



## **Election Monitoring of Press**

August 16 – September 15, 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 second interim report before the presidential elections of 2013, which covers the period from August 16 until September 15.

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.<sup>1</sup>

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

- As the elections got closer, number of articles and interviews on the election issues increased in almost all the outlets. Special attention is paid to the elections topic in the newspapers the Akhali Taoba and the Akhali Versia.
- During the reporting period, the newspapers most actively covered the Prime Minister, to whom the largest area was allocated in all the newspapers except the Akhali Taoba and the Asaval-Dasavali.
- Presidential candidates, who were less known to the public and were registered at the CEC and are running for the elections on October 27, were left beyond the attention of the outlets. Compared to other newspapers, the Akhali Taoba and the Akhali Versia allocated more area to them than others.
- There were no cases of manipulation with photos observed in any of the newspapers except the Asaval-Dasavali.

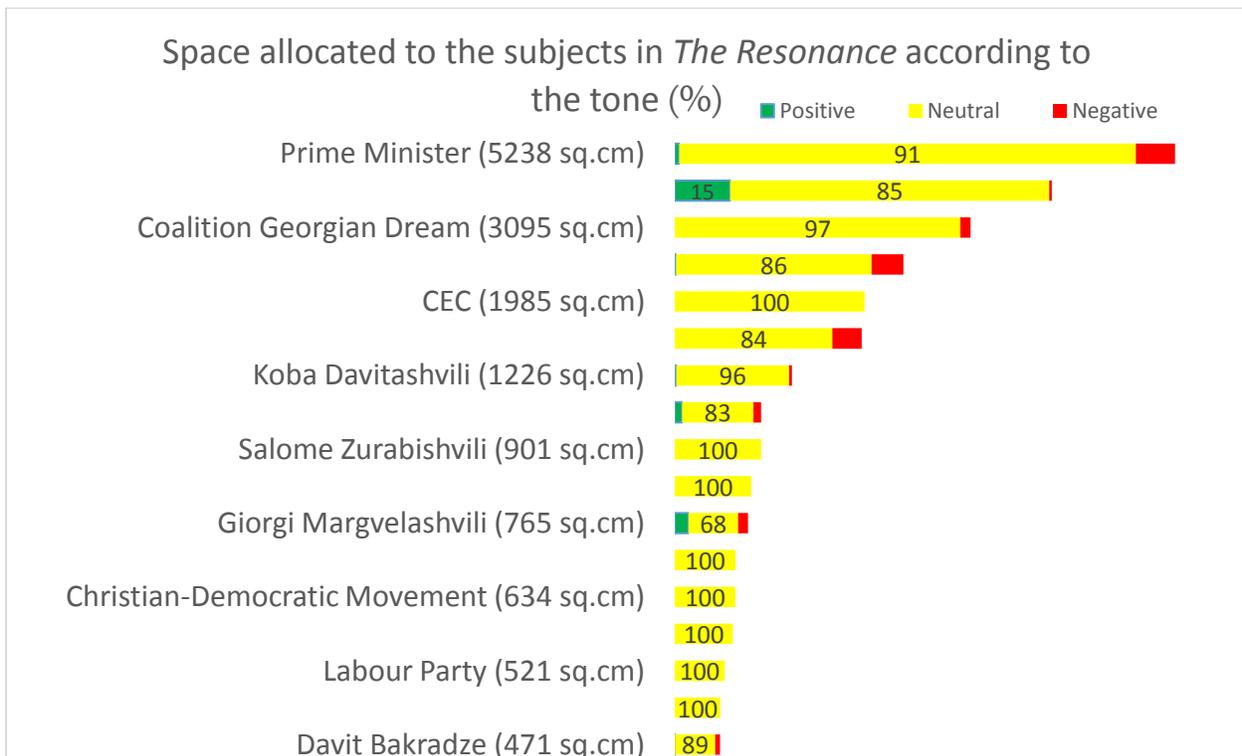
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<sup>1</sup> The newspapers were selected according to the results of the print media research done in 2012 by the Institute of Polling and Marketing.

- We still encounter unethical expressions in the newspaper the Alia and the Asaval-Dasavali. Such expressions are especially frequent in the Asaval-Dasavali.

## The Resonance

With the polling day getting closer, the number of materials on the topic of elections has increased in the Resonance. However, the head of the government, the cabinet of ministers and the Coalition Georgian Dream were more intensively covered than the electoral subjects. The Prime Minister got 19% of the total area allocated to the monitoring subjects, the government – 15%, and the parliamentary majority 11%. The tone used towards the subjects is mostly neutral, but we come across with little number of positive and negative tones as well. This outlet is distinguished with its coverage of subjects with a broad spectrum.<sup>2</sup>



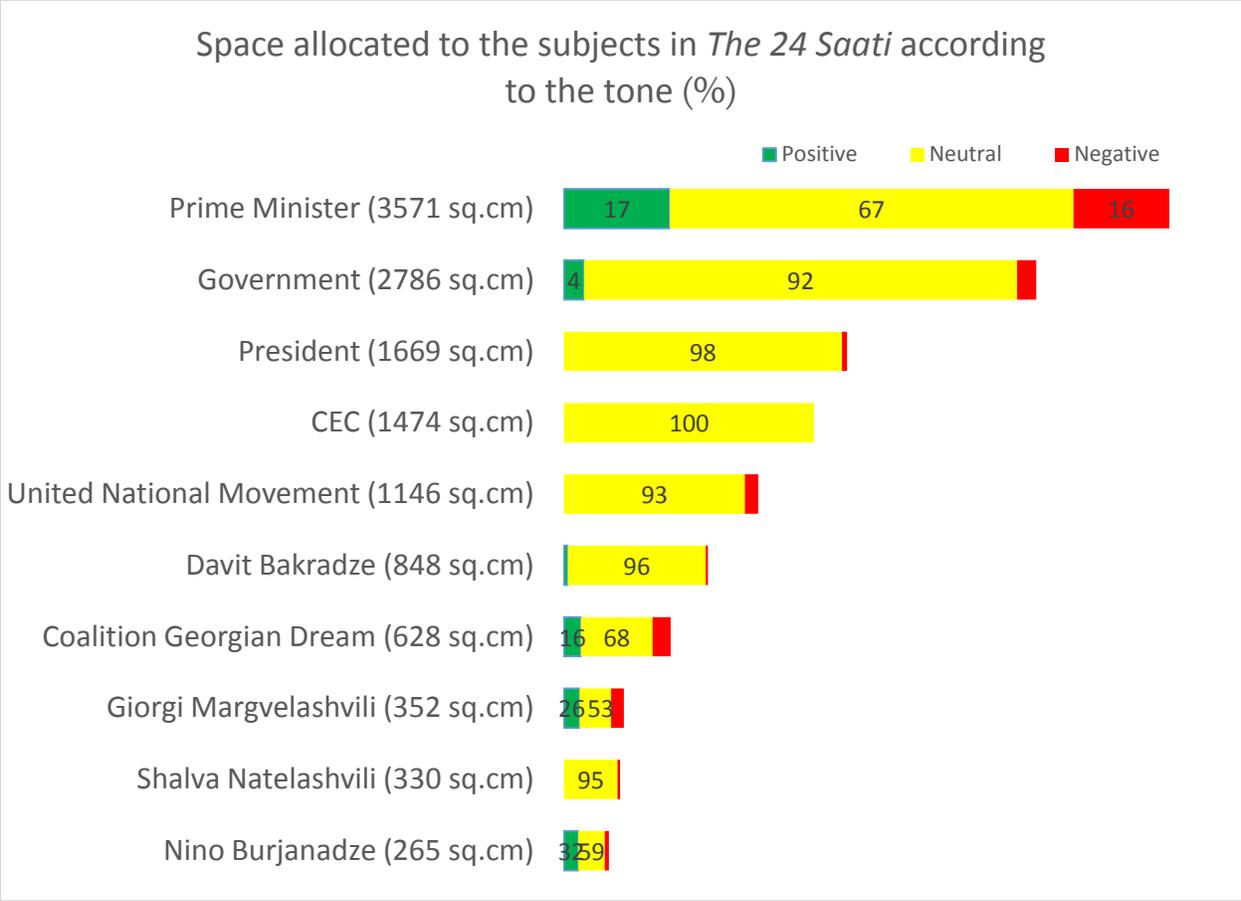
<sup>2</sup> Due to a big number of subjects, only those subjects are displayed on the diagram, to which 2% or more of the total area was allocated in the outlet.

The Resonance provided intensive and multifaceted coverage of all the events of current significance. The journalists tried not to violate the journalistic ethics. The outlet provided the readers not only with brief news and factual information about the ongoing events, but also with interviews and analytical articles. In most cases, the provided information is double-checked and the articles have two or more sources.

There were no unethical expressions or discriminatory vocabulary towards any specific subject or issue observed in the newspaper during the period August 16 - September 15, which may be evaluated positively.

### **The 24 Saati**

The 24 Saati, like the previous reporting period, does not leave any topical issue unreported, but provides information to the reader without analysis. The biggest attention was paid to the Prime Minister among the subjects, as far as the Prime Minister published an extensive letter and arranged one of the largest press conferences during this reporting period, which covered many topical issues. The neutral tone dominated towards the subjects, but we also come across with the positive and negative tones towards certain subjects.



There was a quite active coverage of electoral issues, and the outlet dedicated numerous articles to the election meetings of various presidential candidates, also to the appointment of a new chairperson of the CEC. However, we encountered the electoral subjects basically only when they were commenting on various issues. Such comments enable the reader to learn about the presidential candidate’s attitude to a certain important issue, but there was less discussion about their programs and promises.

Despite the 24 Saati does not offer an in-depth analysis to the reader, the outlet always provides many diverse positions about the event. For example, after the Prime Minister’s press conference, there was a big and extensive article constructed only on the quotes, without a journalist’s text, and evaluations of various politicians were provided in connection to this or that statement of the Prime Minister.

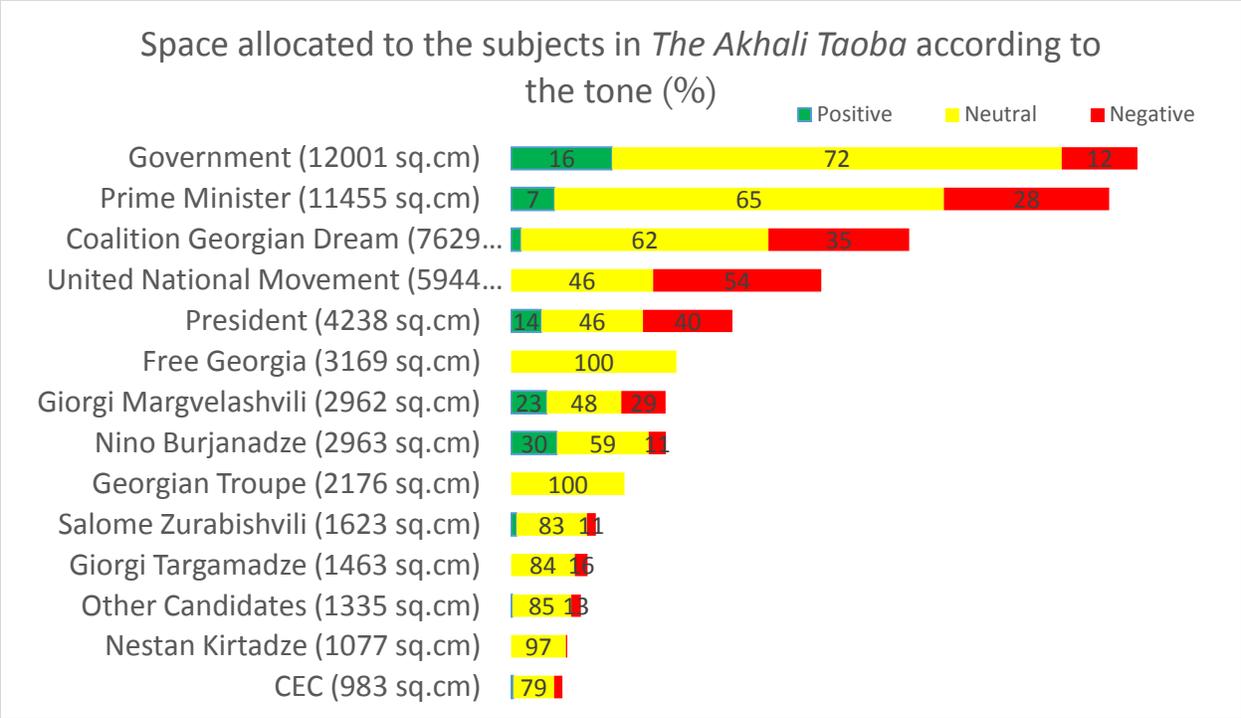
The 24 Saati almost never publishes any photo materials. We see photos mostly in the sports articles only. On one hand, this enables the outlet to load the pages with text dedicated to politics and the news too, but on the other hand, the lack of visual material makes it difficult for the reader to perceive some topics, e.g. verbal description of disaster consequences is less comprehensible than at least one photo showing the event.

## **The Akhali Taoba**

The daily newspaper the Akhali Taoba provided a diverse coverage of all the political events taken place during the reporting period. The outlet published the news, also the interviews and analytical articles in connection to the current issues.

The Akhali Taoba is distinguished with its special attention to the elections and the electoral subjects. The outlet provided a detailed coverage of the issues such as the registration of candidates, appointment of the CEC chairperson, CEC's refusal to Salome Zurabishvili and other issues related to the elections. Other than the presidential candidates who are well known to the public, other candidates also had an opportunity to state their positions regarding a certain event in this newspaper.

The issues related to the Prime Minister also fell under the limelight of the Akhali Taoba as well, but unlike other outlets, here the government is the most actively covered subject, to which 19% was allocated out of the total area dedicated to the monitoring subjects. Other than the coverage of institutions, the outlet often offers to the readers the comments of and interviews with the government representatives regarding the ongoing political events. There is a diverse tone used towards the subjects, but in this respect it is interesting that the United National Movement and the President were more often represented in the negative tone than the government and the Prime Minister.

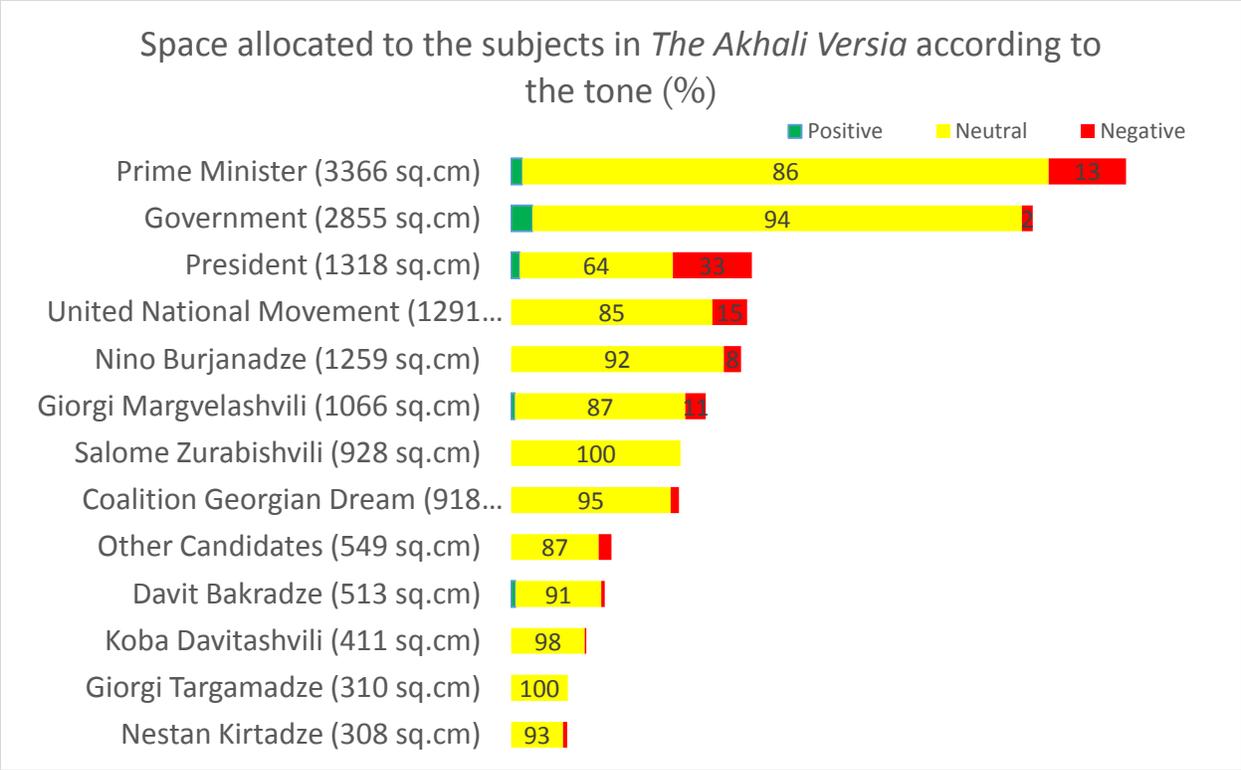


From the qualitative point of view it is noteworthy that in most cases the articles of the Akhali Taoba provide verified information to readers and present several different opinions regarding a topical issue.

There were no cases of unethical expressions and manipulation with photos observed during the reporting period. The journalists try to abide by the journalistic ethics and standards.

**The Akhali Versia**

Diversity of topics is eye-catching in the Akhali Versia, but as the elections get closer the number of articles about the electoral topics started to increase. Despite promoting the election-related issues, however, the presidential candidates are not covered most actively, as it is the case of other outlets. Instead, the government, the Prime Minister, the President and the United National Movement are the most focused subjects for the outlet.



The outlet, which is published three times a week, is mostly focused on analytical articles and interviews. It also contains the news, but the emphasis is laid on the analysis of ongoing events and perspectives for the future, especially in the context of elections. Some issues have separate rubrics for description and analysis of presidential candidates and their election campaign, which should be evaluated positively, as far as the intensive coverage of electoral marathon positively influences the awareness of voters during the run-up to the elections.

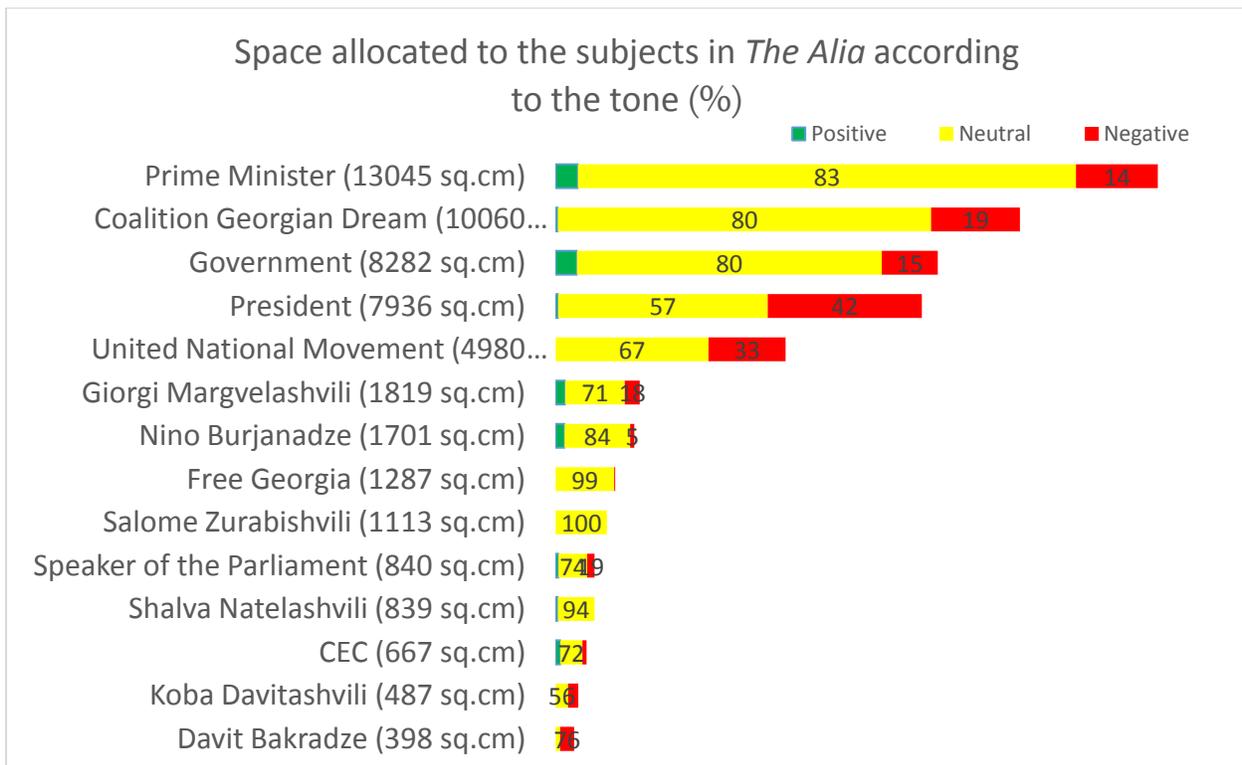
The language of a journalist/article is mostly neutral in the Akhali Versia, but we come across with cases when the journalist’s disrespectful and somehow cynical attitude is felt towards a person or a topic. For example, the presidential candidate Nino Burjanadze is referred to as a Lady Bella Ciao, and Shalva Natelashvili, leader of the Labor Party – as Robin Hood.

**The Alia**

On the background of ongoing political events, the Alia publishes the news, also interviews, analytical articles and columns of journalists. As the elections get closer, the

topic of elections is gaining more importance for this newspaper too. Whereas the emphasis was laid on three presidential candidates during the previous election period, now their number has increased, and the number of articles published on the topic of elections increased as well.

During this reporting period as well, the biggest attention is allocated to Bidzina Ivanishvili, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the government. Like other newspapers, the Alia also dedicated extensive articles to the statements made by the Prime Minister in the first half of September.



Neutral tone prevails towards the Coalition Georgian Dream in the outlet, although a clearly negative attitude is revealed towards the Republican Party among the coalition member parties. One of the journalists of the newspaper calls them “Resps”, and often blames them of making deals with political opponents, but information in such articles are not double-checked or verified.

The President and the United National Movement still remain one of the main objects of criticism in the pages of the Alia. The journalists also go beyond the criticism and start to abuse and insult the President and the Parliamentary opposition, which should be

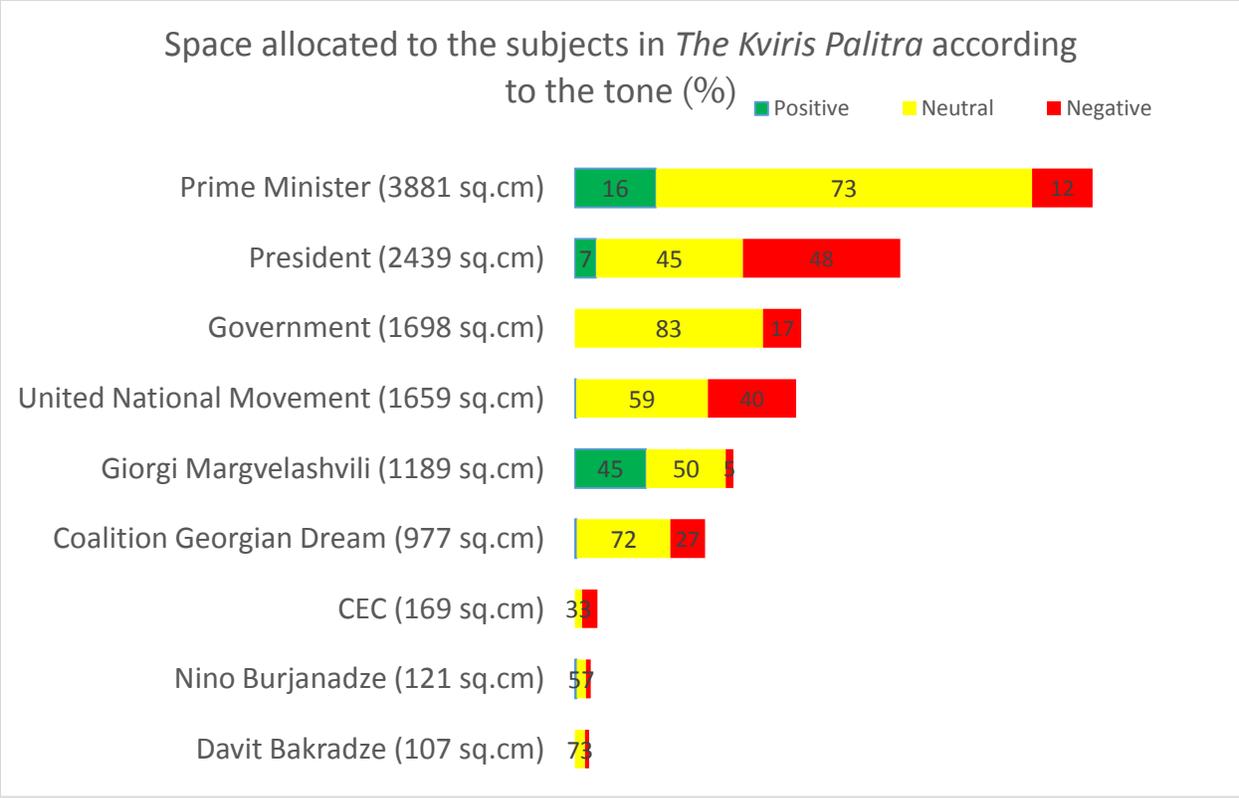
evaluated negatively, because the emotional expressions (regardless whether they are positive or negative) do not serve the purpose of informing the readers, instead, they are focused on creating a certain disposition. However, the unverified negative information may be disseminated as a true fact and the public can be misled.

The articles are almost always accompanied with a photo in the Alia, which provides additional information to a reader; however, in some cases instead of providing information, the photo repeats a general disposition of the article, and is positive and negative. When this is the case, we are dealing with manipulation with photos.

### **The Kviris Palitra**

As it was the case for a month of the previous reporting period, the Kviris Palitra is focused on providing analytical material to the readers. Coverage of events in the news format includes all the ongoing news, but extensive articles are dedicated only to the most important events of the week. Every issue provides an interview with various experts, who are analyzing political processes. Besides, the columns are published as well, where the journalists are evaluating the events and are also sharing their conclusions with the readers as well. Offering diverse types of articles to the readers should be evaluated positively, because the readers can get familiar with the thinking of various people and also analyze the current issue themselves too.

Pages of the Kviris Palitra also serve as evidence that the election processes have been activated. However, at this stage the mostly covered subjects are Bidzina Ivanishvili, Mikheil Saakashvili and the government. This is related to the events taken place in the second half of August and in the beginning of September, such as the sale of Channel 9, Prime Minister's letter, his press-conference, Chela incident, etc. where these three subjects were more intensively seen than any other presidential candidates.



Among the presidential candidates, the largest area was dedicated to Giorgi Margvelashvili, Nino Burjanadze and Davit Bakradze. Other subjects, who are not represented in the chart, got only less than 1% of the total area dedicated to the subjects.

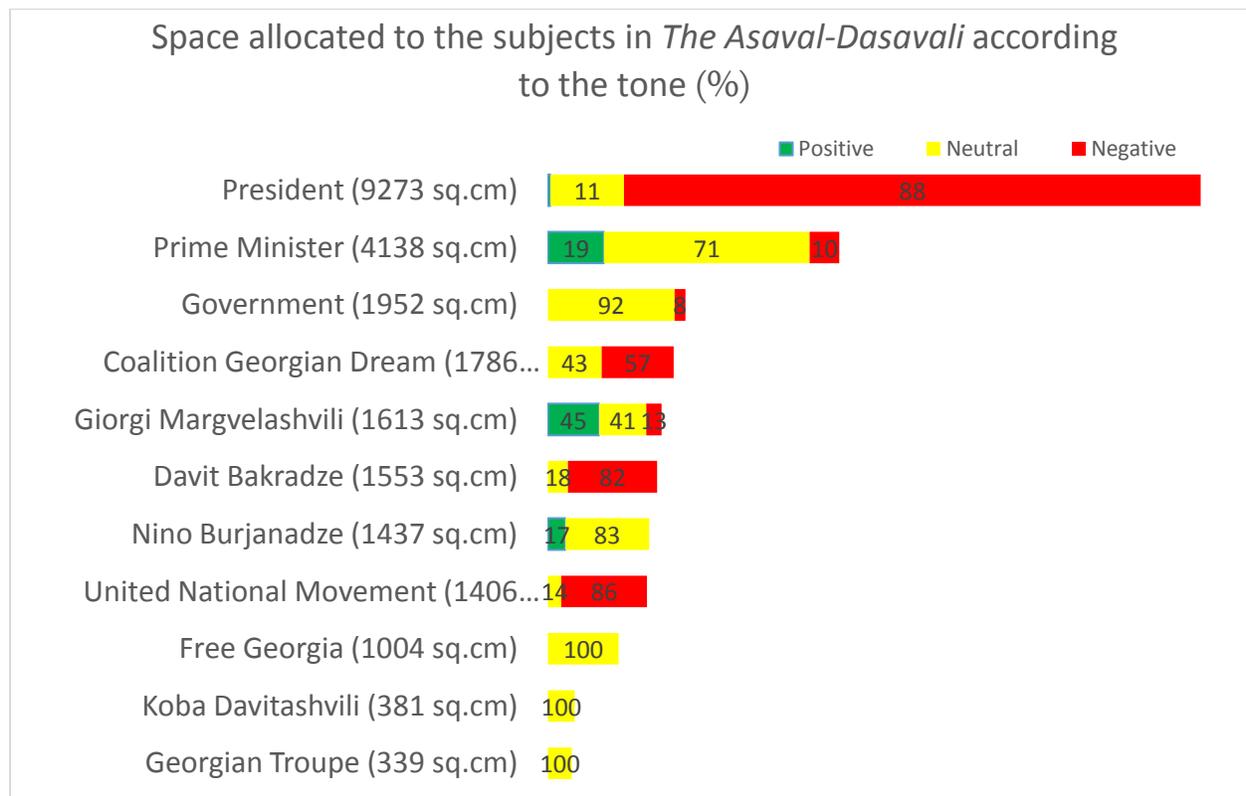
There were no cases of manipulation with photos in the Kviris Palitra. Almost all the articles are published with illustrations, but they are neutral and provide some information to a reader.

Journalists of this outlet try to be ethical, also in the columns as well, where they do not go beyond criticism of subjects and do not engage in insulting the politicians. There is no bias revealed to any political party or candidate from their side.

**The Asaval-Dasavali**

The Asaval-Dasavali is loaded with interviews and articles, where current events are analyzed sometimes by respondents, and sometimes also by the journalists. The topic of elections is also discussed in the pages of this outlet as well, but at first the President, the government and the Prime Minister are highlighted. Unlike all the other outlets, the

Asaval-Dasavali allocates the largest space to the President, which is mentioned in a negative context almost always by the respondents and by the journalists as well. Negative tone is used for 88% of the space allocated to him.



Among the candidates, the outlet lays emphasis on the celebrities, but the less known candidates are left beyond its attention. There was no space allocated to them at all during the reporting period, and this should be evaluated negatively, because the voter needs maximum information about a candidate during the run-up to the elections in order to make an informed choice. Laying emphasis selectively on a few candidates puts other candidates in unequal conditions, and the voter gets insufficient information.

Unethical expressions are used and photos are manipulated with in the newspaper. Photos are especially often used for creating negative disposition about the President in those articles which criticize Mikheil Saakashvili with the words used therein as well. The President is quite often referred to as “Mishtler”.

Other than the President, representatives of the former government are also criticized. For example: “At last the Office of Prosecutor General remembered about the existence of Saakashvili’s female executioner Khatuna Kalmakhelidze and a centurion with

goatee – Dimitri Shashkin”. The journalist is calling on that a prison is the right place for both of them. Journalists of Asaval-Dasavali, who have been notorious with such appeals and expressions, support the incitement of hatred towards specific subjects. Other than the former government, critical expressions and attitudes are increasing towards the Prime Minister and the cabinet of ministers in the Asaval-Dasavali.

In some cases the articles do not have an identifiable source and neither is the provided information double-checked. However, the journalist is speaking as if it were a true fact.

## **Conclusion**

It should be pointed out in conclusion that the majority of outlets tries to be guided by the ethical norms of journalism and provides reliable and exhaustive information to the reader. All the ongoing events are reflected in the outlets with more or less amount of analytical material.

We do not see analytical articles only in the 24 Saati, which is limited to reporting the facts and presenting various comments about these facts.

The newspaper Asaval-Dasavali is especially distinguished with its unethical expressions. Other than spreading unverified information, the Asaval-Dasavali also lays ground and incites hatred to a particular person or a group of people. To this effect, the outlet is also using illustrations with texts.

During the reporting period all the newspapers covered Bidzina Ivanishvili most actively except the Asaval-Dasavali, where the largest area was dedicated to the President, and the Akhali Taoba, where the government was the most actively covered subject. Other than the Prime Minister, attention was paid to the President and the government as well.