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საქართველოსთვის
The European Union for Georgia



Research on Media Coverage for 2017 Local Government Elections

Monitoring of Print Media

19 June - 8 October, 2017

საზოგადოებრივი
განვითარების
ინსტიტუტი



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The Civic Development Institute (CDI) is implementing the monitoring of print media for coverage of the 2017 Local Government Elections within the framework of the project Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2017 Local Government Elections in Georgia supported by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The monitoring has been carried out from 19 June 2017 and includes 12 publications: Resonansi, Kviris Palitra, Asaval-Dasavali, Guria News, Akhali Gazeti, Postscriptumi, Spektri, Guriis Moambe, Trialeti Expresi, Borjomi, Svaneti and Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi.

Research Methodology: Monitoring on selected media outlets has qualitative and quantitative components. Quantitative analysis concentrates on the frequency and tone of the coverage. The qualitative analysis focuses on whether the monitored media outlets upheld journalistic ethics. This includes the following: fact-checking and accuracy of information, appropriacy of language, diversity of sources of information, reasonable balance in reporting, visual or other type of manipulation, making fact-based argumentations and conclusions, etc. Monitoring has been carried out on each article of every selected newspaper from the first to the last day of the monitoring period.

The results of the media monitoring for the period of 19 June through 8 October are presented in this report.

The following **key findings** have been revealed as a result of the quantitative and the qualitative analyses:

- No offensive and discriminatory terminology was noted in any regional publication. This problem had been regularly observed during the past years of monitoring in several newspapers published in Tbilisi;
- The vast majority of regional newspapers covered the political parties objectively and impartially;
- The vast majority of regional newspapers actively covered social problems in regions and sought to obtain comments from local authorities concerning those problems;
- The vast majority of regional newspapers actively covered infrastructural projects successfully implemented by local governments, and also made critical assessments regarding incomplete works;
- Regional newspapers published interviews with local government representatives where journalists reminded the authorities of their pre-election promises and asked them whether those promises had been fulfilled;

- The diversity of sources of information was often represented in separate articles in the regional newspapers. When covering existing problems in a region, representatives of government authorities were respondents quite often, as well as local residents;
- No particularly positive or negative attitudes to any election subject was observed in the regional press;
- Most regional publications allocated equal space to the pre-election activities of different political parties;
- Only two regional publications (Borjomi and Svaneti) demonstrated a clearly positive attitude towards local or central government authorities;
- The commercial and advertising articles were distinguished from the editorial materials in all the regional publications selected for the monitoring;
- Advertising materials were not properly marked in the newspaper Resonansi;
- Cases of publishing unverified information were revealed in the newspaper Kviris Palitra;
- Multiple violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed in each publication of Asaval-Dasavali.

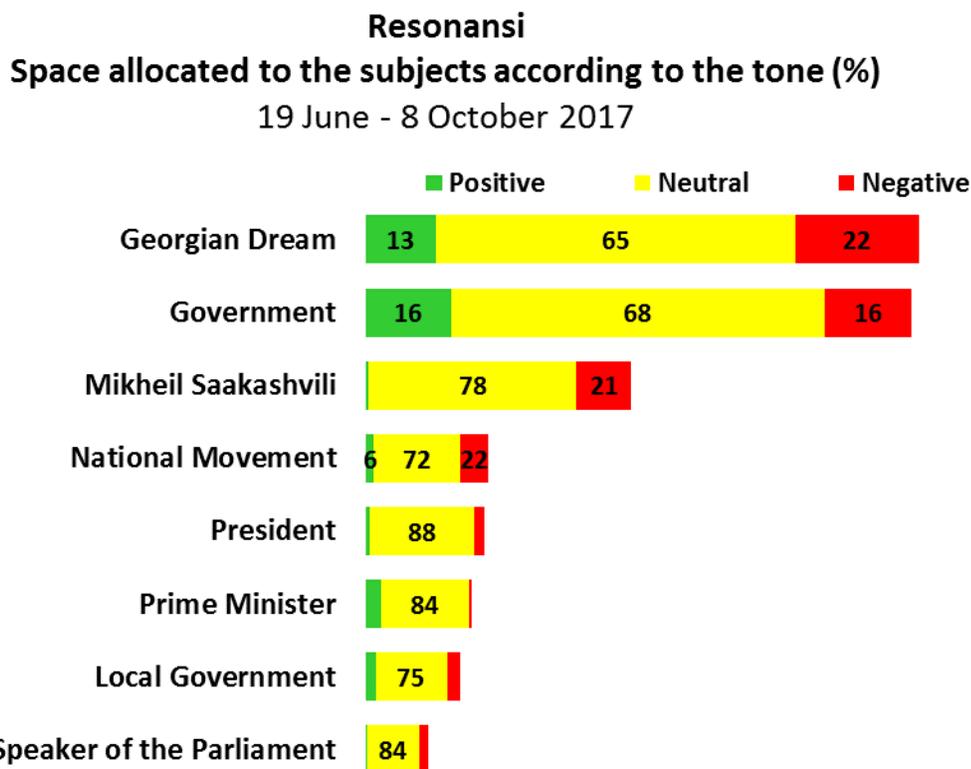
Resonansi

The positive or the negative attitude towards any political power was not observed with the Resonansi newspaper during the monitoring period. The cases of violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms were not identified. However, it should be noted that the articles prepared under commercial contracts were not dully distinguished from the editorial materials.

The activities of the Georgian Dream (24%), the Government (24%) and the ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (11%) received the most coverage during the given period of the monitoring. Exceptionally high percentage of the positive or the negative tone indicators were not observed in the materials covering any subject.

The articles under the commercial contracts were often published without proper reference. In previous years of the monitoring, commercials were put in frame, and it was noted in a very small font on the last page of the newspaper that the articles included in frames were published under commercial contracts. This time, a part of the commercial articles was not put in frames and the articles were titled in the same way as other articles. For example, during the monitoring period two rather extensive articles were published under the section *Phenomenon [Movlena]* about the Georgian Dream and it's Mayoral candidate Kakha Kaladze (*Tbilisis Loyalty and Love - 25 Candidates United under One Principle*, September 4, pp.3; *7 Directions for the City Full of Life*, September 6, pp. 3). There was no indication that the mentioned articles were commercial.

As a result of the monitoring it can be concluded that Resonansi covered political processes impartially and objectively. No cases of gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed. However, the inadequate distinction of the articles published under commercial contracts from the editorial materials remains a noteworthy problem



Kviris Palitra

The negative tone prevailed on Kviris Palitra when covering the government, the Georgian Dream and the local governments, as well as the United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili. However, the negative tone was mainly observed in the statements of the respondents and not in the texts of the journalists. There were no cases of the particularly gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. However, it is noteworthy dissemination of unverified information by the journalists was detected many times when reporting on the activities of the former government officials.

Kviris Palitra most actively covered the government (28%), the Georgian Dream (21%) and Mikheil Saakashvili (14%). The highest rates of the negative tone indicators were observed in the materials

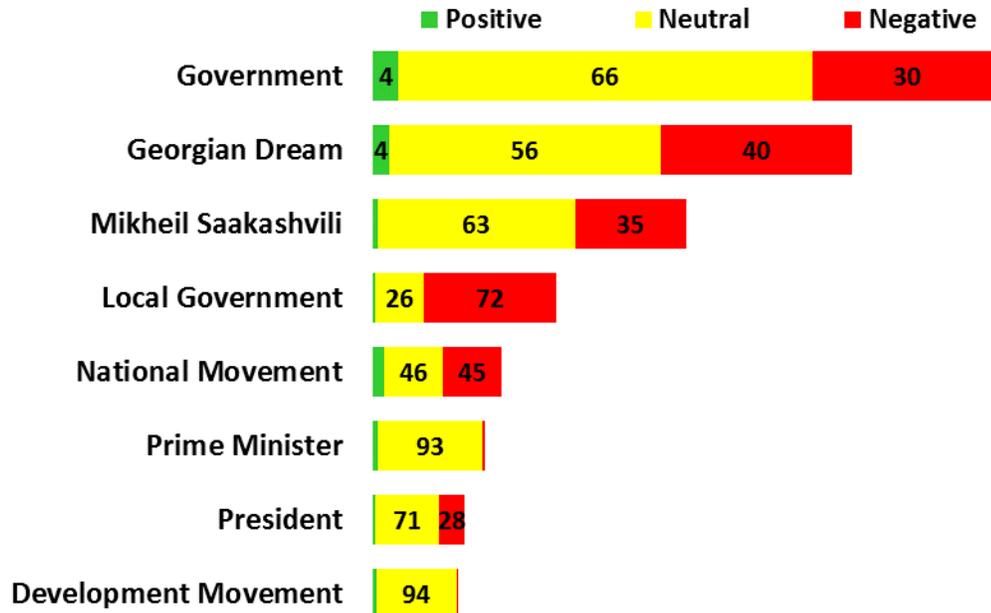
covering the local government (72%), the Speaker of the Parliament (49%) and the United National Movement (45%). The highest percentage of positive tone indicators was observed in covering the block Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Kakha Kukava-Democratic Movement-Free Georgia (36%).

The cases of dissemination unverified information were frequently observed in Kviris Palitra. In the article *According to One Version "Zooni" [nickname] Was Loyal to Saakashvili and the Ukrainian Security Services Removed Him* (11-17 September, pp. 5), the journalist wrote: *Temur Makhouri, the same Ruslan Papaskiri, was reported to be involved in the attempt to murder the businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili in 2007. At that time, the special services contacted Gia Dgebuadze, nicknamed Mastera. It was said that Mastera met Uva Akhmedov in Dubai to negotiate on this issue. The Ruslan Papaskiri should be the killer.* There was no indication in the article where did the journalist get that information from.

There were cases when Kviris Palitra journalists did not specify the source of information; For example, according to Kviris Palitra, the questioning of the members of the United National Movement and their donors was scheduled at the State Audit Office (*Nomenclature Capitalism is in Georgia*, September 11-17, pp. 6). It is noteworthy that the dissemination of unsubstantiated information by the journalists should be mainly observed while covering the activities of the United National Movement.

During the monitoring period interviews were held with the Tbilisi mayoral candidates. Those interviews were prepared professionally and no positive or negative attitude of the journalists towards any of the Tbilisi mayoral candidate was observed.

Kviris Palitra
Space allocated to the subjects according to the tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October 2017



Asaval-Dasavali

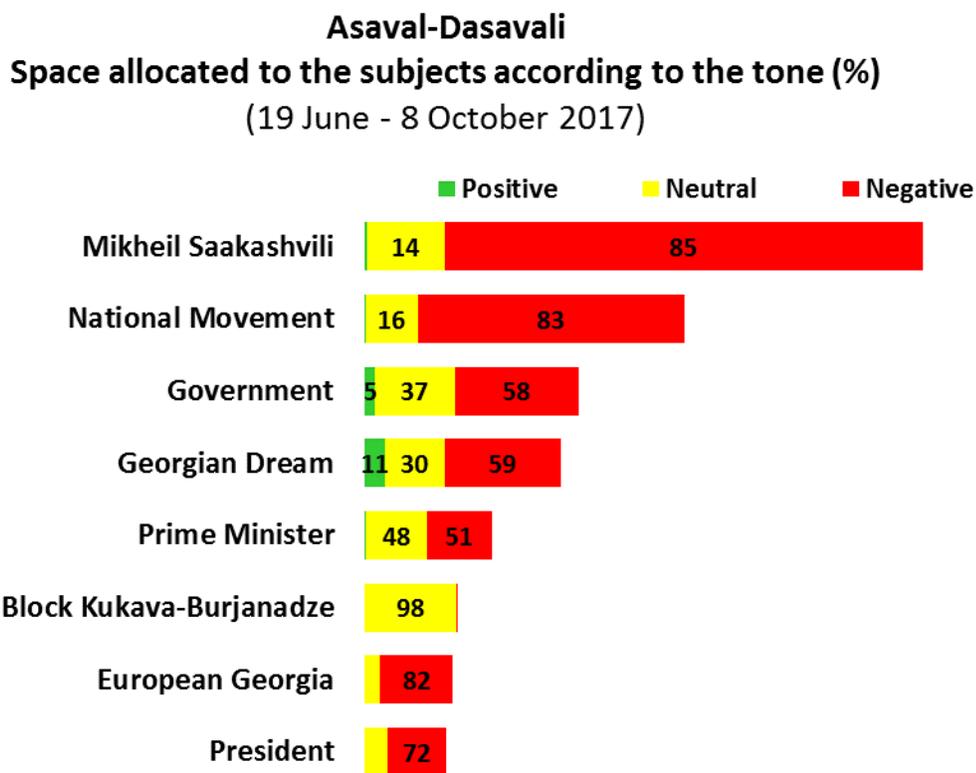
The cases of extremely gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms were observed with Asaval-Dasavali newspaper during the monitoring period. Extremely negative attitude towards the former and the current government officials were noted in the publications. Journalists systematically referred to unverified information and used insulting language. The newspaper allotted considerable space to the respondents who were distinguished by frequent use of insulting language.

Asaval-Dasavali most actively covered the activities of the ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (26%), the United National Movement (15%), the government (10%) and the Georgian Dream (9%). The highest rates of the negative tone indicators were observed in the materials covering the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (83%), the European Georgia (82%), the Republican Party (82%) and the President of Georgia (72%). The highest rates of the positive tone indicators were observed in the materials covering ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. The high rate of the neutral tone indicators were observed in the materials covering the political block Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Kakha Kukava - Democratic Movement - Free Georgia (98%).

The journalists of Asaval-Dasavali often used insulting terminology when covering politicians; For example, *Imagine, to what level of disgrace the so called party (and now a prick already!), the Republican Party, fall down that it can not find any supporter in the political and the public elections*

except this *Buck Lesbian* (*The Republicans Favor the Lesbian As the Tbilisi Mayoral Candidate*, August 21-27, pp. 8). One-sided reporting and unsubstantiated discussions by the journalists were systematically observed; in many articles during the reporting period, the United National Movement was accused of starting fires that took place on the territory of Georgia in 2017 (For example, in the articles *Natzis Turned Fire to a Weapon of Political Struggle*, August 21-27, pp.2 , *Borjomi of August*, August 28 – September 3, pp. 2, *The Fire Set Georgia*, September 4-10, pp. 8). Allegation coming only from one side was presented in those articles and no attempt of the journalists was seen to offer the reader different opinions.

As a result of the monitoring, it can be concluded that Asaval-Dasavali covered the ongoing political processes in a biased and one-sided manner. The journalists of the newspaper did not refrain from the dissemination of unverified information, unsubstantiated judgements and insulting language.



Guria news

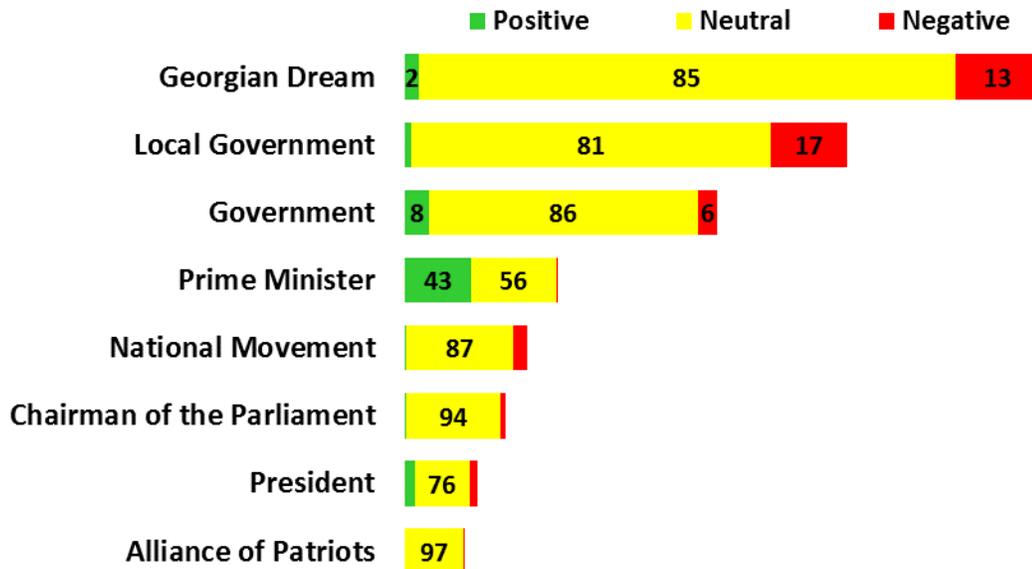
The positive or the negative attitude towards any political power was not been observed with Guria news newspaper during the monitoring period. Cases of the gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms were not identified.

The activities of the Georgian Dream (30%), the government (15%) and the local government (21%) were most actively covered in Guria news. Exceptionally high percentage of the negative tone indicators was not revealed when covering any of the monitoring subjects. The high rate of the positive tone indicators was observed in the materials covering the Prime Minister (43%).

Guria news was quite actively covering the events taking place both in the region and throughout the country. In the course of reporting on regional events the attempts were made to present the views of the government officials as well as of the local population. The critical analyses of the social and infrastructural problems in the region was frequently observed in the newspaper publications. (For example, in the articles: *Problems of the PR-ed Resort*, August 14, pp. 4; *Soon People will Cut Down Hazelnut Trees as Tea Plants*, August 17, pp. 1-5). During the monitoring period advertising materials of the Georgian Dream were observed. The materials were marked as commercials. It should be noted that Guria news properly distinguishes commercial ads and articles from the editorial materials.

As a result of the monitoring, it can be concluded that Guria news had covered the ongoing political processes objectively and impartially. The newspaper preserved journalistic standards and ethical norms.

Guria News
Space allocated to the subjects according to the tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October 2017



Borjomi

Very positive attitude towards the local government was observed with Borjomi newspaper publications during the monitoring period. More than half of the articles were about the activities carried out in the region by the local government.

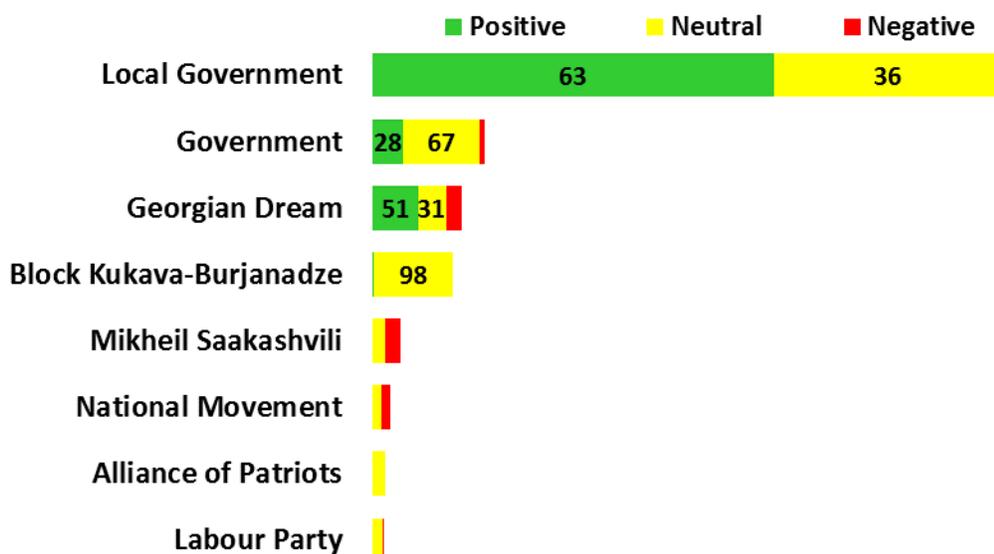
The activities of the local government (62%), the central government (11%) and the Georgian Dream (9%) were most actively covered in Borjomi newspaper. The positive tone indicators did prevail when covering all the three mentioned monitoring subjects.

The one-sided coverage of the local government prevailed in Borjomi newspaper. The journalists did not attempt to present different opinions about the events in the region to the readers. Most respondents were representatives of the local government and deputies of the Georgian Dream. There were almost no critical opinions expressed and comprehensive analysis of the social problems in the region was not presented.

The positive attitude towards the ruling team was noticeable in the texts of the journalists and in the titles of the articles; For example, *Tired of Taking Care of Voters* (July 13, pp. 2). It is noteworthy that from all the political parties only the presentation of the mayoral candidate from the Georgian Dream in the region was covered. (*Strong Self-Governance for Strong State*, 5 October, pp.1).

As a result of the monitoring, it can be concluded that Borjomi newspaper is biased in covering current affairs in the region. It should be noted that the main page of the newspaper has the inscription *Be always informed about our work. Borjomi Municipality* . If the newspaper is financed by the Municipality it should be clearly indicated.

Borjomi
Sapce allocated to the subjects according to the tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October 2017



Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi

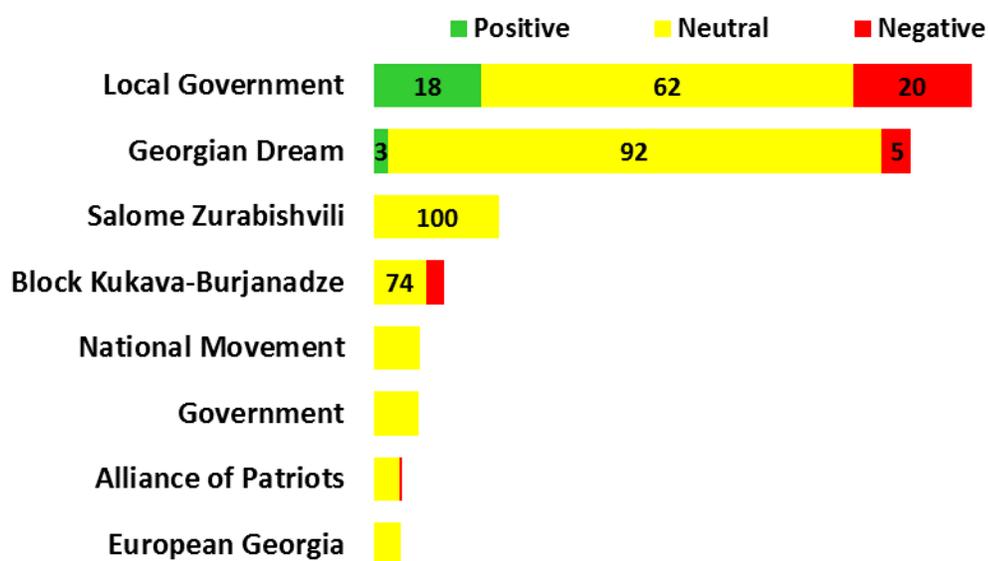
The positive or the negative attitude towards any political power was not observed with Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi newspaper during the monitoring period. The newspaper mainly reported on the regional developments. No cases of the gross violating of journalistic standards and ethical norms were identified.

The activities of the local government (40%) and the Georgian Dream (36%) were covered most frequently in Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi. Exceptionally high percentage of the positive or the negative tone indicators was not revealed when covering any of the monitoring subjects. During the monitoring period the newspaper did not cover the election programs of the Poti mayoral candidates intensely.

The newspaper actively reported on the social issues and infrastructural projects implemented in the region. It is noteworthy that quite often the journalists tried to present the opinions of the government officials as well as of the local population (For example, in the article *Senaki from Elections to Elections*, 19-26 June, pp. 3-4).

As a result of the monitoring, it can be concluded that Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi covered ongoing political processes objectively and impartially. The newspaper preserved journalistic standards and ethical norms.

Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi
Space allocated to the subjects according to the tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October 2017



Guriis Moambe

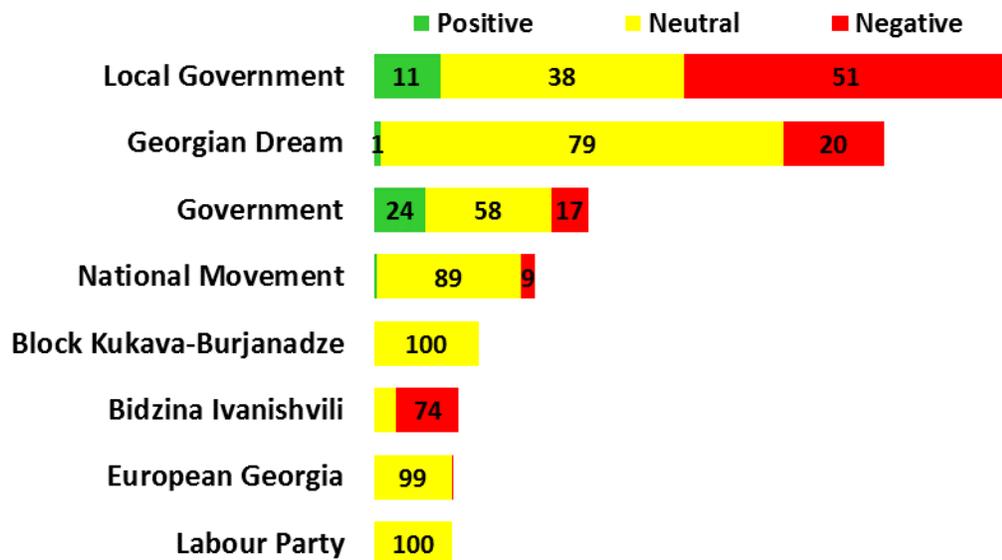
The positive or the negative attitude towards any political power was not observed with Guriis Moambe newspaper during the monitoring period. However, the publication expressed critical attitude towards the ruling team, the local government and the ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. No cases of the gross violating of journalistic standards and ethical norms were identified.

The activities of the local government (32%), the Georgian Dream (26%) and the government (11%) were most intensely covered in Guriis Moambe newspaper. The high percentage of the negative tone indicators was revealed when covering materials on the ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (74%) and the local government (51%). No positive tone indicators were revealed when covering any of the monitoring subjects.

The critical analyses of the works carried out by the local government was provided in the publications. However, it should be noted that the publication also covered the successful projects implemented in the region. The social problems in the region and the opinions of the local population were also actively covered. Guriis Moambe published articles on the problems of the socially vulnerable people living in the region.

As a result of the monitoring it can be concluded that Guriis Moambe was impartial and covered ongoing political processes in the region impartially. The newspaper was distinguished with a critical analytical reports on the works carried out in the region.

Guriis Moambe
Space Allocated to the subjects according to the tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October 2017



Postscriptumi

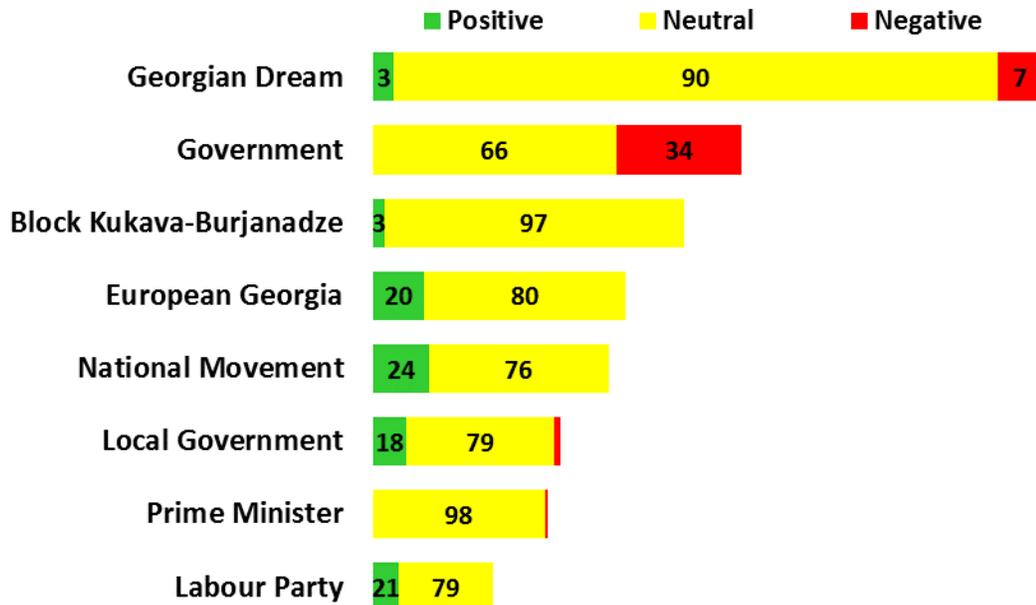
The positive or the negative attitude towards any political power was not observed with Postscriptumi newspaper during the monitoring period. No cases of the gross violating of journalistic standards and ethical norms were identified.

The activities of the Georgian Dream (25%) and the government (14%) were most frequently covered in Postscriptumi newspaper. No positive tone indicators were revealed while covering any of the monitoring subjects. The relatively high negative tone indicators were allotted to the government (34%).

Unlike many other regional publications selected for the monitoring, Postscriptumi covered important issues related to other regions. It should be noted that in the given period of the monitoring, Postscriptumi offered the readers the detailed information on Kutaisi mayoral candidates. (For example, the articles: *Pre-Election Preparations for Parties in Kutaisi and New Versions of the Mayoral Candidates*, July 10-16, pp. 1-2; *Who Does Not Have a Mayoral Candidate in Kutaisi*, July 17-23, pp.1). There were articles in the newspaper under advertisement section for the election campaign of the Georgian Dream and the projects implemented by the central or the regional government.

As a result of the monitoring, it can be concluded that Postscriptumi was impartial and unbiased in covering the ongoing pre-election processes. The newspaper preserved journalistic standards and ethical norms. It should be noted that Postscriptumi properly distinguished the articles published under commercial contracts from the editorial materials.

Postscriptumi
Space allocated to the subjects according to the tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October 2017



Trialetis Expressi

The positive tone indicators prevailed with the Trialetis Expressi newspaper during the monitoring period. No cases of the gross violating of journalistic standards and ethical norms had been identified.

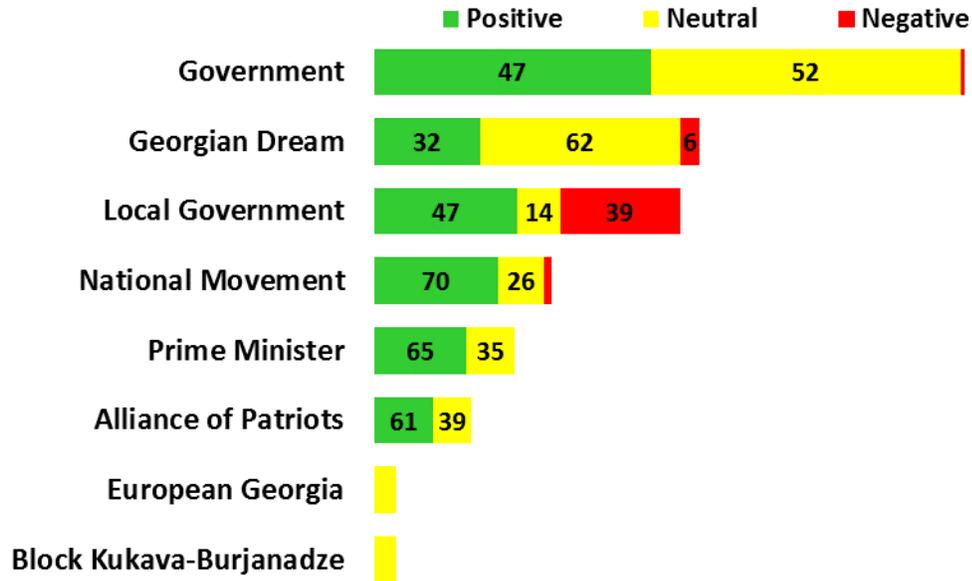
The activities of the government (35%) the Georgian Dream (19%) and the local government (18%) were most frequently covered in Trialetis Expressi newspaper. The positive tone indicators prevailed while covering the subjects. The high rate of negative tone indicators were not revealed while covering any of the monitoring subjects.

In Trialetis Expressi there was little coverage of the current events in the region. The respondents were mainly politicians. Any critical analysis of the current events in the region was rarely encountered.

The newspaper objectively covered the pre-election programs of the Tsalka candidates (*Five Candidates are Struggling for Tsalka*, October, pp.2). However, the journalist did not seem to try to raise critical questions for the mayoral candidates.

As a result of the monitoring it can be concluded that Trialetis Expressi was not biased to any political party. The main challenge of the newspaper was the lack of critical analysis of the events in the region.

Trialetis Ekspresi
Space allocated to the subjects according to the tone(%)
 19 June - 8 October 2017



Spektri

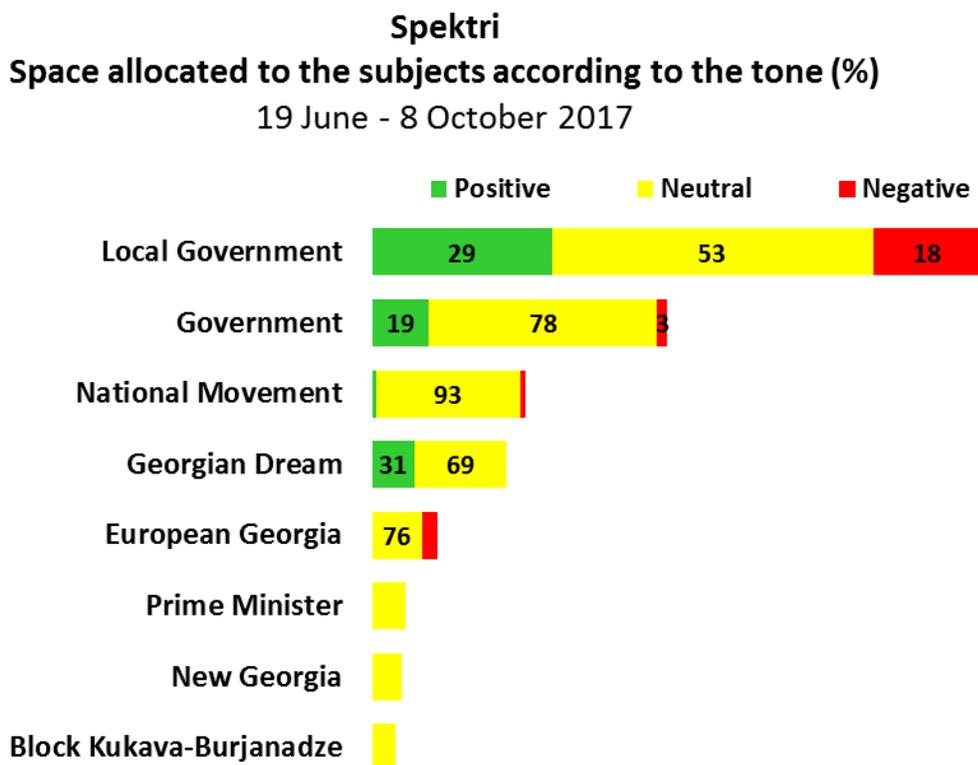
The positive or the negative attitude towards any political power was not observed with the Spektri newspaper during the monitoring period. The newspaper observed journalistic standards and ethical norms.

The activities of the local government (44%), the central government (21%), the National Movement (11%) and the Georgian Dream (10%) were most frequently covered in Spektri newspaper. The relatively high percentage of the positive tone indicators was revealed when covering the Georgian Dream (31%) and the government (19%). The high rate of the negative tone indicators was allotted to the European Georgia (24%).

Spektri covered the social problems in the region intensely. The opinions of the local government representatives, as well as of the population were presented in the articles prepared on the infrastructure projects implemented in the region.

It should be noted that Spektri provided detailed information on the election procedures and the election precincts (For example, in the articles: *Informed Voters for Conscious Elections*, September 12, pp.6; *Unified Lists of Voters and Verification Ways*, September 12, pp.7).

As a result of the monitoring, it can be concluded that Spektri was impartial and unbiased in covering the current political processes. It should be noted that the newspaper properly distinguished the articles published under commercial contracts from the editorial materials.

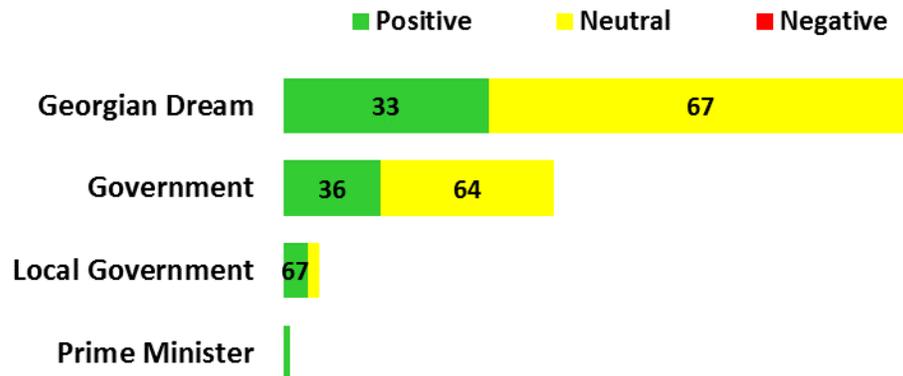


Svaneti

The newspaper Svaneti is the monthly newspaper and accordingly, the data of only two issues (July and August; September issue was published late) were monitored in the reporting period. The activities of only the government representatives were covered in the above mentioned two publications. It should be noted that the coverage was only positive or neutral.

As a result of the monitoring, it can be concluded that events in the Svaneti newspaper had been unilaterally covered. There was no evidence of the diversity of sources of information in the articles; The attempts of the journalists to present different opinions to the reader when covering a particular issue were not noticed. Activities of the central or the regional government authorities had been covered only in the positive or the neutral tone. It should be noted that the Svaneti newspaper properly observed distinguishing the articles published under commercial contracts from the editorial materials.

Svaneti
Space allocated to the subjects according to the tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October 2017



Akhali Gazeti

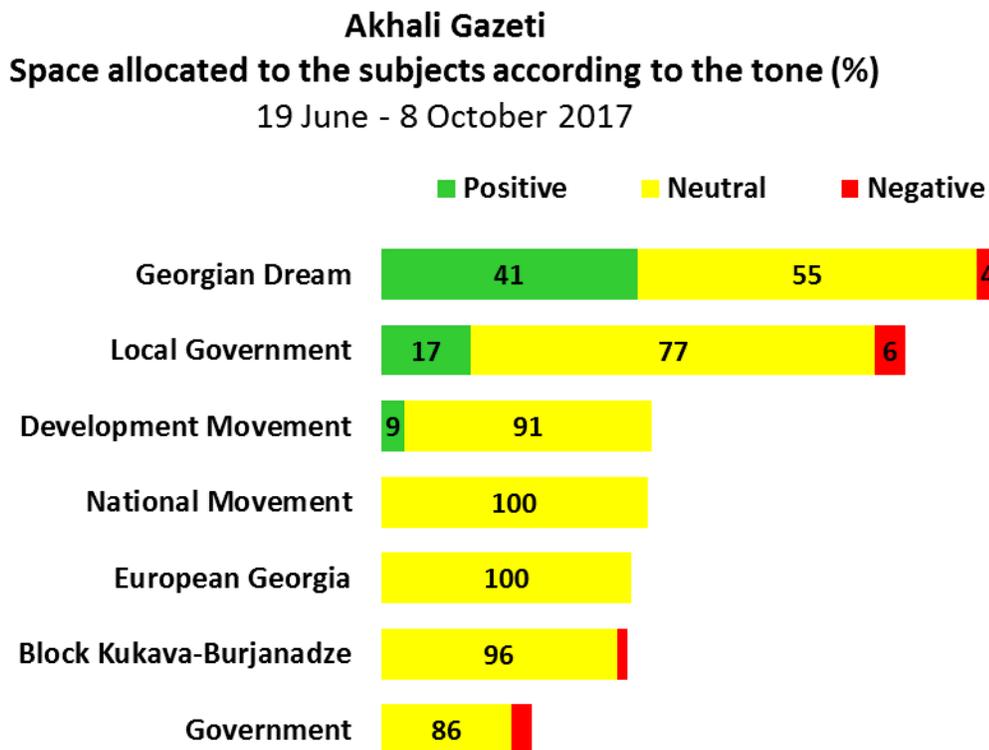
During the monitoring period the positive tone relatively prevailed in Akhali Gazeti newspaper when covering the ruling party. No cases of the gross violating of journalistic standards and ethical norms were identified.

The activities of the Georgian Dream (24%) and the local government (20%) were most intensely covered in Akhali Gazeti newspaper. The percentage indicators of the positive tone exceeded in the coverage of these subjects. High rates of negative tone indicators were not identified during the coverage of any of the monitoring subjects.

Comprehensive analyses of the social and the economic problems in the region were rarely observed in Akhali Gazeti. In most cases, the representatives of the local government were chosen as the respondents and different positions were presented less often.

It should be noted that while covering the Kutaisi mayoral candidates, there were no particularly negative or positive tone indicators observed in the newspaper towards any political power. (For example in the article *Struggle for Kutaisi Precedence with Familiar Priorities and Methods*, September 11-24, pp. 3).

It should be noted that the Akhali Gazeti newspaper properly distinguished the articles published under commercial contracts from the editorial materials.



Conclusion

As a result of the monitoring, it can be concluded that the regional press covered the current events in the regions of Georgia impartially and professionally. In most publications there were no positive or negative attitudes expressed towards any election subject.

It is noteworthy that the comments of the local population on the existing problems or achievements in the region were often provided in the regional press. The large number of the regional publications offered the readers critical analyses of the activities carried out in the regions by the government authorities. The interviews with local government officials who were asked by journalists to give the analyses of the pre-election promises were frequent.

Various violations were observed in all the three newspapers published in Tbilisi. Improper reference to the commercial and advertising materials was a serious problem in Resonansi newspaper. It should

be noted that all the regional publications selected for the monitoring were properly distinguishing advertising articles from the editorial materials.