



Media Monitoring of Local Government Elections of 2014

Monitoring of Online Media

May 24 – June 14, 2014

In connection with the local government elections of 2014, the Civic Development Institute (CDI) renewed its media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU and UNDP program. The monitoring is carried out for the period of April 15 through June 30, 2014, covering 12 the most rated Georgian websites: *netgazeti.ge*, *droni.ge*, *piroeliradio.ge*, *liberali.ge*, *news.ge*, *presa.ge*, *civil.ge*, *tabula.ge*, *reportiori.ge*, *for.ge*, *dfwatch.net*, *palitrato.ge*. This report covers the third monitoring period and presents the monitoring results from May 24 until June 14, inclusive.

The online media monitoring has revealed the following key findings:

- Compared to the results of the monitoring in 2012 and 2013, the online media has improved in regards to the adherence to ethical norms of journalism, and objective coverage of subjects.
- There are positive changes observed on the websites *presa.ge*, *droni.ge* and *tabula.ge* even in the third monitoring period, as compared to the monitoring results of 2013.
- There is a clearly negative attitude observed during this monitoring period towards the United National Movement on the websites *reportiori.ge* and *for.ge*.
- The most intensive coverage was provided for the activities of the following monitoring subjects: the United National Movement, the Coalition Georgian Dream, the government and the Prime Minister.

- Again, election activities of mayoral candidates were less frequently covered; the websites were more focused on the coverage of political parties and government forces.
- Although the elections got closer, the online media did not provide more frequent coverage of mayoral candidates.

netgazeti.ge

During this monitoring period, netgazeti.ge kept on objective and impartial reporting of the events taking place in the country, as before. There was no positive or negative attitude observed on the website towards any political force. The journalistic standards and ethical norms were highly observed.

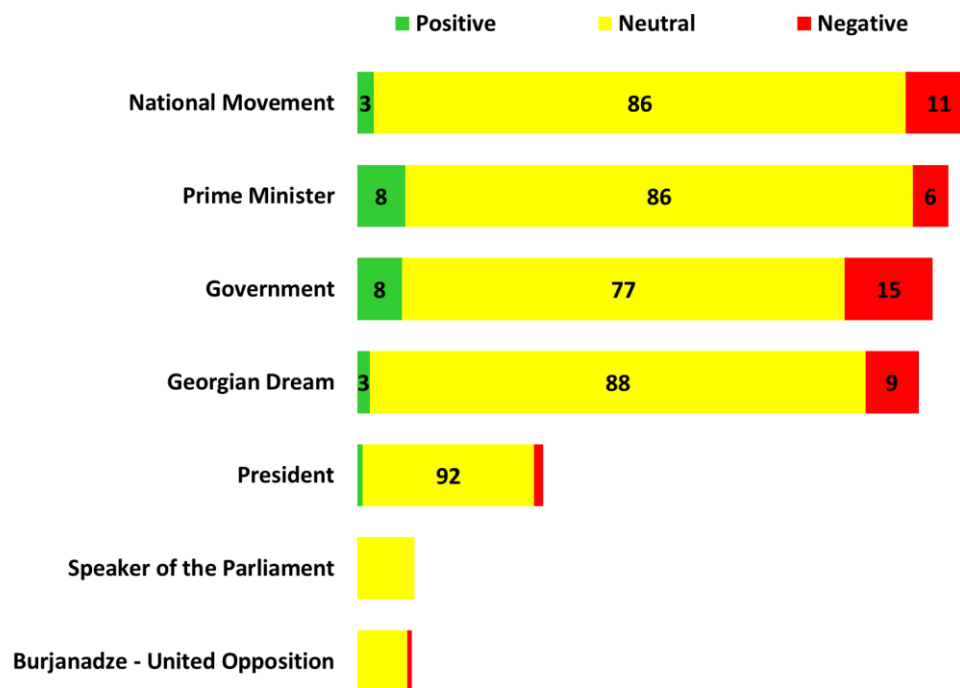
The most intensively covered activities were those of the following monitoring subjects: the United National Movement (8%), the Prime Minister (19%), the government (28%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (37%). There were no extraordinarily high rates of positive or negative tone observed in regards to any of the subjects (*See the Chart 1*). The website provided less frequent coverage of election activities of mayoral candidates during this monitoring period, and laid main emphasis on political parties and government structures.

The website actively covered the reports of various NGOs during this monitoring period about the violations discovered during the pre-election period (e.g. “GYLA Report: CEC is incoherent in regards to the opposition and the government candidates”, 11.06.2014; “NGOs: there are more violations during the elections in 2014 than in 2013, 14.06.2014”).

The monitoring results let us conclude that netgazeti.ge is still providing quite objective reports about the events taking place in the country. The journalists of the website highly observe the journalistic standards and ethical norms. Active coverage was provided regarding the violations revealed during the election period.

(Chart 1, Subject Coverage, netgazeti.ge)

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



droni.ge

During this monitoring period, droni.ge provided less active coverage about the ongoing political processes. As observed, there was no positive or negative disposition towards any political force. Journalistic standards and ethical norms are observed.

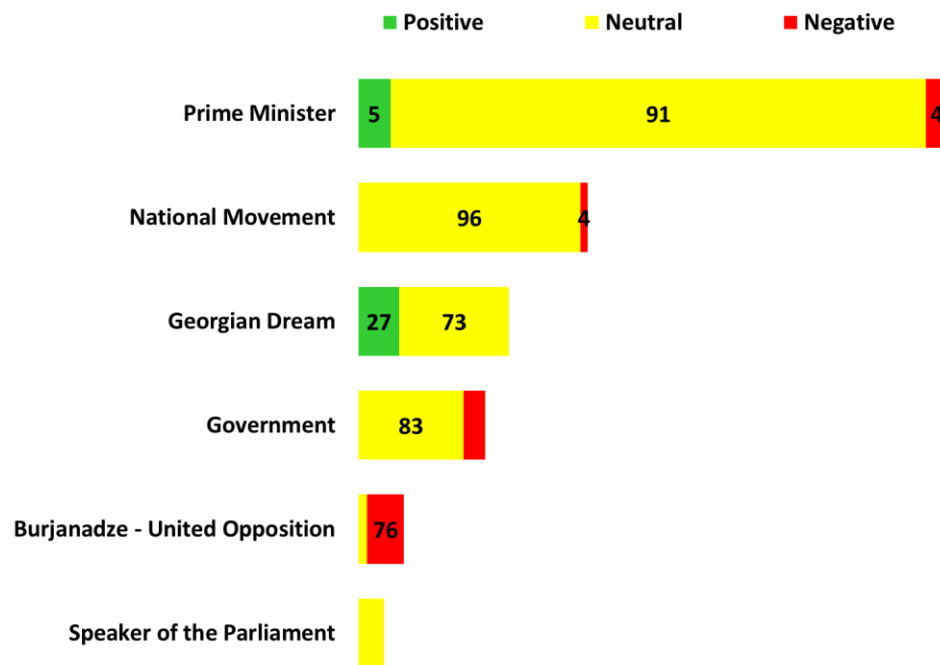
The most intensively covered monitoring subjects were: the Prime Minister (39%), the United National Movement (15%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (10%) and the government (9%). We did not observe any especially high rates of positive or negative tone in regards to any of the subjects (See the Chart 2).

During this monitoring period, compared to the monitoring results of previous years, there are changes observed on the website in regards to the adherence to the ethical norms of journalism, also the balanced coverage of subjects. We no longer encounter any insulting or discriminatory terminology on droni.ge.

The monitoring results let us conclude that droni.ge is covering the ongoing political processes objectively and impartially. However, it is worth noting that during this monitoring period the website less frequently reported about the political issues.

(Chart 2, Subject Coverage, droni.ge)

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



pirveliradio.ge

During this monitoring period, pirveliradio.ge continued pretty objective and impartial coverage of actually all the important events taking place in the country. Journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed. There were no especially positive or negative disposition observed on the website towards any political force.

The most intensively covered activities were those of the United National Movement (26%), the government (23%), the Prime Minister (22%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (14%). We did not observe any especially high rates of positive or negative tones towards any of the subjects (See the Chart 3). While reporting about the mayoral candidates, higher rate of positive one was used for Davit Narmania (27%), Asmat Tkabladze (27%) and

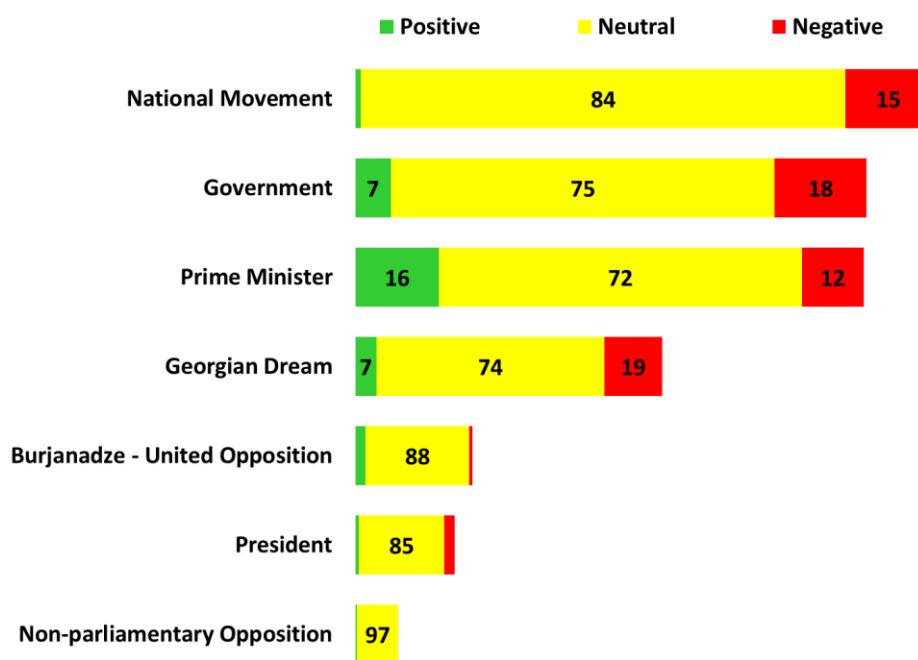
Dimitri Lortkipanidze (20%) (See the Chart 4), which was due to the fact that the website often reported about the election meetings and promises of candidates without comments.

The website provided quite an active coverage of election meetings of mayoral candidates during this monitoring period. There was a rubric “Election Meetings”, where the articles informed about the election meetings of the representatives of various political parties (e.g. “Election Meetings”, 5.29.2014; “Election Meetings” 5.30.2014; “Election Meetings”, 2.06.2014; “Election Meetings”, 3.06.2014). It is noteworthy that the articles in this rubric were quite objectively written and there was no positive or negative attitude observed towards any particular candidate.

Based on the monitoring results we can conclude that pirveliradio.ge provides quite an objective and impartial coverage of the ongoing national political processes. Journalistic standards and ethical norms are observed. The website actively highlighted the election meetings of election subjects.

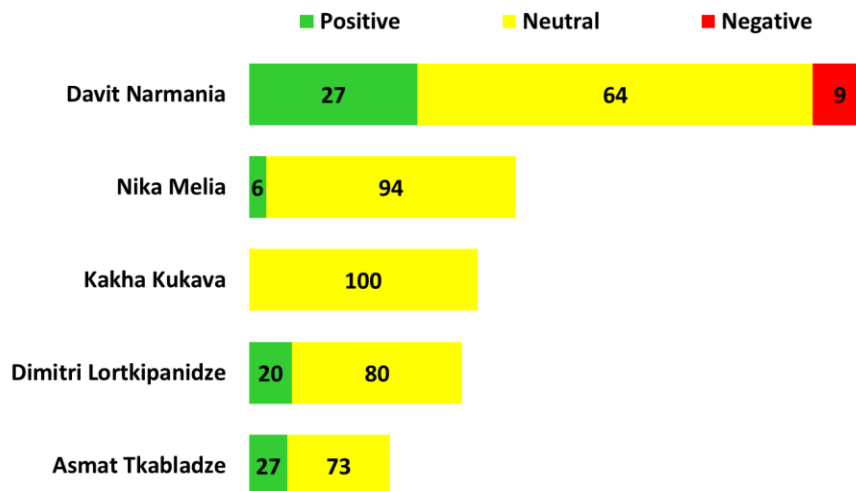
(Chart 3, Subject Coverage, pirveliradio.ge)

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



(Chart 4, Coverage of Mayoral Candidates, *pirveliradio.ge*)

**Volume of the text allocated to the Mayoral candidates on
pirveliradio.ge
according to the tone (%)**



liberali.ge

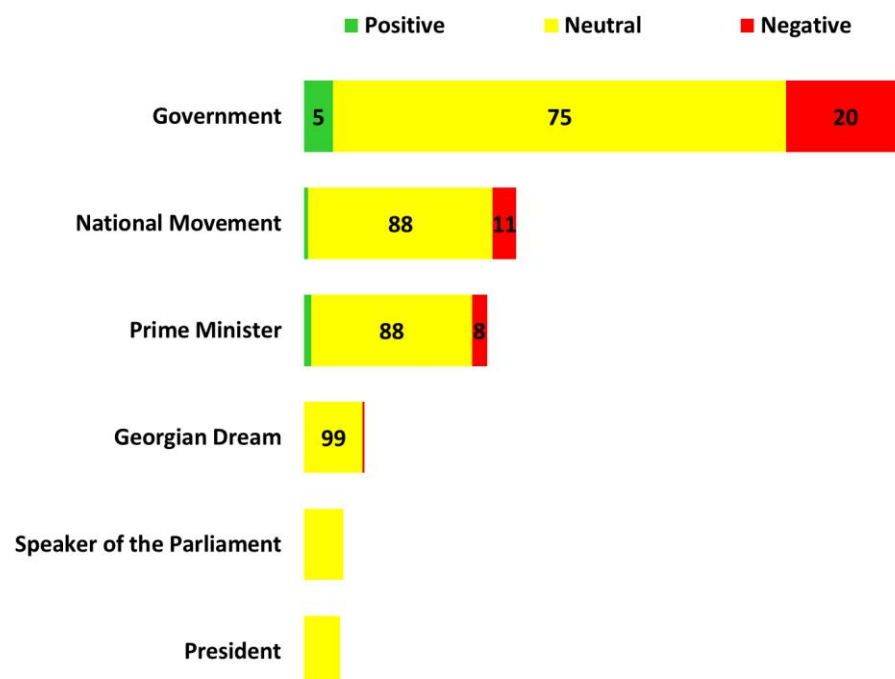
During this monitoring period liberali.ge kept on objective reporting about the events taking place in the country. We did not observe any positive or negative disposition towards any political force on the website. The journalistic standards and ethical norms were highly observed.

The most intensively covered activities were those of the following monitoring subjects: the government (53%), the United National Movement (18%), the Prime Minister (16%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (5%). We need to point out quite a high rate of negative tone in regards to the government (45%) (See the Chart 5), which was due to the fact that the website provided a broad coverage of quite critical statements of various organizations addressed to the government (e.g. “GYLA: the authorities failed to prevent violent facts before the elections”, 13.06.2014; “Prime Minister’s statements will have negative impact on the election processes”, 3.06.2014). We did not encounter especially high rates of positive or negative tone towards other monitoring subjects. The webpage less frequently reported about the election activities of mayoral candidates during this monitoring period and laid main focus on the political parties and government structures.

The monitoring results let us conclude that liberali.ge again provided quite an objective coverage about the ongoing political processes. There is a critical disposition observed towards the activities of authorities. Journalistic standards and ethical norms are highly observed.

(Chart 5, Subject Coverage, liberali.ge)

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



news.ge

During this monitoring period, news.ge provided quite active coverage about the ongoing events in the country. As observed, the website did not demonstrate any positive or negative attitude towards any political force. We did not reveal any cases of gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms during this monitoring period.

The most intensively covered activities were those of the government (30%), the United National Movement (24%), the Prime Minister (24%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (10%). We did not observe any especially high rates of positive or negative tone in regards

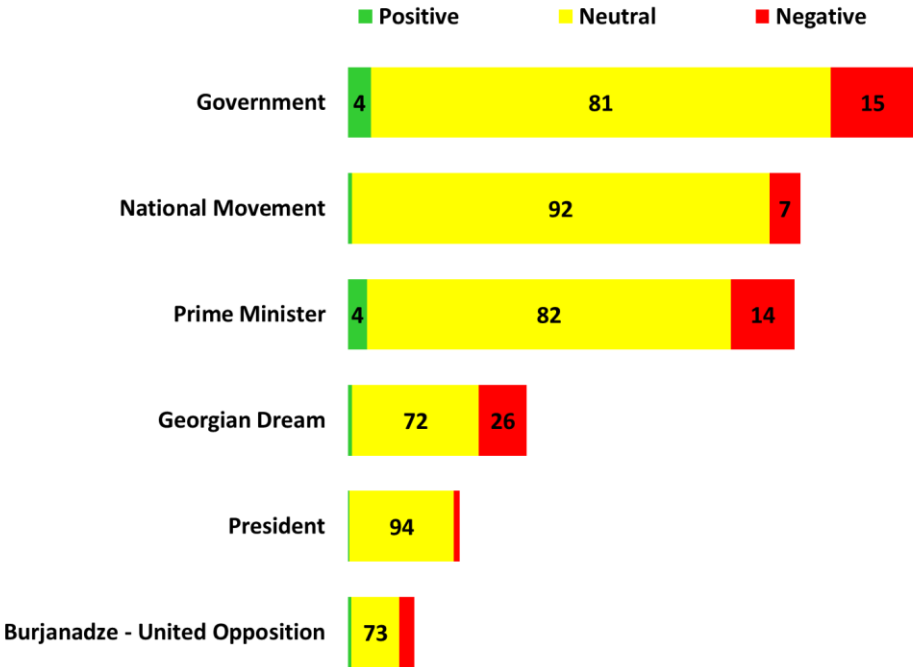
to any particular subject (See the Chart 6). The website reported about the election activities of mayoral candidates less frequently and laid major emphasis on political parties and government structures.

During this monitoring period the website actively reported the information obtained from the social work Facebook.

The monitoring results let us conclude that news.ge is impartially covering the election processes. Journalistic standards and ethical norms are observed. However, coverage of mayoral candidates did not become frequent on the website as the elections date got closer.

(Chart 6, Subject Coverage, news.ge)

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



presa.ge

Presa.ge was mostly focused on covering the election subjects during the monitoring period. There was no positive or negative attitude observed on the website towards any political power. Journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed.

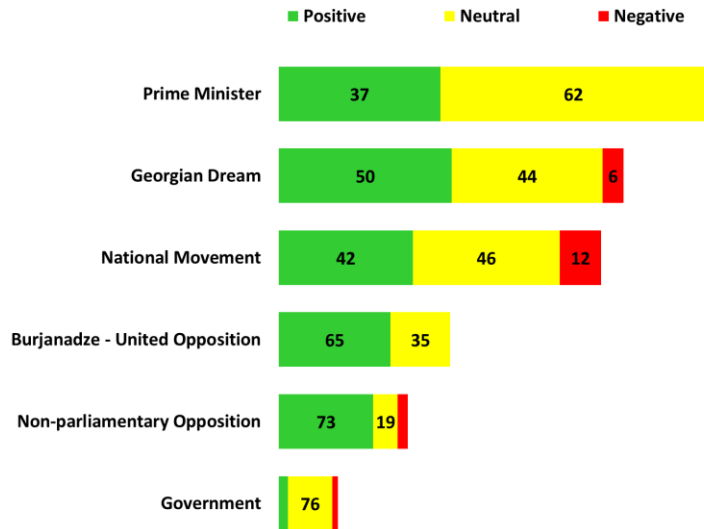
The most intensively covered activities were those of the following monitoring subjects: the Prime Minister (28%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (22%), and the United National Movement (21%). Rates of positive tone prevailed on the website regarding all the subjects during this monitoring period (*See the Chart 7*), which is due to the fact that the main focus was laid on the programs and election promises of political parties. High rate of positive tone in case of the Prime Minister (37%) was caused by many reports about the Prime Minister's appeals and statements, where he often emphasized his achievements and future plans (e.g. "Prime Minister Addressing the Whole Georgia", 26.05.2014; "Prime Minister's Speech in Germany – Joint Statement", 28.05.2014; "What Was Happening at the Prime Minister's Press Conference?", 4.06.2014; "Prime Minister's Speech in Khevsureti", 10.06.2014). Rates of positive tone prevail on the website when covering the Tbilisi mayoral candidates (*See the Chart 8*).

During this monitoring period the website was actively and exhaustively covering the programs and promises of election subjects. We need to point out a special rubric, which highlighted the election programs of mayoral candidates of various self-governing cities (e.g. "These are the key messages of Kutaisi mayoral candidates", 26.05.2014; "What do the Akhaltsikhe mayoral candidates promise to us?", 30.05.2014; "What are the plans of Ozurgeti Mayoral Candidates?", 9.06.2014).

The monitoring results let us conclude that presa.ge quite actively and exhaustively covered the election activities of electoral subjects. There is no positive or negative attitude revealed on the website towards any political force. Journalistic standards and ethical norms are observed.

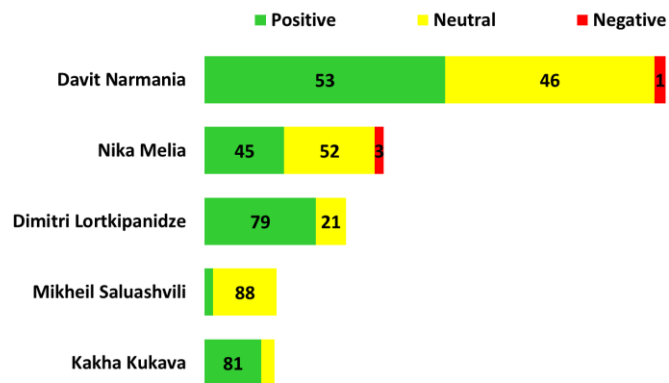
(Chart 7, Subject Coverage, presa.ge)

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



(Chart 8, Coverage of Mayoral Candidates, presa.ge)

Volume of the text allocated to the Mayoral candidates on presa.ge, according to the tone (%)



civil.ge

Civil.ge kept on providing quite objective and impartial reports about the events taking place in the country during this monitoring period. There are no positive or negative disposition demonstrated on the website towards any political force. The journalistic standards and ethical norms are highly observed.

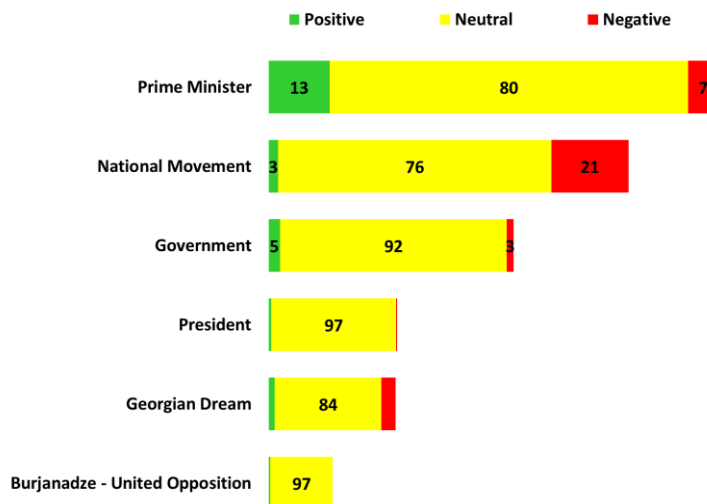
The most intensively covered activities were those of the following monitoring subjects: the Prime Minister (31%), the United National Movement (25%), the government (17%) and the President (9%). We did not observe any especially high rates of positive or negative tones for any of the subjects (See the Chart 9). The neutral tone prevails on the website when reporting about the subjects. Civil.ge did not actively cover the election activities of mayoral candidates.

It is noteworthy that during this monitoring period the website published active and exhaustive reports about the issues related to the local government elections (for example: “Mayoral Candidates”, 25.05.2014; “CEC: Number of Voters 3, 429, 748”, 10.06. 2014; “Gangebeli Candidates”, 10.06.2014).

The monitoring results let us conclude that civil.ge kept on covering the ongoing political processes in a quite objective manner. High standards of journalism and ethical norms are duly observed. The website provides detailed coverage of the issues related to the local government elections.

(Chart 9, Subjects Coverage, civil.ge)

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



tabula.ge

During the monitoring period tabula.ge again provided quite objectively reported the events taking place in the country. Journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed on the website. Out of political parties, more active coverage was provided for the comments of the representatives of the United National Movement.

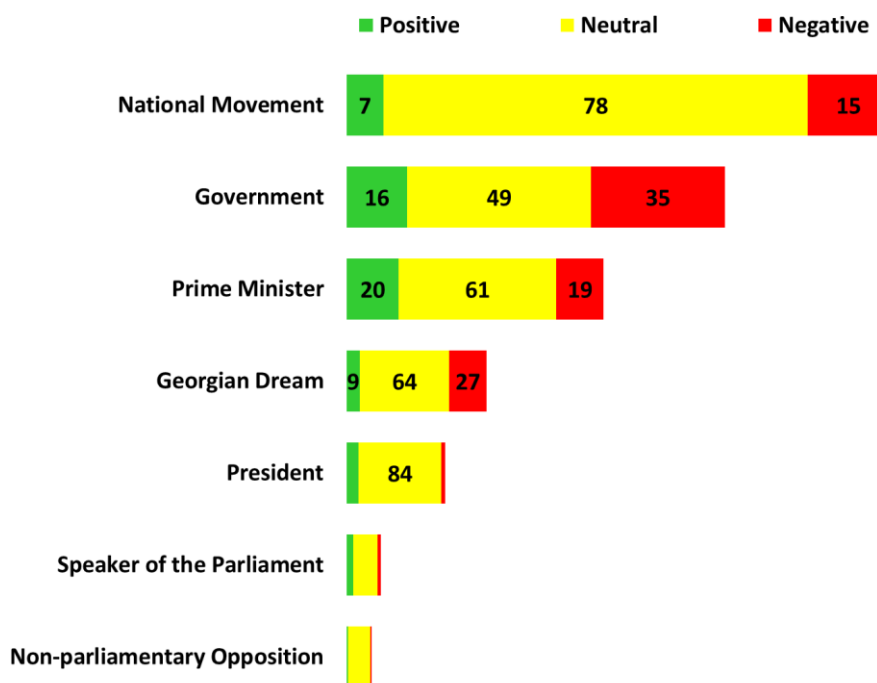
The most intensively coverage was observed for the activities of the United National Movement (36%), the government (25%), the Prime Minister (17%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (9%). Relatively higher rates of negative tone were observed when covering the government (35%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (27%). However, it should be pointed out that the negative tone was found in the respondents' statements and not in the journalists' texts. The journalists of tabula.ge were refraining from making political evaluations and unreasoned judgments during the monitoring period. The highest rate of positive tone was used in regards to the Prime Minister (20%), which was caused by the fact that the website intensively covered the press conferences and addresses of the Prime Minister, where he positively evaluated his performance in most cases (for example: "Prime Minister: We informed the Chancellor about improving our relations with Russia", 2.06.2014). We did not observe especially high rates of positive or negative tones in the reports about other subjects (*See the Chart 10*). The website less frequently covered the election activities of mayoral candidates during this monitoring period and more emphasis was laid on the activities of political parties and government agencies.

During this monitoring period the website actively covered the reports of various NGOs regarding the violations identified during the election period (for example: "GYLA: The authorities failed to prevent violence during at the pre-election stage", 11.06.2014).

The monitoring results let us conclude that tabula.ge provided pretty objective coverage for the political processes taking place in the country. We did not observe any violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms during his monitoring period on the website. Comments of the representatives of the United National Movement are intensively reported about.

(Chart 10, Subject Coverage, tabula.ge)

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



reportiori.ge

During this monitoring period, on one hand there was a clearly negative attitude observed towards the United National Movement on reportiori.ge, and on the other hand - a positive disposition towards the ruling party. We came across with violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms on the website during this monitoring period.

The most intensive coverage was observed for the activities of the following monitoring subjects: the government (21%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (20%), the United National Movement (19%) and the Prime Minister (15%). The highest rate of negative tone was observed in case of the United National Movement (40%), and the high rates of positive tone were observed in case of the Prime Minister (27%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (21%), Burjanadze-United Opposition (19%) and the government (17%) (See the Chart 11).

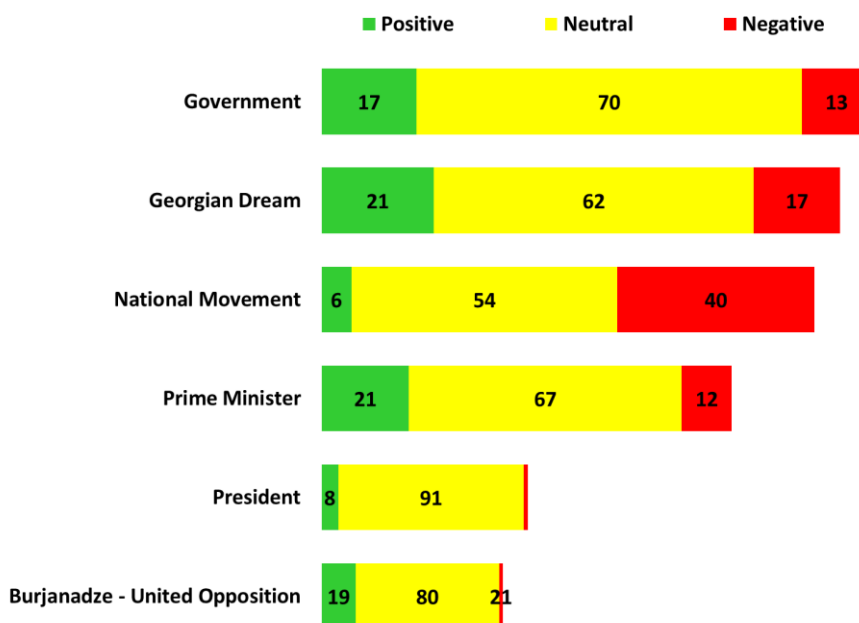
There were many videos posted on the website during this monitoring period, where the United National Movement was presented in an extremely negative light, namely, Mikheil Saakashvili (for example: "Mikheil Saakashvili, efreitor of the KGB", 11.06.2014; "Thanks to

Giorgi Gabedava”, 13.06.2014). It is noteworthy that these materials were posted without any comment, and mentioning the author. In terms of the approaching elections, posting such materials without comments may serve the goal of discrediting one of the election subjects. Besides, we need to point out the article “New Faces of the Georgian Dream” (24.06.2014), where the article’s author gives extremely positive evaluation to the three members of the Georgian Dream.

The monitoring results let us conclude that there is a clearly visible negative attitude towards the United National Movement and a positive attitude to the Coalition Georgian Dream during during the third monitoring period on reportiori.ge. We have come across with violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms on the website during this period.

(Chart 11, Subject Coverage, reportiori.ge)

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



for.ge

Compared to the first and second monitoring periods, criticism against the United National Movement increased significantly. We observed the some violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms during the third monitoring period.

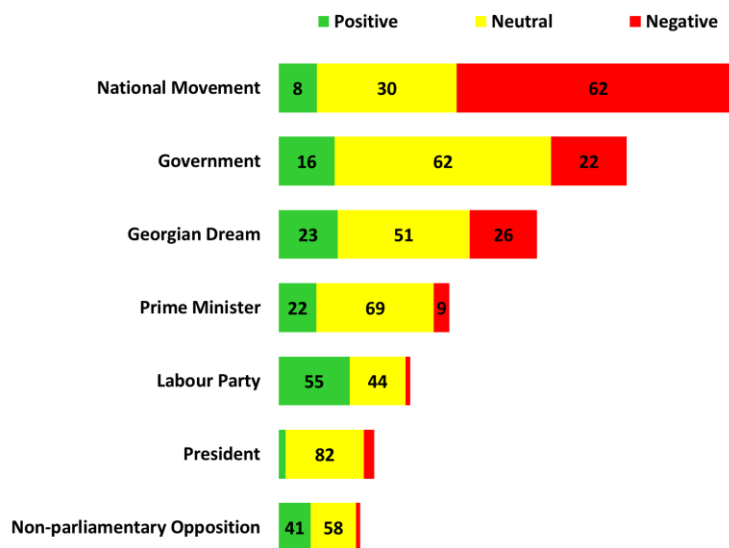
The most intensive coverage was reports were about the activities of the United National Movement (26%), the government (20%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (15%) and the Prime Minister (9%). There was quite high rate of negative tone observed while covering the United National Movement (62%) (*See the Chart 12*). As for the coverage of mayoral candidates, here we should point out the high rate of negative coverage for Nika Melia (88%) (*See the Chart 13*).

During this monitoring period, for.ge pretty often published interviews with the respondents who were extremely critical towards the United National Movement. There were also cases when the journalist would not conceal negative disposition towards this party (for example, the article "Joking in Kakheti – we have elected a billionaire and ended up with Gharibashvili (*translator's note: "gharibi" means poor in Georgian*)", 29.05.2014). Besides, the article "Thea Tsulukiani instead of Khatuna Gogorishvili, because of Ahmed Imamkulievi..." (6.06.2014) was attached a photo of Khatuna Gogorishvili, member of the United National Movement, in an unnatural position, and thus, it created negative disposition towards the politician.

We may conclude based on the monitoring results that coverage of national events by the website for.ge was quite unbalanced and biased. It is possible to clearly see that the website is attempting to discredit the United National Movement, and Nika Melia, Tbilisi mayoral candidate of this party.

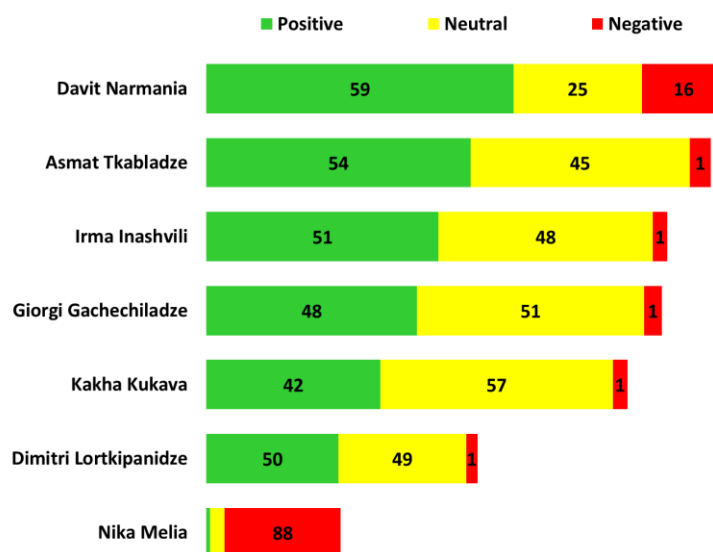
(Chart 12, Subject Coverage, for.ge)

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



(Chart 13, Coverage of Mayoral Candidates, for.ge)

Volume of the text allocated to the Mayoral candidates on for.ge, according to the tone (%)



dfwatch.net

During this monitoring period dfwatch.net again provided quite objective and impartial reports about the events taking place in the country. There was no positive or negative disposition observed on the website towards any political force. Journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed.

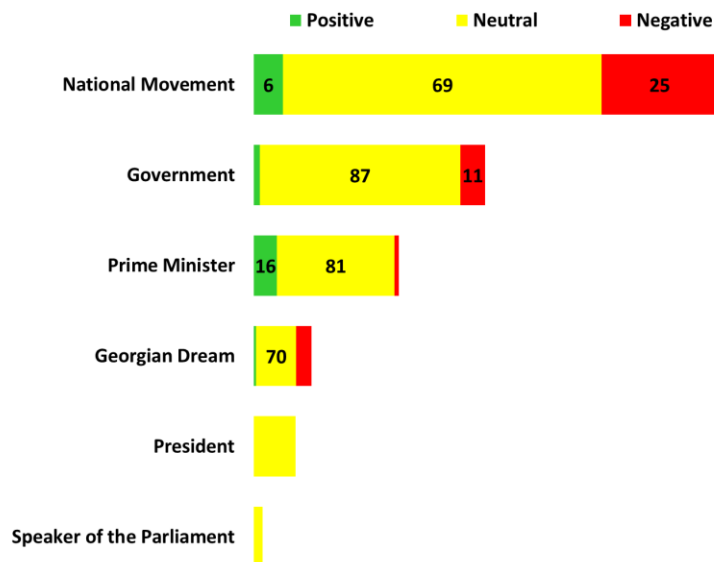
The most intensively covered activities were those of the following monitoring subjects: the United National Movement (49%), the government (24%), the Prime Minister (15%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (6%). The United National Movement got relatively higher rate of negative tone (25%). We did not observe especially high rates of positive or negative tone towards any other monitoring subjects (*See the Chart 14*). Election activities of mayoral candidates were less frequently highlighted during this monitoring period, and more emphasis was laid on the activities of political parties and government agencies.

Higher rate of positive tone was observed in the reports about the Prime Minister (16%), which was because the website dedicated many articles to the statements of the Prime Minister during this monitoring period, where he evaluated his activities positively (e.g.: „Georgian PM expects ‘adequate assessment’ of his efforts”, 4.06.2014).

The mentoring results let us conclude that dfwatch.net was providing quite an objective coverage of political processes taking place in the country. Journalistic standards and ethical norms are observed.

(Chart 14, Subject Coverage, dfwatch.net)

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



palitrav.ge

During this monitoring period, palitrav.ge provided quite objective and impartial coverage of the events taking place in the country. There was no positive or negative attitude observed on the website towards any political force. Journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed.

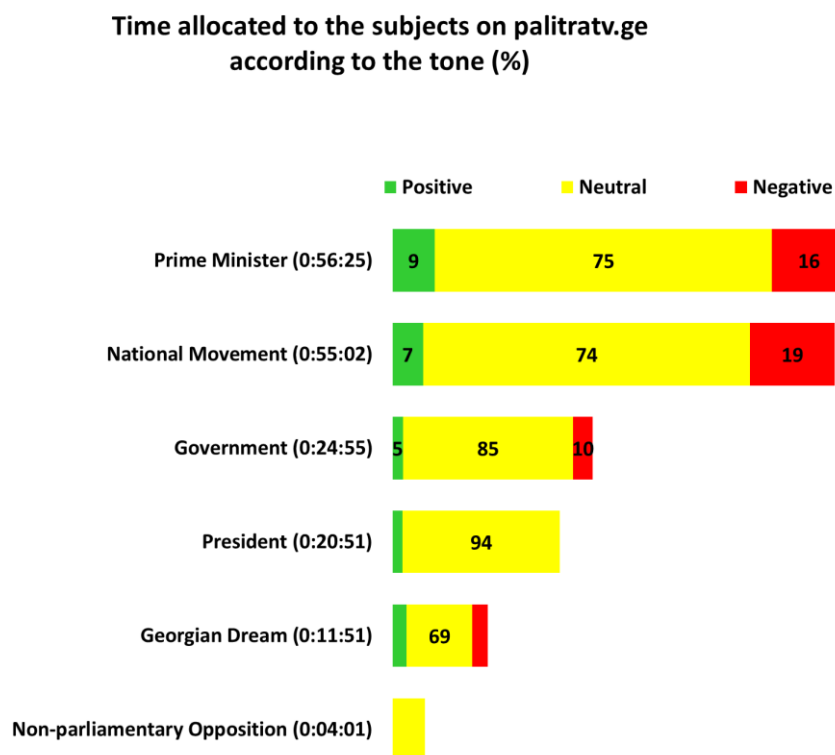
Activities of the following subjects got the most intensive coverage: the Prime Minister (32%), the United National Movement (31%), the government (14%) and the President (12%). We did not observe any especially high rates of positive or negative tone in regards to any subject. Relatively higher rates of negative tone were observed for the United National Movement (19%) and the Prime Minister (16%) (See the Chart 15). Davit Narmania (38%) and Dimitri Lortkipanidze (36%) got higher rates of positive coverage among mayoral candidates. (See the Chart 16).

We encountered various polls conducted by the editorial board on palitrav.ge during this monitoring period. It is worth mentioning that these stories kept balance of opinions and presented respondents with various opinions about a certain issue raised (for example: “Recently there have been more frequent attacks on the members of the National Movement, and what are they linked to?”, 27.05.2014; “Election promise of which political subject did you remember and which one is the most credible?”, 29.05.2014; “What

evaluation do you give to the Prime Minister's statements that they will not tolerate victory of any other political force in the elections?" , 3.06.2014).

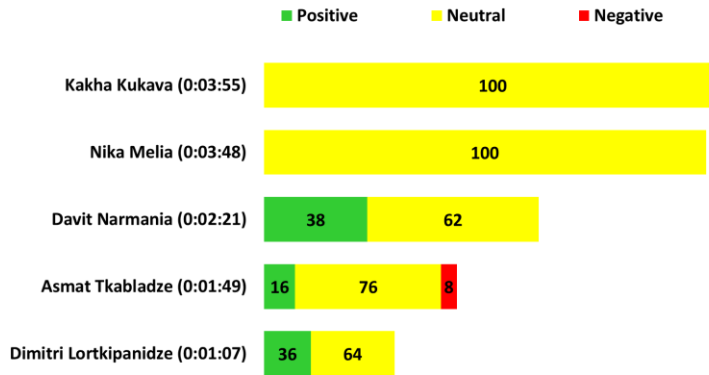
The monitoring results let us conclude that palitrav.ge kept on providing objective coverage about the political processes. Journalistic standards and ethical norms are observed.

(Chart 15, Subject Coverage, palitrav.ge)



(Chart 16, Coverage of Mayoral Candidates, palitrato.ge)

Time allocated to the Mayoral candidates on palitrato.ge, according to the tone (%)



Conclusion

As the elections got closer, coverage of mayoral candidates did not become more frequent in the online media. Majority of the websites were again most focused on the coverage of political parties and government structures.

Compared to the election media monitoring carried out in 2012 and 2013, we still observe positive changes in the Georgian online media in regards to adherence to the journalistic standards and ethical norms. We should especially point out presa.ge, which has radically changed its mode of operations. The websites: droni.ge and tabula.ge improved their performance from the viewpoint of the objective coverage of monitoring subjects.

There is some negative disposition observed towards the United National Movement on the websites reportiori.ge and for.ge during the third monitoring period. We did not identify any other changes in the online media as compared to the first and second monitoring periods.