



Election Monitoring of Press

September 16 – October 26, 2013

The *International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)* continues the election monitoring of press within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project “Professional Media for Elections”, and presents the third interim report before the presidential elections of 2013, which covers the period from September 16 until October 26.

The monitoring will last until November 15 and during this period the organization’s media monitors will monitor the following outlets: the Resonance, the 24 Saati, the Akhali Taoba, the Akhali Versia, the Alia, the Kviris Palitra, and the Asaval-Dasavali.¹

Following key findings were identified after performing the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the material:

- Although the elections have been the main highlight for this period, electoral candidates were covered less intensively than other political subjects in all the monitored newspapers. More space was allocated for the government, the President and the Prime Minister, as well as the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement, than for the presidential candidates.
- Among the 23 presidential candidates, the press was more focused only on a few of them (Nino Burjanadze, Giorgi Margvelashvili, Davit Bakradze) and insufficient information would be provided to the readers about the less known candidates and their programs.
- The outlets mostly provided fact-based information to the reader, but in some cases unverified information was disseminated.

¹ The newspapers were selected according to the results of the print media research done in 2012 by the Institute of Polling and Marketing.

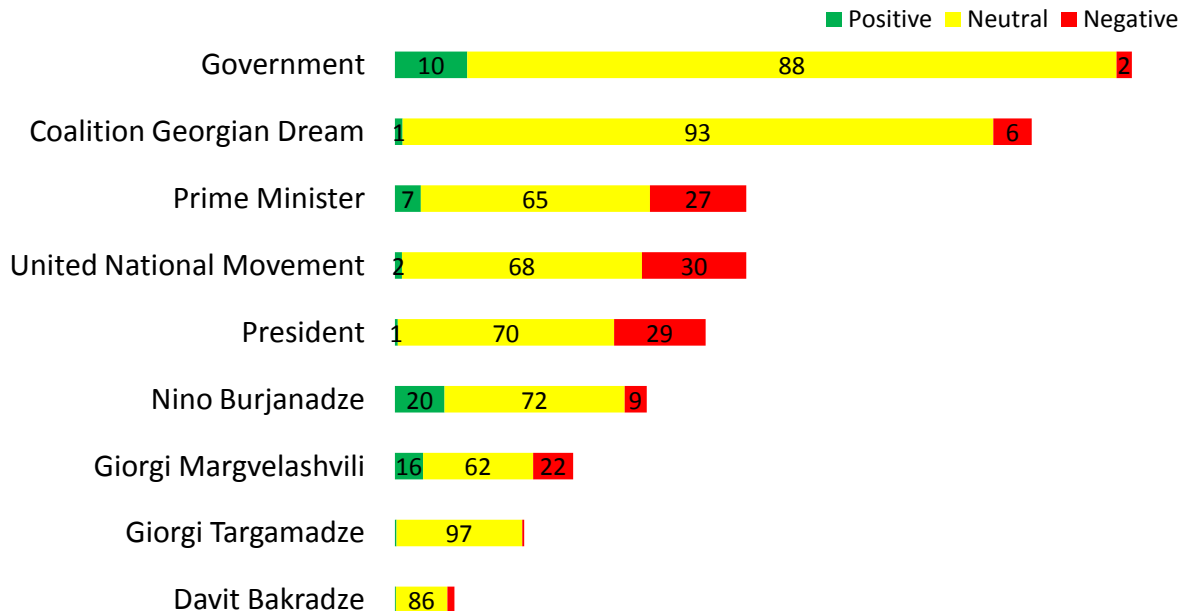
- Unethical expressions and ironic attitudes to the events or subjects were revealed again during the election period, and such cases were especially often observed in the Asaval-Dasavali.

The Resonance

The issues related to the elections were actively covered in the pages of the Resonance, but other subjects had more coverage than the electoral subjects and more emphasis was laid on the government members, the Prime Minister, the Parliamentary majority and the minority, also the President.

The most space (3,855 cm²) was allocated to Nino Burjanadze among the presidential candidates; however, the area dedicated to her is almost three times less than the area allocated to the government (11,287 cm²), which has been the most actively covered subject. The programs of candidates, who were less known to the public, and their election campaigns were seldom published in the pages of the Resonance.

Space allocated to the subjects in *The Resonance* according to the tone (%)



The tone has been mostly neutral towards the monitoring subjects. The positive and negative tone was observed towards all the subjects, but the negative tone has been

higher for the Prime Minister, the United National Movement and the President than for other subjects (27%, 30%, 29%).

From the viewpoint of the qualitative analysis it should be pointed out that the outlet has not omitted any of the significant events taking place in the country. Reporters of the Resonance try to provide fact-based information to the reader. Majority of articles have several sources. Other than the news, the Resonance provides analytical material to the readers, which lets them evaluate the facts from different angles.

The 24 Saati

As the elections got closer, the topic of elections became more and more topical for the 24 Saati as well. The outlet provided information to the reader on a daily basis about the conduct of the campaign and other issues related to the elections.

Despite the current significance of the issue, the 24 Saati is more focused on covering the activities of various branches of the government than presenting the activities or programs of the electoral subjects. The government, the Prime Minister, the President, the United National Movement and the Coalition Georgian Dream – all these subjects surpass the candidates according to the space allocated to them.

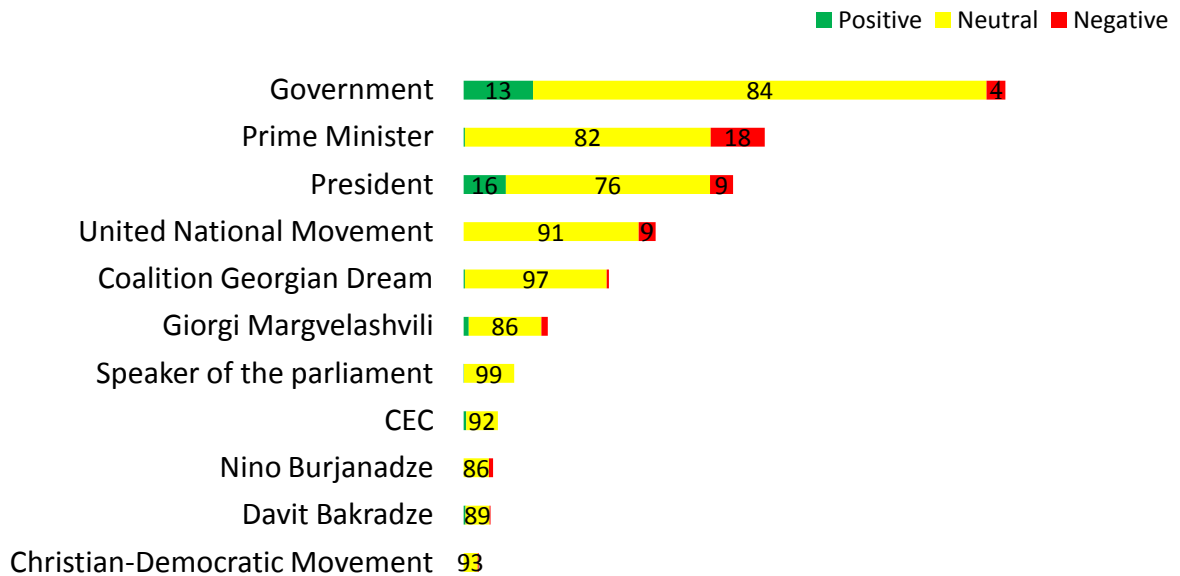
The neutral tone dominates towards the monitoring subjects. The small portion of negative and positive tone is observed towards the government, the Prime Minister and the President.

The 24 Saati is mostly limited to providing factual materials and does not provide any evaluation of events. We almost never encounter analytical articles, interviews or columns in the newspaper. Consequently, the reader has access to the information about what happened, however, as for why or how it happened – the 24 Saati lays less emphasis on this. The articles have several different sources in most cases.

The journalist's language is almost always neutral. The authors of the articles do not reveal personal positive or negative attitude to the subjects or events. We do not come across with unethical expressions in this outlet.

We should also point out herein that the 24 Saati is distinguished with scarce photo materials. The illustration is found in the front page of the newspaper, and we seldom see any photos in the main body of the Article.

Space allocated to the subjects in *The 24 Saati* according to the tone (%)



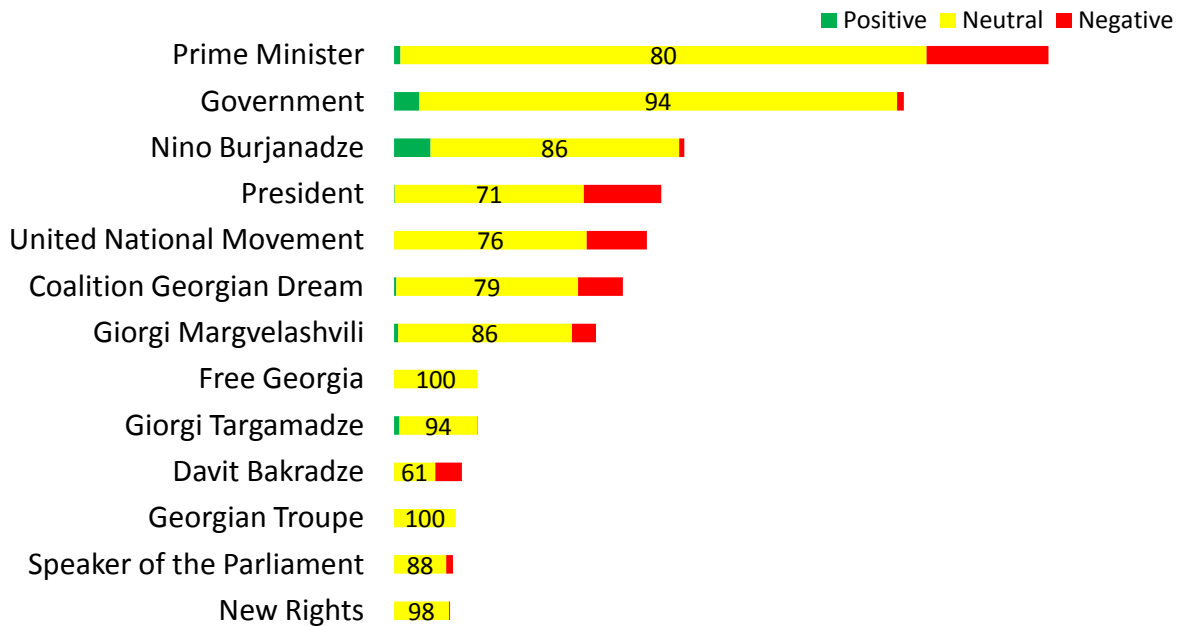
The Akhali Taoba

During the election period, the Akhali Taoba was one of the outlets that provided one of the most intensive coverage of election issues together with other topical issues, and published interviews with the electoral subjects. As the result, one of the presidential candidates (Nino Burjanadze) is among the three most actively covered subjects.

The Akhali Taoba allocated the largest space to the Prime Minister (22%), which has been one of the most active political figures during the run-up to the elections. He is followed by the Government (17%) and one of the presidential candidates Nino Burjanadze (10%).

The tone to the subjects are mostly neutral, but we also come across with little negative tone towards various subjects as well – Prime Minister (19%), the President (29%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (20%), the United National Movement (24%) and Giorgi Margvelashvili (12%).

Space allocated to the subjects in *The Akhali Taoba* according to the tone (%)



The Akhali Taoba has been covering all the issues of current significance and allocated much attention to the elections. There was the news about this topic, also interviews and analytical articles. Among the candidates, the outlet mostly emphasized the candidates who were better known to the public, but published little information about the subjects who were registered by the initiative groups.

In most cases the articles had several sources and provided fact-based information to the reader. The journalists try to be ethical and impartial while writing about various topics.

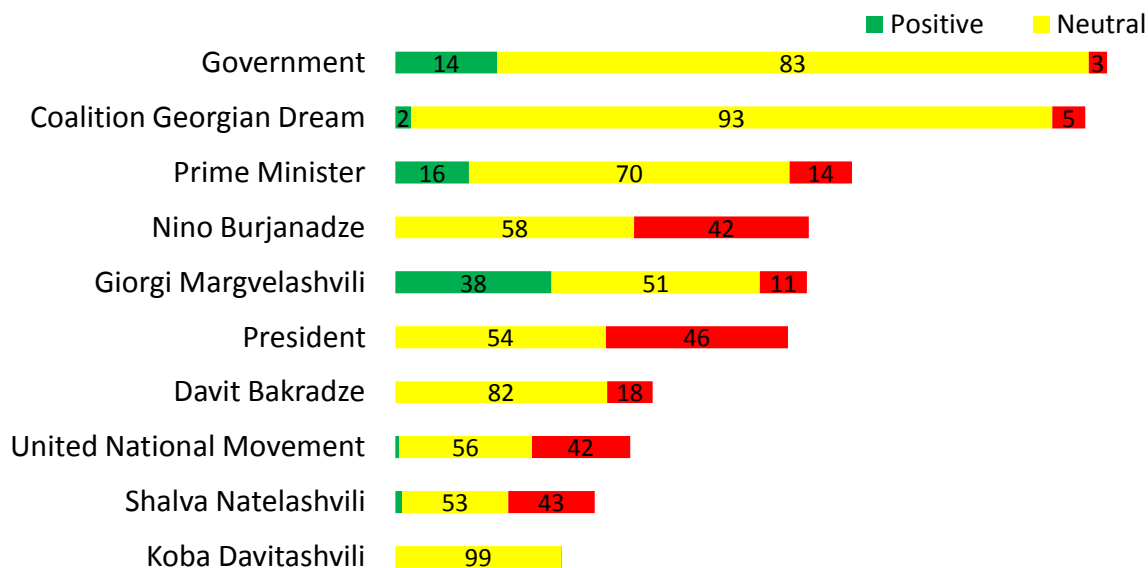
The Akhali Versia

The newspaper provides diverse information to the reader about ongoing events three times a week. Elections and the related issues were one of the leading topics in the pages of the Akhali Versia during the run-up to the elections; nevertheless the newspaper did not omit any other important events.

Among the monitoring subjects the largest space was allocated to the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the Prime Minister, followed by Nino Burjanadze, one of the presidential candidates.

The tone has been diverse towards the subjects. The neutral tone prevails, but the indicators of negative and positive tones are quite high in case of specific subjects. The negative tone is almost higher than 40% in case of Nino Burjanadze, the President, the United National Movement and Shalva Natelashvili. As for Giorgi Margvelashvili, there is 38% of positive tone in the space allocated to him.

Space allocated to the subjects in *The Akhali Versia* according to the tone (%)



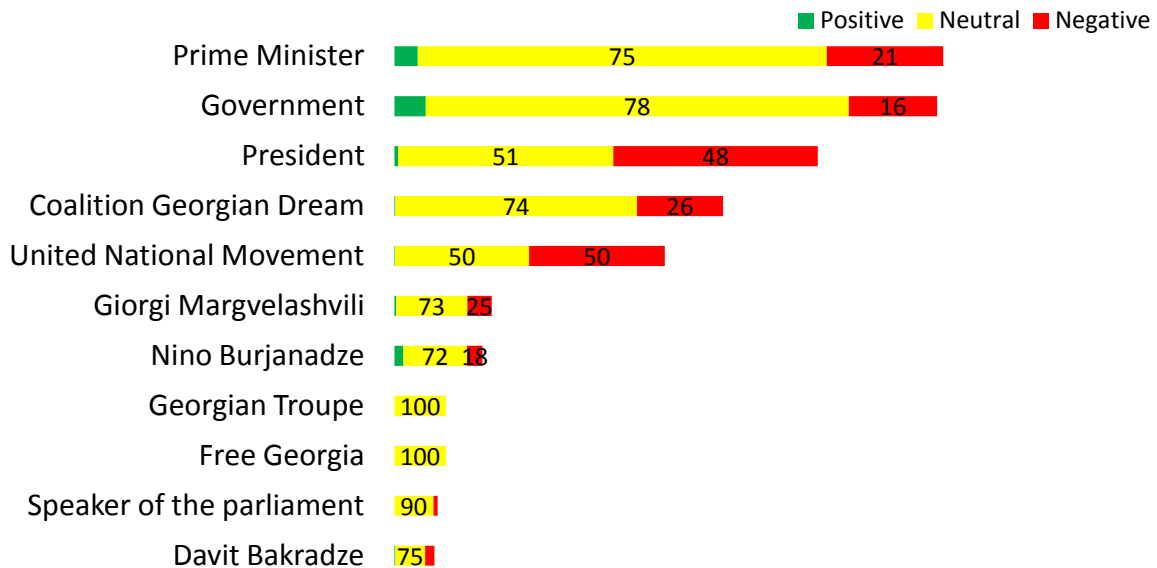
The Akhali Versia was not limited to providing only the news to the readers and also offered interviews, analytical articles and columns on many topical issues.

In most cases the journalists provided fact-based information to the reader in a neutral way, but in some cases the journalist's tone was ironical towards various subjects or topics.

The Alia

The election issues were actively covered in the Alia, but instead of presidential candidates, the outlet laid more emphasis on the Prime Minister, the government, the President, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement. Only some candidates were highlighted – Giorgi Margvelashvili, Nino Burjanadze and Davit Bakradze.

Space allocated to the subjects in *The Alia* according to the tone (%)



The tone has been neutral towards the presidential candidates, but the indicator of negative tone is quite high in regards to other subjects. The outlet is critical to the current authorities, also to the President and the United National Movement as well.

From the qualitative point of view it should be pointed out that backstage information is often published in the *Alia*, with facts received from an unknown but reliable source, which is not double-checked or verified.

Other than unverified information, we also come across with unethical expressions about various political subjects in the newspaper, which are expressed by the sources and by the journalists themselves too.

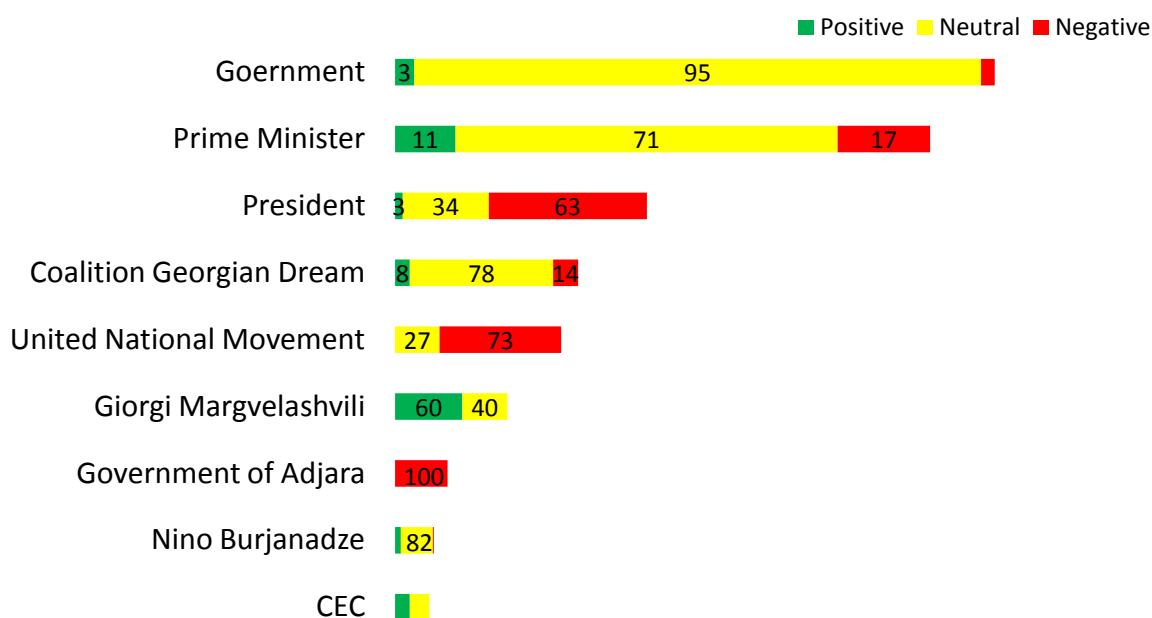
During the reporting period several cases of manipulation with photos were observed in the *Alia*, where the photo illustration did not serve the goal of providing additional information to the reader.

The Kviris Palitra

The Kviris Palitra allocated much attention to the topic of elections during the run-up to the elections and offered not only the news about the elections to the reader, but also interviews and analytical articles. Despite the issue of elections was topical, the outlet did not leave other ongoing events without attention.

The largest space among the subjects was allocated to the government, the Prime Minister and the President. The neutral tone prevails for the government and the Prime Minister, whereas 63% and 73% of the space allocated to the President and the United National Movement is a negative tone. As for the presidential candidates, the space was allocated to Giorgi Margvelashvili, Davit Bakradze and Nino Burjanadze during the reporting period.

Space allocated to the subjects in *The Kviris Palitra* according to the tone (%)



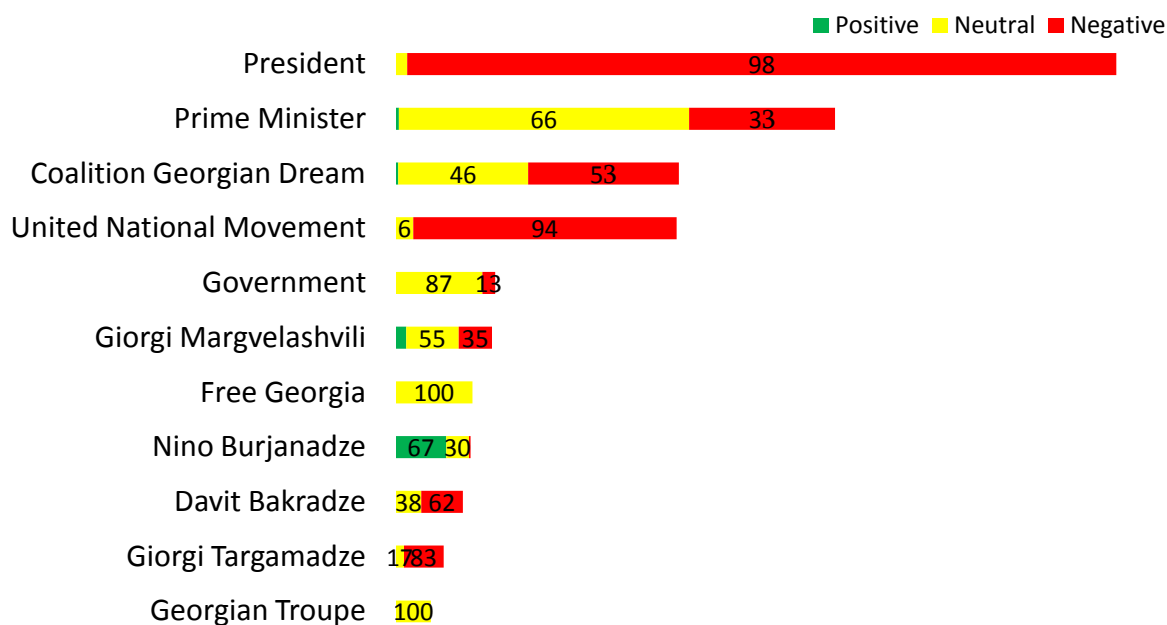
Reporters of the Kviris Palitra tried to provide diverse and exhaustive information to the readers about the issues of current significance. The language of the article is mostly neutral. The journalist states their positions in columns.

The Asaval-Dasavali

This daily publication is distinguished with its critical attitude to various political subjects. Despite the current significance of the topic of elections, even in case of this newspaper, the biggest coverage was provided to other political subjects than the candidates, although different tones were observed towards the subjects.

The largest space was allocated to the President out of the monitoring subjects, out of which 98% is a negative tone. Similar situation is present in regards to the United National Movement, where 94% of the total space is a negative tone. The indicator of negative tone is high towards other subjects as well. It is noteworthy that the positive tone has not been used for any of the subjects except Nino Burjanadze, and in her case 67% of the allocated space is a positive tone, and 2% - negative tone.

Space allocated to the subjects in *The Asavali-Dasavali* according to the tone (%)



From the qualitative viewpoint we need to point out the usage of unethical expressions and hate speech by the respondents and the journalists as well. There is a special aggression revealed towards the President. In order to express the negative attitude, the newspaper uses not only the verbal material, but also graphics, namely the photos, which is used for creating negative disposition among the readers and not for providing additional information about the topic of the article.

Besides, it is important to note that the provided information in some cases is not double-checked. Sometimes the journalist does not name the source at all or just says that the source is anonymous.

Conclusion

Providing exhaustive information about presidential candidates is especially important for the voters during the election period in order to make informed choice. However, during the reporting period (September 16 - October 26), the reader would get incomplete information about the candidates and also about the election program too.

Scarcity of analytical material was observed in some outlets, although such material would have let the readers to see the current events exhaustively and from various angles.

Usage of unethical and abusive phrases still remains to be an important issue in the pages of the outlet. Such vocabulary does not serve the goal of providing any information to the reader, but rather its goal is to develop a negative attitude towards political subjects. Some newspapers also use photo illustrations to this effect.