

Media Monitoring of Local Government Elections of 2014

Monitoring of Print Media

June 15 –June 30, 2014

In connection with the local government elections of 2014, the Civic Development Institute (CDI) is implementing the media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU-UNDP program. The monitoring is carried out for the period of April 15 through June 30, 2014, covering 7 publications: the Rezonansi, the Akhali Taoba, the Asaval-Dasavali, the Alia, the Versia, the Kviris Kronika, and the Kviris Palitra.

This report presents the media monitoring results from June 15 until June 30, inclusive.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the material revealed the following **key findings**:

- Criticism against the United National Movement still prevails in all the publications that have been selected for the monitoring.
- We encounter especially critical disposition to this party in the following newspapers: the Alia, the Asaval-Dasavali, the Kviris Kronika.
- Evaluations of various politicians about the results of the elections were extensively reported during this period.
- Frequency of coverage of mayoral candidates decreased in the print media after the Election Day (June 15).
- After the Election Day, the rates of neutral tone increased while covering the subjects.

- During this monitoring period, unlike the previous monitoring periods, we encountered less abusive and discriminatory terminology in the journalists' texts in the newspaper the Versia.
- Especially gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms are still found in the newspapers the Alia, the Asaval-Dasavali and the Kviris Kronika.

The Rezonansi

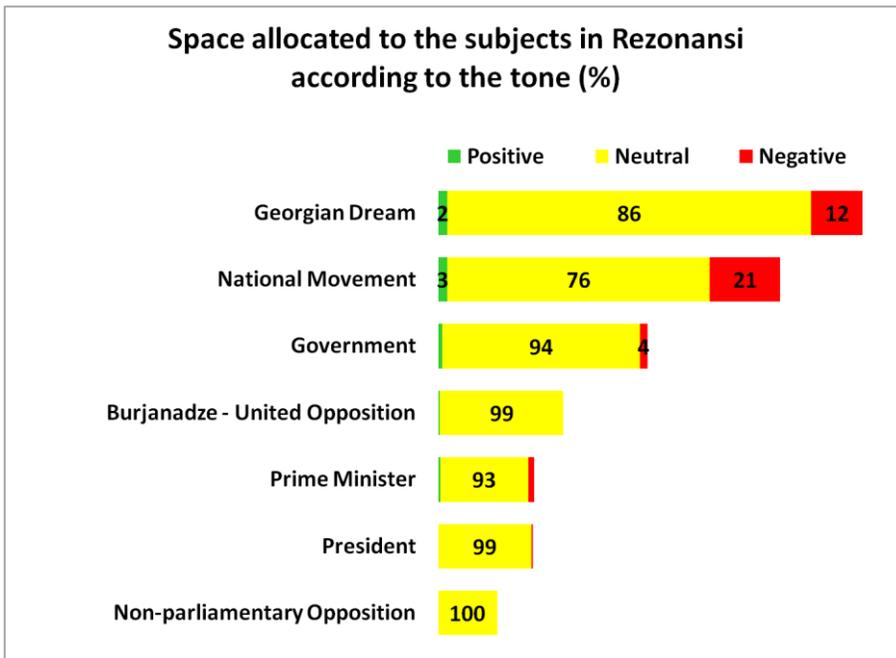
During this monitoring period, the Rezonansi continued its objective and impartial coverage of the actualities taking place in the country. We did not observe any particularly positive or negative attitude towards any political force. Journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed. Intensive coverage was provided regarding the election results.

The most intensive coverage was observed for the Coalition Georgian Dream (30%), the United National Movement (24%) and the government (15%). There were no especially high rates of positive or negative tone reported for any of the monitoring subjects. Relatively higher rate of negative tone was observed while covering the United National Movement (21%) (*See the Chart 1*). However, it is noteworthy that the negative tone is basically observed in the respondents' statements and not in the journalists' texts. Journalists of the Resonance refrained from political evaluations and ungrounded reasoning during the first monitoring period. Neutral tone prevailed in the newspaper when covering the mayoral candidates (*See the Chart 2*).

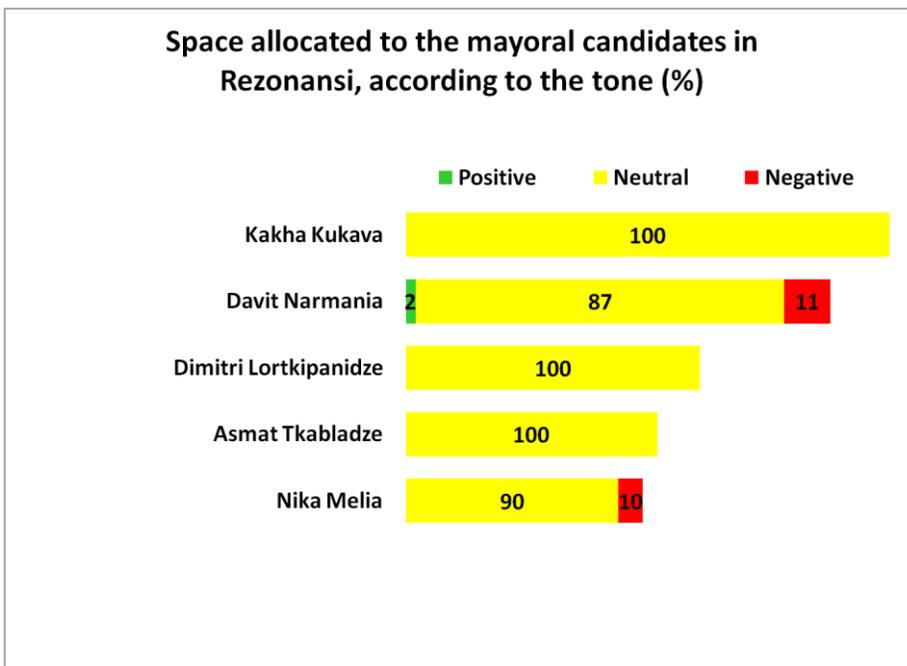
Issues related to the results of local government elections were actively and quite objectively covered in the newspaper during this monitoring period (for example: "Dream will have more than 2/3 in the Tbilisi Sakrebulo", 17.06.2014, page 4; "The Dream has lost 39% of supporters in 2 years, and the National Movement - 63%", 18.06.2014, page 4; "Celebration on the background of conflicting results of exit polls," 16.06.2014, page 16). Besides, the Resonance covered the opinions of mayoral candidates who lost the elections (short interviews with Kakha Kukava, Dimitri Lortkipanidze and Asmat Tkabladze, 16.06.2014, page 3).

The monitoring results let us conclude that the Rezonansi quite actively and objectively covered the results of local government elections. Journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed in the newspaper during this monitoring period.

(Chart 1, Subject Coverage, the Rezonansi)



(Chart 2, Coverage of Mayoral Candidates, the Rezonansi)



The Alia

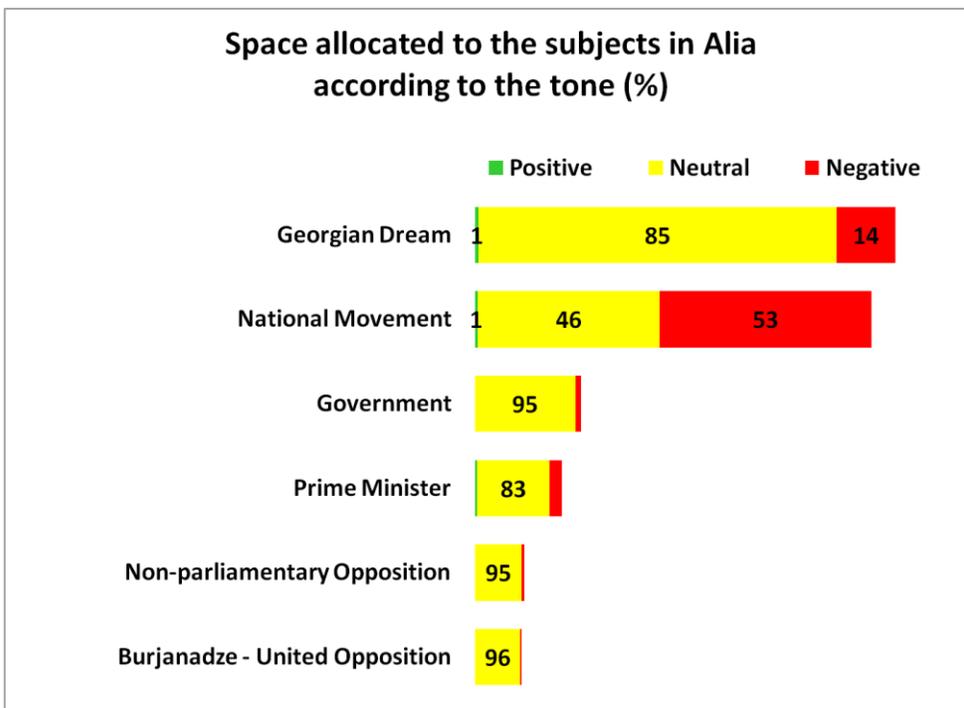
During this monitoring period, the Alia again covered the ongoing events in a quite biased manner. We encountered ungrounded reasoning by the journalists, unethical expressions and cases of publishing unverified facts and information provided by less reliable sources. Journalists of the newspaper quite often used offensive terminology while covering various politicians.

Among the monitoring subjects, the most intensive coverage was provided for the activities of the Coalition Georgian Dream (34%), the United National Movement (32%) and the government (21%). We should point out quite high rates of negative tone while covering the United National Movement (53%) (See the Chart 3).

We often observed the usage of abusive and discriminatory terminology by the journalists during this monitoring period; for example: "Now the whole world knows that Mikheil Saakashvili is a PR freak. This is how he cheated us, with this kind of PR" ("What happened in Ukraine when Saakashvili went to the President's inauguration", 24.06.2014, page 11); "News agencies disseminated information by 6pm that the MPs from the National Movement Irma Nadirashvili, nicknamed "Nursa" and Zurab Japaridze, the poet Rezo Amashukeli's "singed piglet" were detained at Baku Airport with electric shock devices and a half million dollars in cash" ("apparently, Aliyev has released Irma Nadirashvili and Zurab Japaridze upon Saakashvili's request...", 20.06.2014, page 3-4). In addition, there were some cases, where the headlines were made of extremely offensive phrases expressed by the respondents; for example: "Lasha Amirejibi: F*** all those people who hates the truth, who cannot stand the truth... let it be from the former or present authorities" (27.06.2014, page 5).

The monitoring results let us conclude that the Alia is still covering the current events with bias. We regularly come across with gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. The journalists of this newspaper are not reluctant to use abusive and discriminatory terminology towards various politicians.

(Chart 3, Subject Coverage, The Alia)



The Kviris Palitra

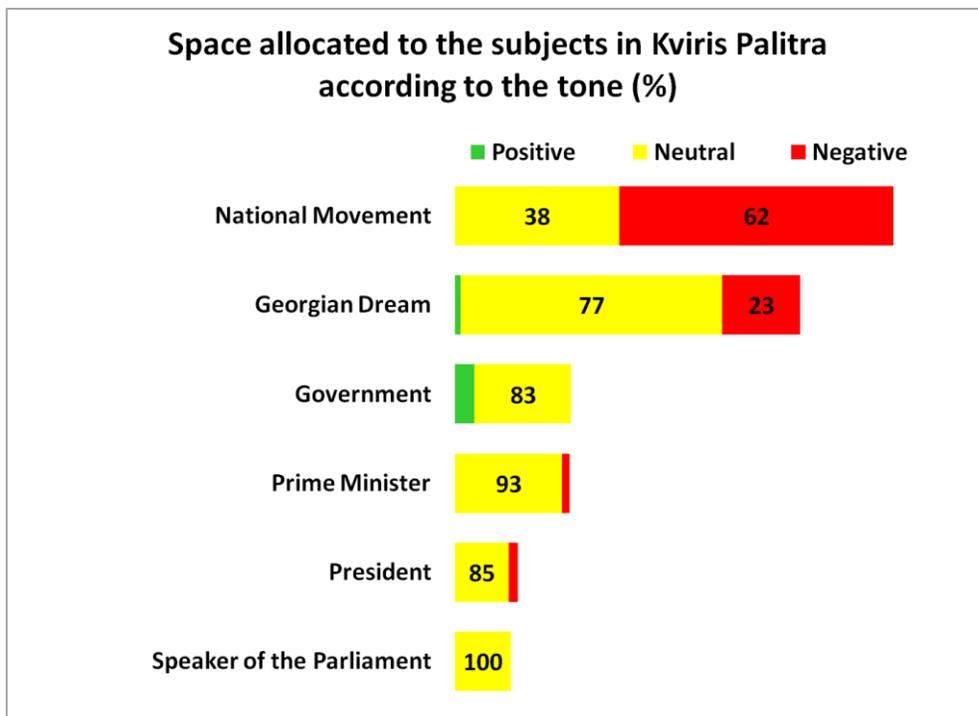
During this monitoring period the criticism of the United National Movement increased significantly in the Kviris Palitra. We did not observe any particularly gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms in this publication.

The most intensive coverage was provided for the activities of the United National Movement (38%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (30%) during the monitoring period. There was quite high rate of negative tone was observed while covering the United National Movement (62%) (See the Chart 4). The Kviris Palitra did not actively cover the activities of mayoral candidates during the monitoring period.

During this monitoring period, the Kviris Palitra provided quite an objective coverage of the news. However, criticism of the United National Movement prevailed in the rubric "Weekly Thoughts with Merab Metreveli".

The monitoring results let us conclude that the criticism of the United National Movement increased significantly in the Kviris Palitra after the local government elections. We did not observe the cases of gross violation of journalistic standards.

(Chart 4, Subject Coverage, The Kviris Palitra)



The Asaval-Dasavali

During this monitoring period, the Asaval-Dasavali was again extremely critical towards the United National Movement. Besides, the negative tone prevailed while covering the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream. However, we should point out that Davit Narmania's activity was covered in a quite positive context. We regularly encountered the cases of gross violation of journalistic standards in the newspaper. The journalists often demonstrate ungrounded reasoning and they also use offensive terminology. During this monitoring period the Asaval-Dasavali again provided extremely biased coverage of the events taking place in the country.

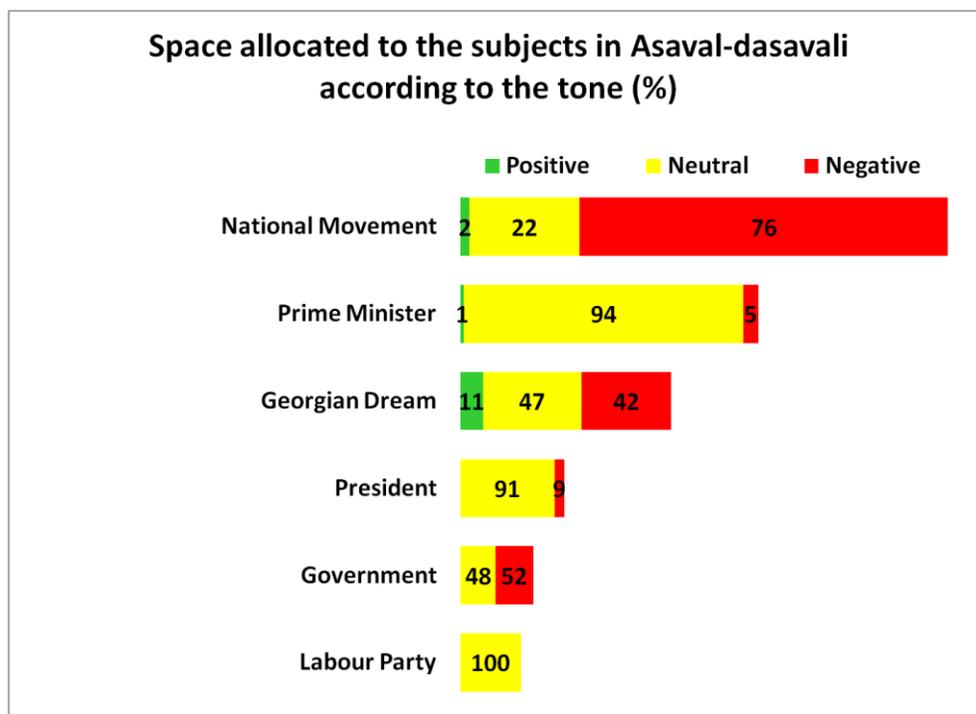
The most intensive coverage was provided for the United National Movement (39%) among the monitoring subjects, also for the Prime Minister (20%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream(14%). Extremely high rates of negative tone was reported when coveringtheUnited National Movement (76%) (See the Chart 5). Quite high rates of negative tone were observed for the government (52%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (47%).

During this monitoring period we often came across with the cases of usage offensive terminology by the journalists towards various politicians; for example: "some

unicellular member of the National Movement, selected for the Sakrebulo, will not be able to do more harm to the city and the country, even if he tries hard, than the harm already caused by this Davit Zurabishvili!" (*The article is attached with the election photo of Davit Zurabishvili, which is crossed over. "Why I have crossed over the republican candidate of the Georgian Dream in the ballot paper!"*, 16.06.2014, page 11); "a stranger running and throwing stones in the cornfields of the village Chunesi, Tskaltubo district, which is "sometimes visible, sometimes invisible", it can only be Mikheil Saakashvili!" (*Misha, come out of the cornfield!*, 30.06.2014, page 6). Besides, we should also point out the journalist's pretty positive disposition towards Davit Narmania, Tbilisi mayoral candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream: "I can say without any curtesy that – Dato is a Georgian man to the core, a young man who was grown up in a very honest Georgian family, with a true Georgian heart!" ("Second round should be about returning the Davit Agmashenebeli's statue to the Tbilisi center!" 16.06.2014, page 2).

The monitoring results let us conclude that the Asaval-Dasavali reporting about the current news is extremely biased. We regularly encounter the cases of gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms.

(Chart 5, Subject Coverage, the Asaval-Dasavali)



The Akhali Taoba

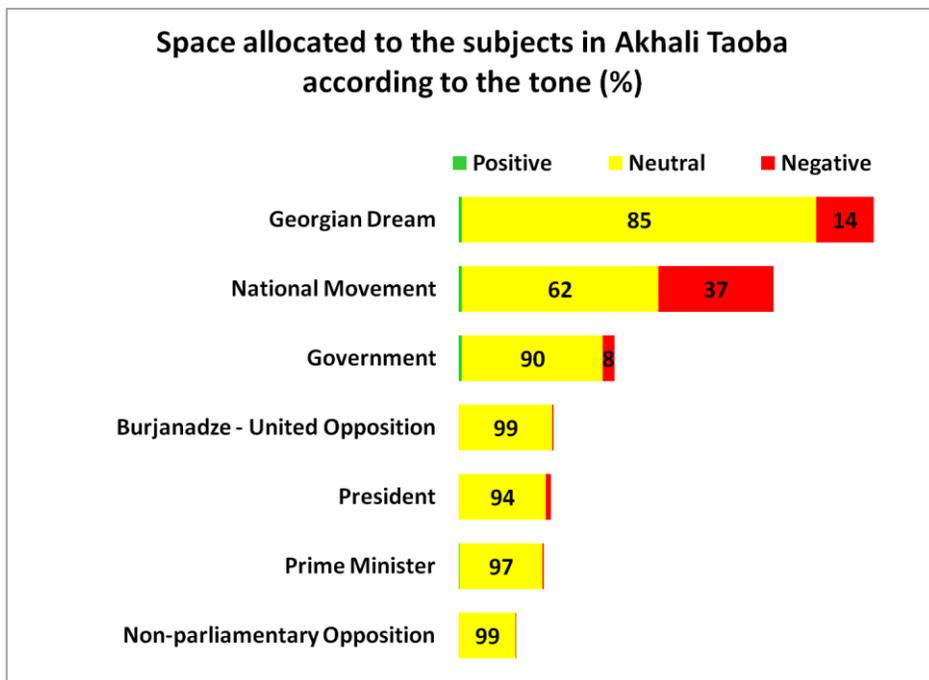
There was a negative disposition towards the United National Movement observed in the Akhali Taoba during this monitoring period. Journalistic standards and ethical norms were mostly observed, but in some cases the newspaper's journalists openly expressed their negative disposition to this or that politician.

The most intensively coverage was provided for the activities of the Coalition Georgian Dream (33%), the United National Movement (24%) and the government (12%). The highest rate of negative tone was reported for the United National Movement (37%) (See the Chart 6). Neutral tone prevails in the newspaper when covering the Tbilisi mayoral candidates (See the Chart 7).

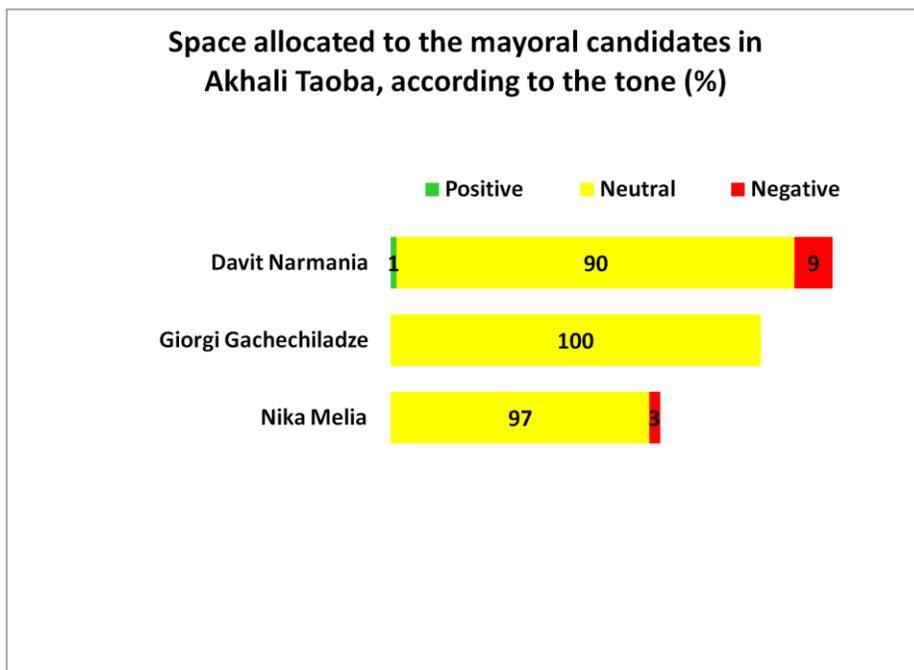
During this monitoring period we often encountered the journalist's offensive phrases addressed to the United National Movement; for example: "This is about the National Movement, which is not very powerful, but rather artificially resurrected...", "Davit Bakradze's words sound like hypocrisy in this situation..." (We failed to get rid of the criminal National Movement, and now we cannot get rid of the Dream, either", 17.06.2014, page 7); "Is not it better for the National Movement to remain a low-rating party, rather than to disperse among the whole political spectrum and spoil the whole space?" (24.06.2014, page 6).

The monitoring results let us conclude that there is a critical disposition towards the United National Movement observed in the Akhali Taoba. In some cases the newspaper's journalists openly express their negative attitude when covering the representatives of this party.

(Chart 6, Subject Coverage, the Akhali Taoba)



(Chart 7, Coverage of Mayoral Candidates, the Akhali Taoba)



The Versia

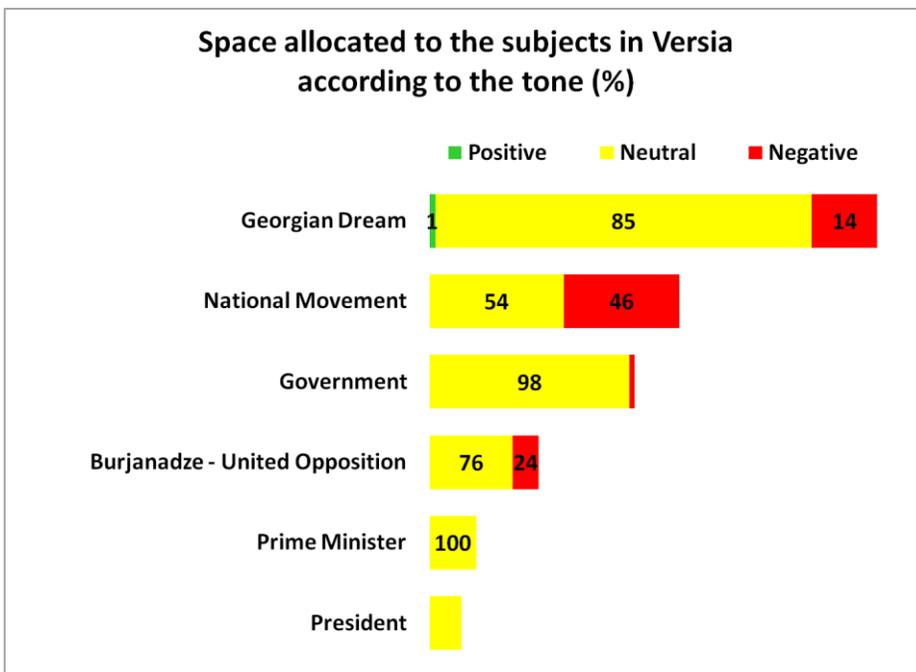
Critical attitude towards the United National Movement is still present in the Versia during this monitoring period. Besides, criticism towards the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream also increased in the newspaper. It is worth noting that we did not come across with the cases of gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms in the newspaper during this monitoring period.

Among the monitoring subjects, the most intensively covered activities were those of the Coalition Georgian Dream (25%), the United National Movement (17%) and the government (19%). Pretty high rate of negative tone was observed while covering the United National Movement (46%). We did not observe any especially high rates of positive or negative tone while covering other subjects (*See the Chart 8*). The Versia did not provide active coverage of activities of mayoral candidates.

During this monitoring period the newspaper quite intensively covered the evaluations of various politicians or experts about the elections results (for example: “What the non-parliamentary opposition is planning”, 16.06.2014, page 3; “Kakha Kakhishvili evaluates the elections and forecasts unmanageable processes”, 18.06.2014, page 4; “Alexander Kantaria’s questions to the authorities”, 27.06.2014, page. 3).

Based on the monitoring results we can conclude that unlike the previous monitoring periods, we no longer encountered the cases of gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms in the Versia. We still observe negative disposition towards the United National Movement in the newspaper.

(Chart 8, Subject Coverage, the Versia)



The Kviris Kronika

During this monitoring period, the Kviris Kronika was again quite critical to the United National Movement also to the ruling coalition as well. We regularly encountered the cases of gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. Journalists of the Kviris Kronika were not reluctant to use subjective reasoning and offensive terminology regarding various politicians.

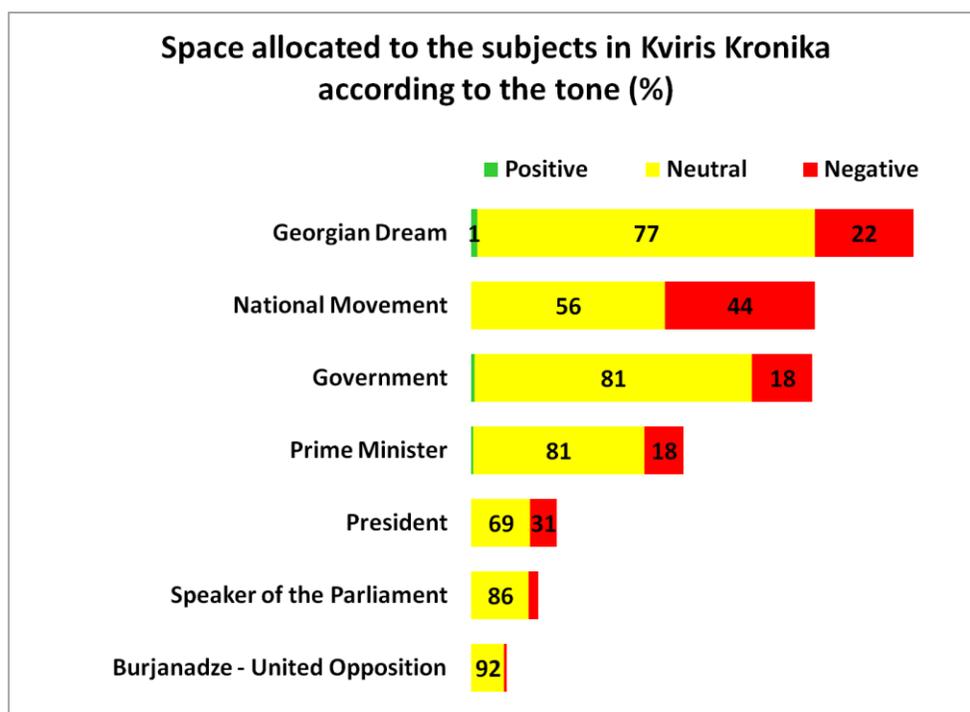
Among the monitoring subjects, the most intensive coverage was provided for the activities of the Coalition Georgian Dream (27%), the United National Movement (22%), the government (21%) and the Prime Minister (13%). Pretty high rate of negative tone was observed while covering the United National Movement (44%) (See the Chart 9). High rates of negative tone were also observed for the President (31%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (22%).

We regularly encountered subjective reasoning and usage of offensive terminology by the journalists towards this or that politician in the Kviris Kronika during this monitoring period. For example: “Now his inflated dream went away with the air-balloons flown into the sky... Davit’s [Narmania] mother turns out to be naughty...” (“It’s high time for the Dream to reject the bonuses taken for doing nothing and start a diet, before the people do something wrong with them”, 23.06.2014, page 2); “Mayor of

Tbilisi Gigilo Ugulava, who has slipped on ice like a pregnant donkey, has been summoned to the Financial Police for interrogation on June 30” (let me tell something to this nerd Gharibashvili and his ichthyologist Ivanishvili: it does not matter how many billions you earn and what position you occupy, neither flute can be carved out of you nor a man will become of you”, 30.06.2014, page 2); “A bad news is not the fact that Usupashvili, who has tied his tail with other flatterers of the Western policy, is making such a statement (on the contrary, this is quite logical), but the bad news and the tragedy is that this three-percent parasite is an official, and he is a head of the legislative power” (“Usupashvili has taken off his mask”, 30.06.2014, page 15); “The people can’t wait to see you off to the political graveyard and bury you in the ground..” (“Rumors about passing away of the National Movement were not exaggerated!!!”, 23.06.2014, page 30); “To those who circles number five and adds up points by talking too much, I would wish Misha to become their son-in-law and Tutberidze - a daughter-in-law” (“We, the poets of Georgia”, 16.06.2014, page 33).

The monitoring results let us conclude that the Kviris Kronika still reports the ongoing events with bias. We regularly come across with the cases of breaching the journalistic standards and ethical norms.

(Chart 9, Subject Coverage, “Kviris Kronika”)



Conclusion

Like the previous monitoring periods, journalistic standards and ethical norms are quite often violated in the Georgian print media in the fourth monitoring period as well. Often the journalists do not refrain from subjective and ungrounded reasoning. Moreover, we often see offensive and discriminatory terminology used in the journalists' texts about a certain politician in the publications that were selected for the monitoring. We regularly encounter the cases of especially gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms in the newspapers the Asaval-Dasavali, the Kviris Kronika and the Alia.

Coverage of mayoral candidates significantly decreased in the print media after the Election Day, but evaluations of various politicians and experts regarding the election results were quite actively covered.

Criticism of the United National Movement still prevails in all the monitored publications.