



Election Monitoring of Online Media

July 16 - August 16, 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 July 16 until August 16, inclusive.

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

- Activities of presidential candidates are more intensively covered during the second monitoring period, however, the rate of their coverage is still quite lower than that of other monitoring subjects.
- Compared to the monitoring carried out during the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2012, positive changes are observed within the online media in this monitoring period as well in regards to the adherence to journalism standards and ethical norms.
- Critical approach towards the issues decreased on the English websites dfwatch.net and civil.ge (civil.ge publishes articles in English, also in Georgian and Russian), and correspondingly, the rates of neutral tone have increased significantly.

- During the second monitoring period, the following main problems are still present in the online media: superficial approach to the issues, little number of sources of information in certain articles, and mismatch between the headlines and the text.

netgazeti.ge

During the second monitoring period, the articles posted on netgazeti.ge were mostly prepared in compliance with journalism standards. No facts of gross violation of the norms of journalistic ethics were identified. Information is double-checked in most cases, and source of information is also indicated. We often come across with opposing opinions, critical evaluations of politicians by the respondents. We often encounter critical articles towards the authorities on the website. There is no bias of any kind observed towards any political force on netgazeti.ge.

The website actively covers current political topics during the day. The issues related to justice are again topical and are intensively covered in this monitoring period as well. The highest coverage rate was reported for the government (27%).

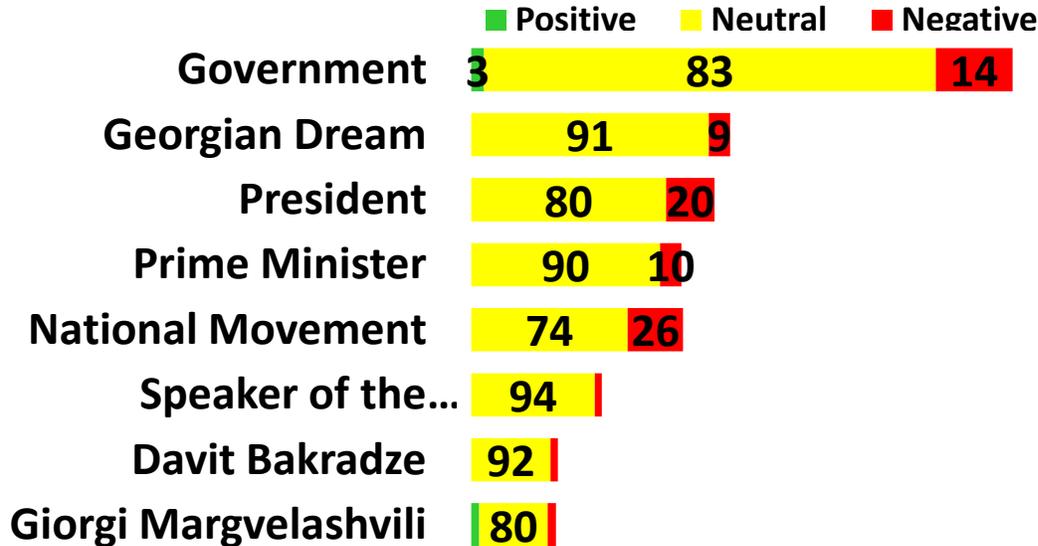
Topics on the website have become more diverse, which coincides with the initiation of the election campaign of presidential candidates. Interviews with presidential candidates became frequent; and compared to the first monitoring period, coverage of activities of presidential candidates has increased significantly on the website.

Election campaign of the candidate of the ruling party officially started on August 12, and correspondingly, coverage of Giorgi Margvelashvili's activities became frequent since that date (4%). Activity of Davit Bakradze, candidate of the presidential candidate of the National Movement was covered with almost the same intensity (4%). However, this indicator is increased because of a quite broad interview with Davit Bakradze, and not as the result of active coverage of the candidate's activities. These two subjects had almost equal rate of negative tone as well (D. Bakradze – 8%, and G. Margvelashvili – 9%), though the positive indicator (8%) was identified only towards the presidential candidate of the ruling team.

High rate of negative tone was observed while covering the activities of the President (20%), the United National Movement (26%) and the government (14%).

Monitoring results let us conclude that netgazeti.ge is covering the national political events quite impartially. Journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed.

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



droni.ge

Compared to the monitoring performed during the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2012, adherence to the journalism standards and ethical norms has significantly increased on droni.ge. We almost never encounter discriminating and abusive terminology in the journalists' narrative, which used to be characteristic to droni.ge. Such violations are not observed during this monitoring period, either. Positive attitude to the President and the United National Movement and on the other hand, negative attitude towards the Prime Minister, the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream are still clearly seen on the website. However, it should be underlined that the ethical norms of journalism are observed in most cases when criticizing this or that politician. While criticizing the subjects, droni.ge no longer uses abusive terminology, nicknames, etc.

The most intensive coverage was provided for the activities of the President (36%) and the United National Movement (26%) among the monitoring subjects.

The highest rate of negative tone was observed while covering the activities of the government (75%), the Prime Minister (32%) and Giorgi Margvelashvili (31%). On the

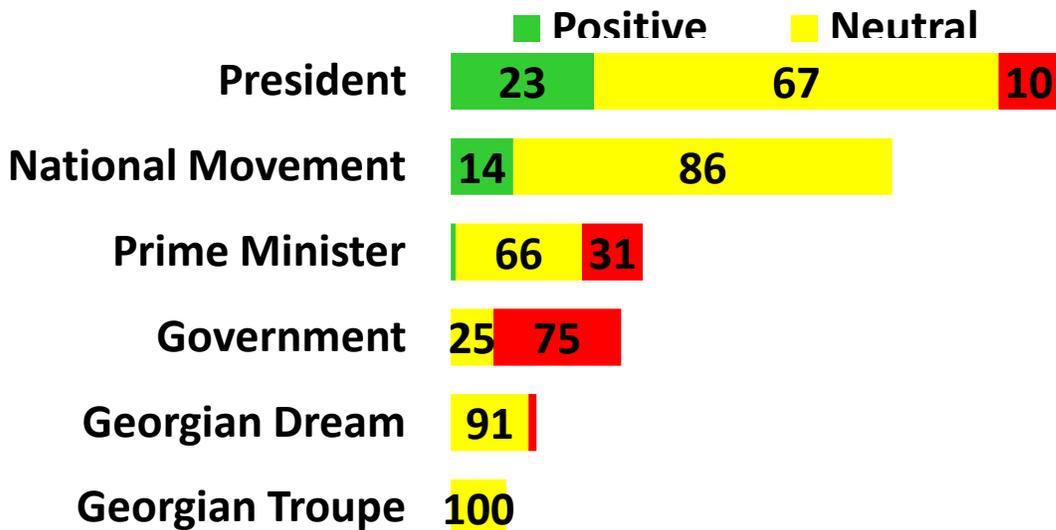
other hand, high rate of positive tone was identified while covering the President (24%) and the United National Movement (15%).

During this monitoring period droni.ge was not distinguished with diversity of topics. Mostly the activities of political parties, presidential candidates and government representatives were covered. Special emphasis should be laid on the photo-collage posted on the website on August 5 (Photos without comments: this is how the Minister of Foreign Affairs is on Holiday), presenting several photos of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, which does not contain any positive or negative elements. It is absolutely unclear why the editorial board of the website decided to publish this information.

Compared to the election monitoring of 2012, there is a reduced number of articles, which are prepared based on the information provided by anonymous or less reliable sources. It should be pointed out that during the second monitoring period, droni.ge covered the comments of representatives of both parliamentary minority and majority.

Monitoring results let us conclude that sharp improvement is observed on droni.ge in regards to the adherence to the journalism standards and ethical norms. This trend has not changed even during this monitoring period. However, the website remains quite biased – there is a clearly positive attitude towards the President and the United National Movement on one hand, and the negative attitude towards the Prime Minister, the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream on the other.

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



politico.ge

politico.ge has been distinguished with thematic diversity during the second monitoring period, however, it is noteworthy that unverified facts are often published. Besides, the lack of sources of information is felt in the articles. The published materials are often based on one official source only and different opinions about the issue are seldom presented.

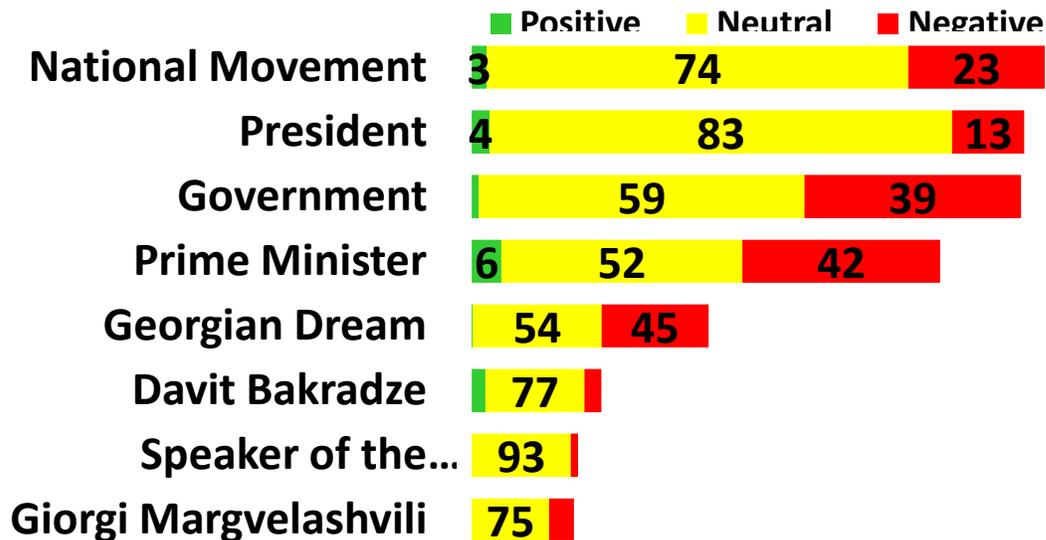
During this monitoring period, the most intensive and almost equal coverage was provided for the activities of the United National Movement (18%), the President (18%) and the government (17%). It is notable that the high rate of negative tone was observed while covering the Coalition Georgian Dream (45%), the Prime Minister (41%) and the government (39%).

There is no specific bias towards any political power observed in certain articles on the websites; however, the website provides an intensive coverage for the issues where mostly the negative tone is felt towards the ruling party.

Among the presidential candidates, activities of Davit Bakradze (4%) and Giorgi Margvelashvili (3%) were most intensively covered. High rate of negative tone was observed for Giorgi Margvelashvili (24%).

Compared to the first monitoring period, there was no significant changes observed on the website.

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

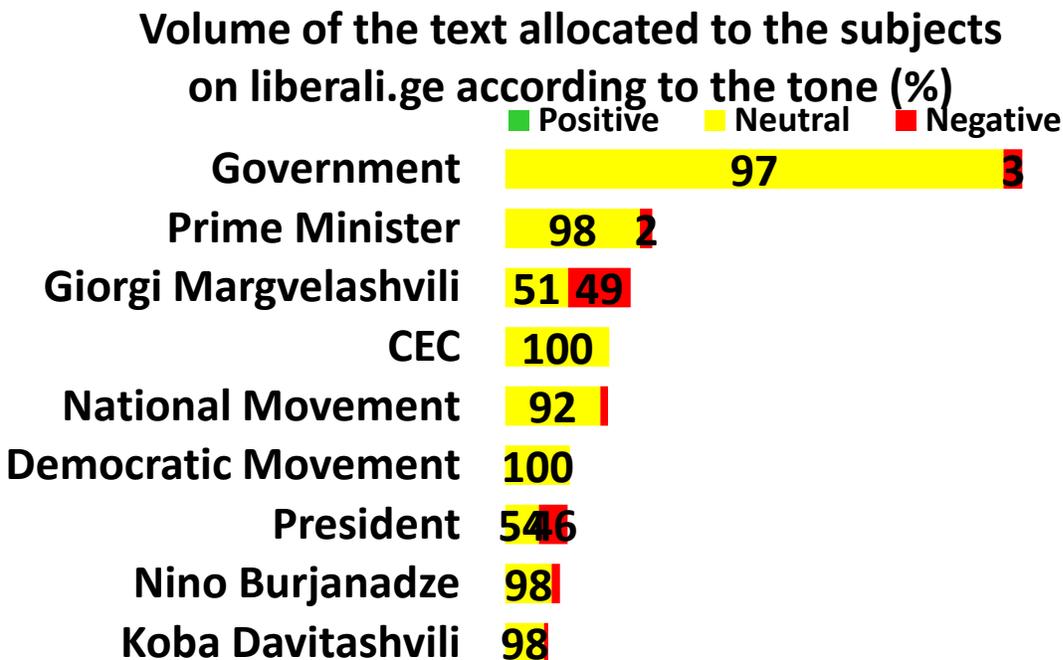


liberali.ge

liberali.ge was distinguished with little number of materials while covering the national political events during the second monitoring period. In some cases the main topics are not covered exhaustively. The materials are small-sized, and mostly are based on one official source. While reporting about significant events, the website is quite impartial and objective. Likewise, the journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed. During this monitoring period, the website is distinguished with a high rate of neutral tone.

From the quantitative viewpoint, the most intensive coverage was provided for the activities of the government (40%), the Prime Minister (11%), Giorgi Margvelashvili (10%) and the National Movement (9%). Especially high rate of negative tone was observed while covering the President (46%) and Giorgi Margvelashvili (49%). Among the presidential candidates, the most intensive coverage was observed for the activities of Giorgi Margvelashvili (10%) and Nino Burjanadze (4%).

Compared to the first monitoring period, the rates of neutral tone have increased on the website.



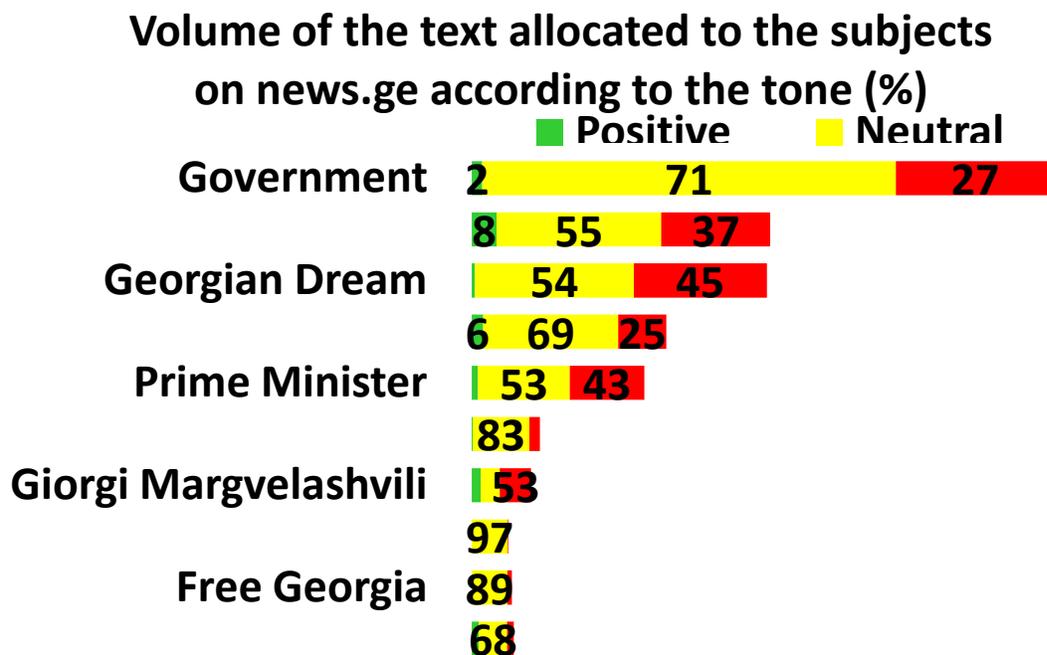
news.ge

During this monitoring period, news.ge actively covered the political events taking place in the country. The website basically keeps on publishing short articles that look like comments, where the balance among sources is rarely observed; however, compared to the previous monitoring period, there was a more attempt observed for keeping the balance of sources in the articles. Several cases were identified during the monitoring period, when there was a problem of relevance in the article – the headline and narrative were not matching. News.ge often uses a quote in headlines, but the author of this quote is not shown in the headline and this quote usually contains quite strict accusations against this or that politician. Similarly, the headlines contain the text with contents about which there is no story discussed in the article at all, or there is only a brief mentioning of it.

During the second monitoring period as well, news.ge continues to actively cover the information obtained from social networks.

It should be pointed out that there is no trend of an especially intensive coverage of any specific monitoring subject observed on news.ge. However, during the monitoring, activities of the government were more covered (28%). It should be pointed out as well that at this stage of the monitoring, activities of other political parties were also covered more or less (other than the parliamentary parties).

Compared to the monitoring held during the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2012 we can say that the coverage style and manner of news.ge has improved more, because we see a very little or no violations such as: abusive terminology, explicitly negative tone by the author, ungrounded reasoning, etc.



presa.ge

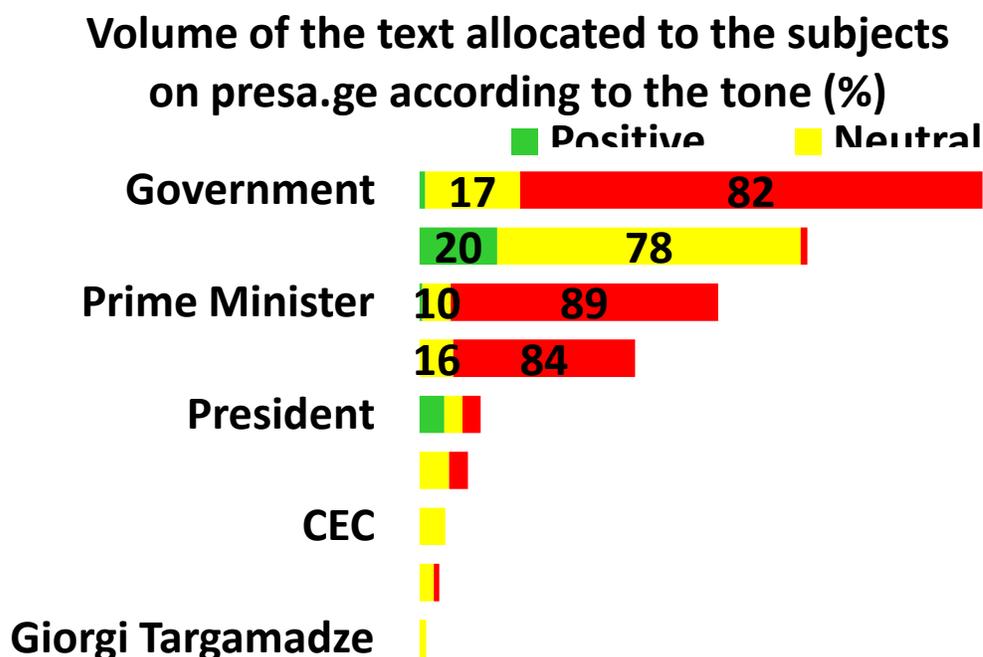
Compared to the first monitoring period, negative tone and one-sided coverage of the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream has increased on presa.ge. It was the government that had the most intensive coverage on the website and 82% of this coverage was done in negative tone. Like the previous monitoring period, the website continues the intensive coverage of activities of only the Coalition Georgian Dream

(13%), the United National Movement (23%), the Prime Minister (18%) and the government (33%).

The monitoring results reveal that the website covers the events from one side and with an explicit bias. It is notable that especially high rate of negative tone were observed when covering the Prime Minister (89%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (84%) and the government (82%). On the other hand there was a high indicator of positive tone when covering the activities of the President (41%) and the United National Movement (20%).

Quite an active coverage of criminals was observed on the website during this monitoring period. The website covered practically all the criminal acts taken place in the country during this period, and each of such coverage was characterized with a trend to conclude by emphasizing the inaction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the minister Irakli Gharibashvili.

Monitoring results let us conclude that presa.ge covers the events taking place in the country in a quite unbalanced and biased way. This trend has not changed even in this monitoring period. Positive attitude towards the President and the United National Movement is clearly observed, and on the other hand, there is a negative disposition towards the Prime Minister, the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream. Journalism standards and ethical norms are regularly violated on the website.



civil.ge

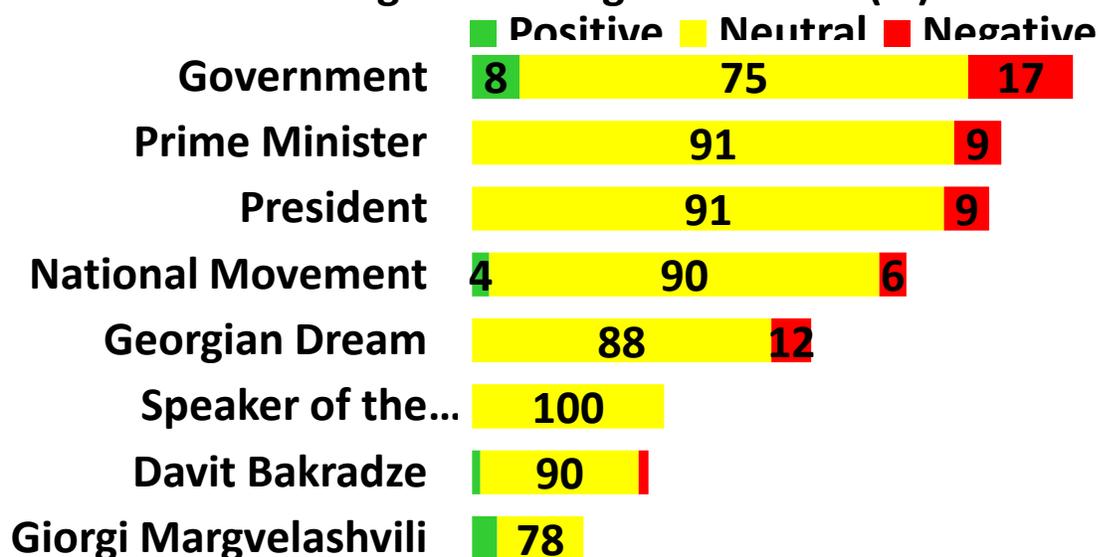
During the second monitoring period, civil.ge covered the political events of the country in a quite balanced and impartial way. There is no explicitly positive or negative attitude towards any political power on the website. Journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed.

We need to point out that during this monitoring period the indicators of neutral tone have significantly increased. In general, compared to the previous monitoring periods, the lack of critical attitude to the issues is observed on civil.ge. Number of analytical articles also decreased.

Among the monitoring subjects, the website provided the most intensive coverage to the activities of the government (20%), the President (18%) and the Prime Minister (18%). The highest indicator of negative tone was observed while covering the government (17%).

We can conclude as the result of the monitoring that civil.ge has been covering the events taking place in the country in a quite impartial way. Journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed. However, the website has reduced critical analysis of ongoing events during the second monitoring period.

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



tabula.ge

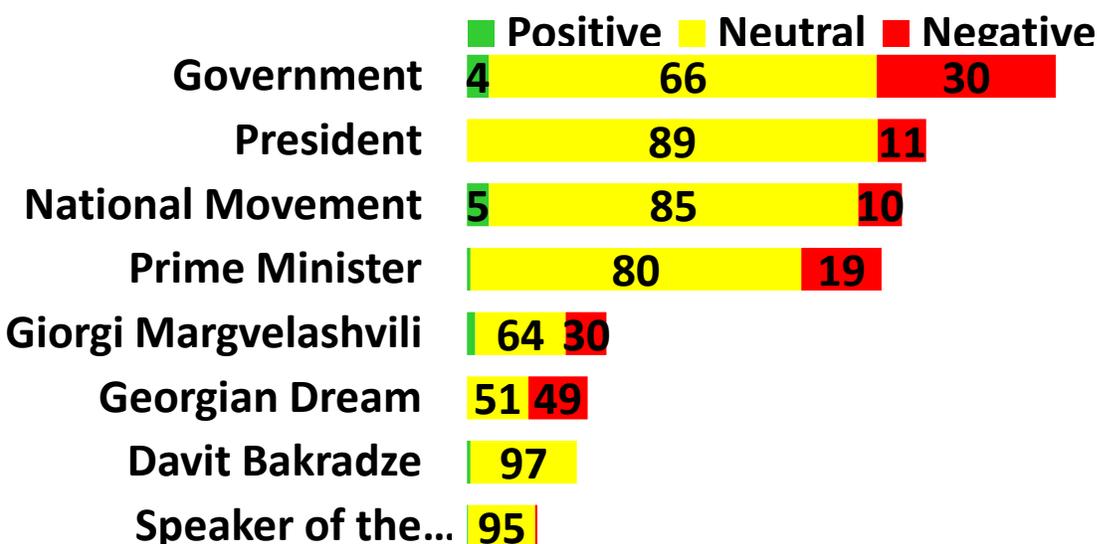
During this monitoring period, the website published brief news articles, also more extensive letters as well. Tabula.ge tries to encompass all the important events taking place in the country during the day. There were no gross violation of journalism standards and ethical norms observed on the website.

Neutral tone prevails while covering the monitoring subjects. High indicators of negative tone were reported while covering the Coalition Georgian Dream (49%), the government (30%), Giorgi Margvelashvili (30%) and Prime Minister (19%).

Bias of editorial board was identified while analyzing certain materials during this monitoring period, because of one-sided and emphasized coverage of western politicians when they evaluated Vano Merabishvili's arrest as being influenced by political considerations.

Monitoring results let us conclude that tabula.ge tries to observe the ethical norms of journalism. However, the negative attitude of the editorial board towards the Coalition Georgian Dream, the Prime Minister and the government is revealed from quantitative and qualitative observations.

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



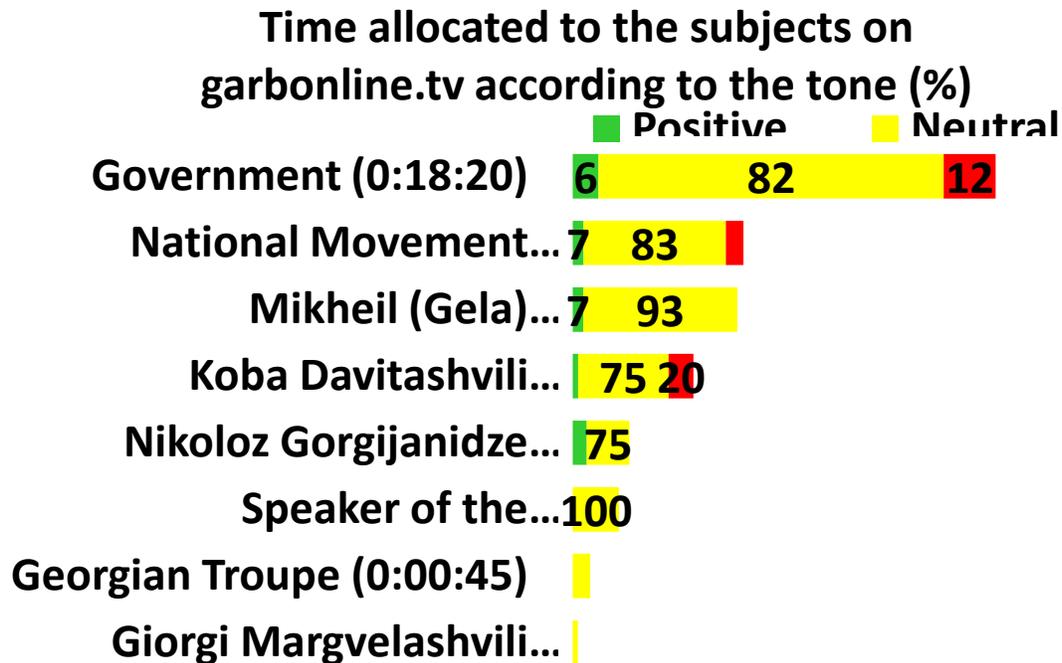
garbonline.tv

(There are maintenance works on the website from August 2 until September 2. Correspondingly, this report covers the period from July 15 until August 2).

Scarcity of materials is observed on the website during the second monitoring period. The video materials, which are posted on the website and show the activities of politicians or public servants are mostly short and often represents fragments of materials recorded at press-conferences. Journalist's comments or reasoning is rare. It should be pointed out that while preparing the texts, the journalists maintain high level of journalism standards and ethical norms. The website covers the political events quite impartially and there is no positive or negative disposition observed towards any particular political power.

During this monitoring period the activities of the government (42%) and the United National Movement (17%) were covered most intensively. It is noteworthy that among the presidential candidates the most active coverage was provided for Mikheil (Gela) Saluashvili (16%), Koba Davitashvili (12%) and Nikoloz Gorgijanidze (6%). When reporting about the monitoring subjects, the website is distinguished with a high indicator of neutral tone.

Monitoring results let us conclude that garbonline.tv observes journalism standards and impartially covers the events taking place in the country. However, the lack of materials was observed especially in the second monitoring period, because of which the website failed to fully reflect the political events taking place in the country or the activities of presidential candidates.



for.ge

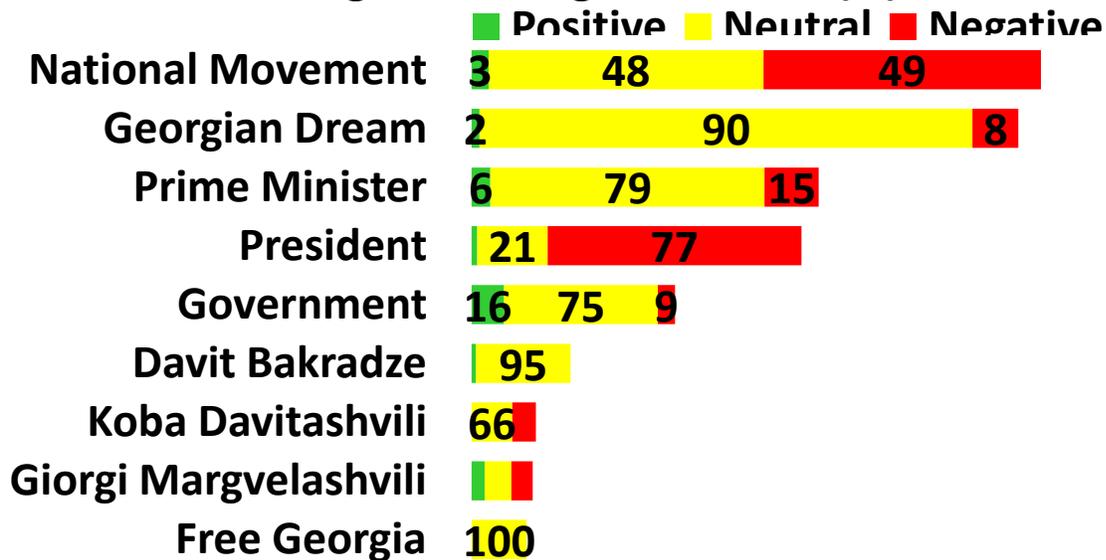
Both in the first and second monitoring periods we mostly encountered quite extensive articles on the website, majority of which were the interviews. We need to point out that the majority of respondents had negative disposition towards the President and the United National Movement. Prevalence of such interviews gives us the grounds to conclude that the editorial board of the website was quite biased when covering the political events going on in the country. We need to point out quite high indicators of negative tone while covering the President (77%) and the United National Movement (49%).

We come across with the cases of gross violation of journalistic ethical norms on the website. Often there are quite insulting statements towards the President and the

United National Movement not only in the texts of articles, but also in the headlines as well; for example: “Ministers vs. Mikheil Münchhausen” (august 15); “Verdict annulled for the ‘Nationals’ for going to hell” (July 29).

Monitoring results let us conclude that for.ge covers the events going on in the country with quite much bias and imbalance. Journalism standards and ethical norms are often violated.

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



dfwatch.net

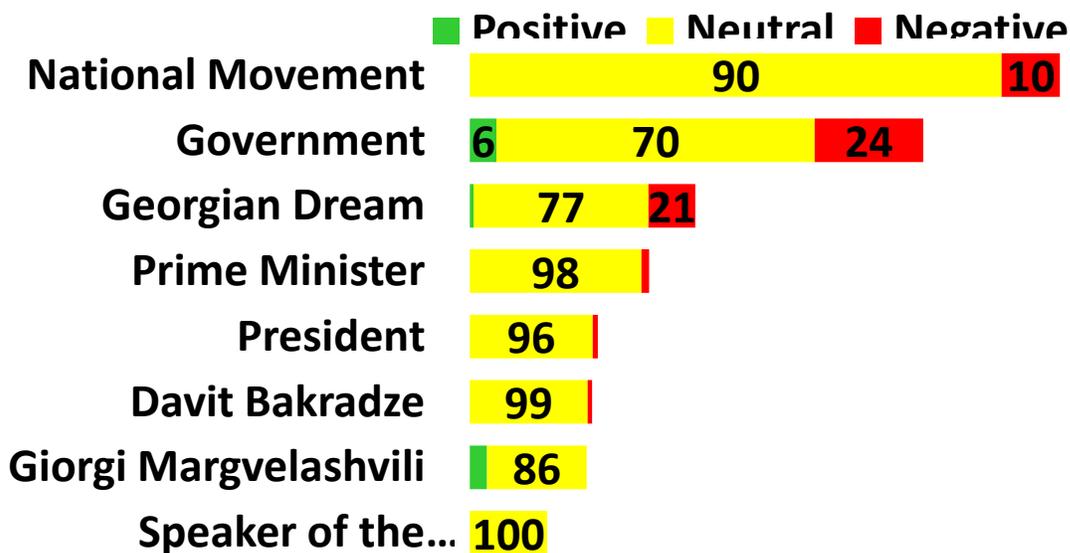
During the second monitoring period, the number of analytical articles decreased on the website, and basically brief news articles were published. Dfwatch.net covers the activities of politicians or various state agencies in a quite balanced and impartial way. Journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed. The website publishes the opinions of various political forces as well.

During this monitoring period the most intensively covered activities were those of the United National Movement (31%), the government (24%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (12%).

It should be pointed out that during this monitoring period we have observed that there is less critical approach towards the covered issues on the website. Correspondingly, the rates of neutral tone are increased when covering the monitoring subjects.

As the result of the monitoring we can conclude that dfwatch.net provides quite an impartial coverage of political events going on in the country; journalism standards and ethical norms are highly observed. However, we need to point out that during this period there is a lack of critical approach to issues observed on the website.

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



palitratv.ge

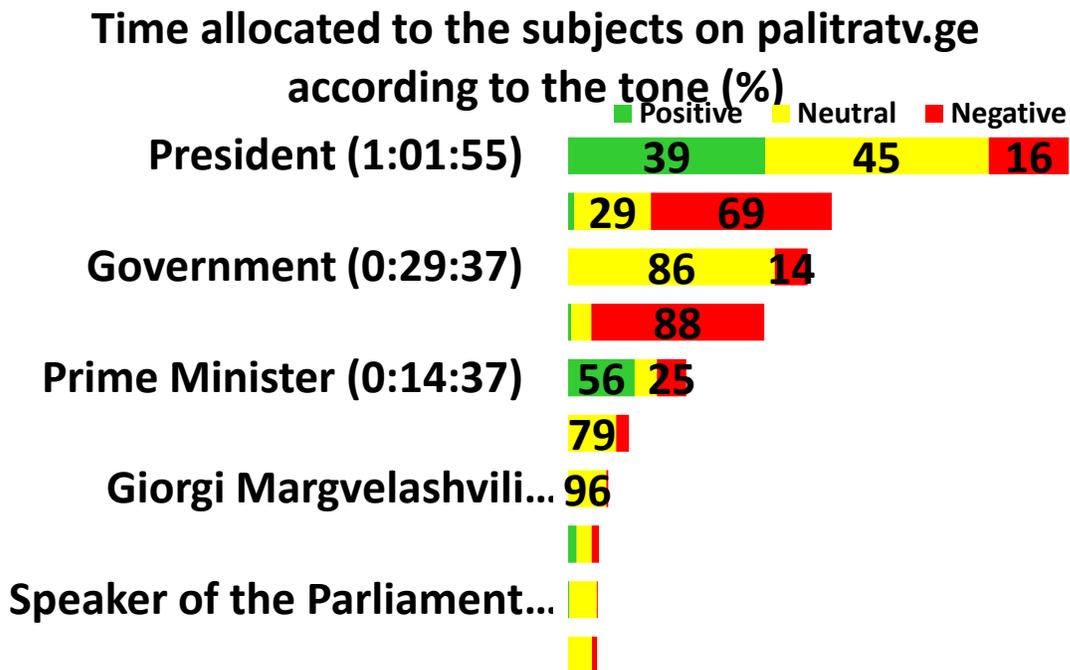
During the second monitoring period, the website mostly disseminated the videos obtained from various TV companies. Sometimes it posted original materials prepared by the journalist of this website, but in most cases, there were only videos without a journalist's comments and texts. There was a case when the videos were accompanied with the journalist's narrative, but the coverage was one-sided, because it did not contain the position of the other side, although it was clearly needed.

During this monitoring period, the most intensive coverage on palitratv.ge was provided for the President's activities (32%). This was due to the fact that the website actually always posted every full-length speech and activity of the President. In such

cases, the videos are usually prepared by various media outlets or the President’s administration, which results in the fact that the President’s coverage tone is mostly positive (39%).

During the monitoring period, activities of following presidential candidates were covered with almost equal intensity: Koba Davitashvili (4%), Giorgi Margvelashvili (3%), Davit Bakradze (2%) and Nino Burjanadze (2%). There were no especially high rates of positive or negative tone revealed towards any presidential candidate.

The website more or less observes the ethical norms of journalism, but we often come across with the video materials posted without any comments, where unethical phrases are allowed without limitation.



Conclusion

During this monitoring period, ongoing political events were quite intensively covered in the Georgian online media. It is noteworthy that during this period, articles about activities of presidential candidates were more often published.

As a general trend we need to point out that the cases of violation of ethical norms of journalism decreased – namely, discriminating and abusive terminology. Special emphasis should be laid on droni.ge, which has radically changed its mode of operations.

Main problem still remains, which is a brief and superficial coverage of the news in the online media; besides, there is a lack of sources of information and irrelevance of headlines of some articles with the narrative.

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

Compared with the first monitoring period, there are no significant changes observed in general and in regards to specific websites either.