Day pretty actively. After the elections coverage of various presidential candidates decreased on all websites, while frequency of coverage of the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili significantly increased.

Within the given period of monitoring, as in the previous periods, the websites droni.ge, presa.ge and for.ge were distinguished by unilateral and unobjective coverage of events. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that violation of journalism standards reduced on droni.ge as compared to the previous periods of monitoring.

There were no drastic changes registered on any website after the elections in comparison to the previous periods of monitoring.

Shallow coverage of issues, lack of critical analysis and shortage of sources of information in certain articles still remained among major problems faced by online media.