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Project tile	Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2016 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia
Contract number	ENI/2015/371-244
Duration of the action	10 months (01 March – 31 December 2016)
Objectives of the action	Overall objective: to promote a peaceful, free and credible media environment during the 2016 parliamentary elections in the country. Specific objectives: • To provide evidence–based assessment of media performance during 2016 to the Georgian electorate and society at large as well as to the external partners. • Public benefiting from more balanced and unbiased media coverage which will allow them to make informed decisions during the elections and getting involved into the public debates. • Improve the CSO oversight practices.
Contract partner	United Nations Development Programme
Financed by	European Union
Partners	• Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics (GCJE) – TV news and talk show monitoring; • Civic Development Institute (CDI) – internet and print monitoring; • Internews – radio monitoring.
Target group(s)	Georgia-based journalists and other representatives of mass media outlets (TV, internet, print and radio), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); voters.
Final beneficiaries	Georgian emigrant and diaspora communities in Europe, the wider Georgian population
Estimated results	• Evidence-based assessment report of election media performance through a comprehensive and qualified media monitoring and public discussions; • Election media reporting standards improved • Media and public awareness about the election media reporting standards raised • Enhanced protection of rights of journalists and media professionals • Public better informed about the electoral developments and thus able to make informed decisions; • Practice of public debate on media professional standards enhanced; • Media Monitoring capacities of CSOs strengthened; • Better informed external partners on media performance and

electoral developments;

Activity implementation status as per the Action Plan:

Project establishment and preparations for monitoring	Completed
Media monitoring of news	Completed
Media monitoring of talk shows	Completed
Media monitoring of online sources	Completed
Media monitoring of radio	Completed
Media monitoring of press	Completed
Publicity of the elections media monitoring	Completed

1. SUMMARY AND CONTEXT OF THE ACTION

1.1 Project Context

Georgia continued to exhibit the signs of successful transition towards consolidating the democracy. Media landscape was vibrant and pluralistic. Its press freedom ratings have consistently improved over the last few years. The EU/UNDP Media Monitoring initiatives for 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2014 elections have contributed considerably to it through the following activities: building the media monitoring capacities for the civil society organizations (CSOs) by refining their watchdog skills, raising Georgian journalists' awareness on professional reporting and increasing access to information and transparency on ownership and financial flaws in media by promoting relevant legislative amendments. Below is the list of the landmark events that upheld the developments in the field:

- In 2009 GNCC approved the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters. The Code requires that both public and private broadcasting companies have established and functional system of self-regulation to handle complaints in impartial and fair manner.

- In 2010 EU/UNDP election media monitoring started to enhance media reporting standards.

- In 2012 the Georgian Law on Broadcasting was amended with regard to the ownership of TV companies. The amendment prohibits the ownership of broadcasting license by an offshore company.

- Another amendment in the Law on Broadcasters, introduced in 2013, aims at increasing financial transparency of TV broadcasters and requests them to periodically submit financial report to GNCC. The reports are available on the GNCC website.

- In 2015 a new wave of reforms started at GNCC, including the establishment of the Consumer's Rights Public Defender Service aiming at protecting TV audience rights against breaches by broadcasters.

- In addition to legal frameworks refining administrative and supervisory instruments, a number of self-regulation mechanisms, established by media representative, have been gaining influence and importance in the field. The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics is one of the most important instruments in the field. The organisation was established in 2009 by 137

representatives of central, regional, and local media, who signed the charter and agreed to act and comply to its provisions. Since 2013 provisions of the charter of journalistic ethics has also been extended to non-signee journalists.

The regulatory developments were accompanied by technical advancements in the field. The upsurge and increased accessibility of modern information technologies set forward a new media landscape in the country. For example, the complete switch-over to digital terrestrial broadcasting in 2015 allowed more broadcasters to emerge. Increased Internet accessibility boosted number and importance of on-line media.

The 2016 parliamentary election cycle took place in a highly fragmented political environment. Established political groups and coalitions were continuously aggregating or splitting up into numerous entities pursuing their separate goals and the expanded media landscape allowed them to better target their audiences.

The above developments have positively affected Georgia's position in the international media freedom indices. For example, according to IREX Media Sustainability Index (MSI), since 2012 Georgia media scoring has substantially improved in the three main objectives of assessment: free speech, professional journalism, and plurality of new sources. The media freedom index of the Reporters without Borders Index showed the 40 points improvement in the country. The positive trend was also strongly represented in the Freedom House's Media Freedom and Internet Freedom Indices. However, the main challenge remains to sustain the achievements and help to regulate political temperatures in the run up to elections.

1.2 Project Summary

To promote provision of balanced and neutral information to the public by media during the election period, EU and UNDP launched a project in 2010 that aimed at developing and building the Media Monitoring (MM) capacities in the country. In partnership with a recognized Slovak organization "Memo 98", UNDP has trained leading Georgian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in MM.

Based on the successful initiatives of 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2014 elections media monitoring, in 2016 UNDP launched a new project, entitled "Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2016 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia", with an aim to contribute to transparent, objective and balanced media environment during 2016 Parliamentary elections in Georgia. Specifically, the project included the following objectives: (1) To provide evidence–based assessment of media performance during 2016 to the Georgian electorate and society at large as well as to the external partners, (2) Public benefiting from more balanced and unbiased media coverage which will allow them to make informed decisions during the elections and getting involved into the public debates., and (3) Improve the CSO oversight practices.

The Project was launched in March 2016. From May to December 2016, the project successfully completed media monitoring for 2016 Parliamentary elections in Georgia.

Monitoring of Georgian TV, radio, print and online media outlets was conducted before, during and after the 2016 elections based on a specific methodology and criteria (see). Main emphasis was made on more analytical and in-depth MM reports that could offer qualified recommendations to media and

facilitate improved electoral coverage. Georgian CSOs performed a quantitative and qualitative analysis of news, political and elections related talk shows aired during prime time further improving their monitoring and watchdog skills. It also promoted unbiased and balanced coverage during the electoral cycles.

The MM results were shared with all major stakeholders and raise their awareness of journalistic standards and media's positive and negative practices through different outreach activities such as: press-conferences, presentations, meetings with media, talk-shows and email correspondences. In addition, a project website www.mediamonitor.ge and a Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/Mediamonitor.ge were regularly updated so that interested individuals could access MM results and receive comprehensive information about the project and MM methodology. A special MM Online Data Analyses (MODA) web enabled website visitors to create charts and analyse data according their interest including comparison and grouping modules.

2. PROJECT RESULTS

The Project was launched in March 2016 and its initial phase was mostly dedicated to necessary administrative arrangements for effective implementation of programme activities as well as selecting and contracting trained CSOs to perform the MM. from May to December 2016, the project successfully completed media monitoring of 2016 Parliamentary elections in Georgia.

Outcome 1	Indicators of achievement	Sources of verification
Outcome 1: The project provided evidence–based assessment of media performance during 2016 to the Georgian electorate and society at large as well as to the external partners	Quantitative indicators revealed as a result of the MM reflecting the dynamics in terms of balanced and unbiased media coverage.	Media Monitoring reports. Project reports. Reports by various international and local observer organizations. Reports by Media. Reports by Media Experts.
Outcome 2: Public benefited from more balanced and unbiased media coverage which allowed them to make informed decisions during the elections and get involved into the public debates.	Observing the interest and public attitude towards MM through collecting the data including through the already existing website www.mediamonitor.ge	
Outcome 3: CSO oversight capacities further strengthened	The quality of the products provided by the CSOs	

Outputs under Outcome 1: *11 Georgian TV channels, 17 online news portals, 7 newspapers and 12 radio stations were monitored within 7 months; Talk shows on 11 TV channels were monitored during 5 months; Total of 4 ongoing reports, 1 special report and 1 final report produced.*

The MM, undertaken during the parliamentary elections of 2016, promoted provision of reliable and independent data of the pre-electoral broadcasts of the selected media sources from the point of view of their content trends and balance of coverage. The news and talk-shows coverage were analysed and

evaluated based on the method introduced by UNDP back in 2010 in partnership with a recognized Slovak organization "Memo 98".

The initiation of the MM signalled various media sources to better prepare for a professional coverage of elections or to seek advise and improvement in the course of coverage. They had been offered with opportunity to consider ways of improving on neutrality and balance in their coverage. The MM also served as a safeguard for certain producers and journalists, who were able to refer to the EU/UNDP MM to protect their editorial independence from the interference, including from owners or higher management of the media outlets.

The initiative was highly regarded and respected among all stakeholders and was able to increase accountability and professionalism of media and established two-way communication between CSOs and media by making MM results easily accessible for all interested parties.

Overall the project has contributed to the delivery of more balanced and professional coverage during the 2016 Parliamentary Elections. The coverage of the election subjects became less polarised, more objective and balanced. The illustration below provides the comparison of aggregate figures of the 2012 and 2016 parliamentary elections coverage in the *national TV outlets:*
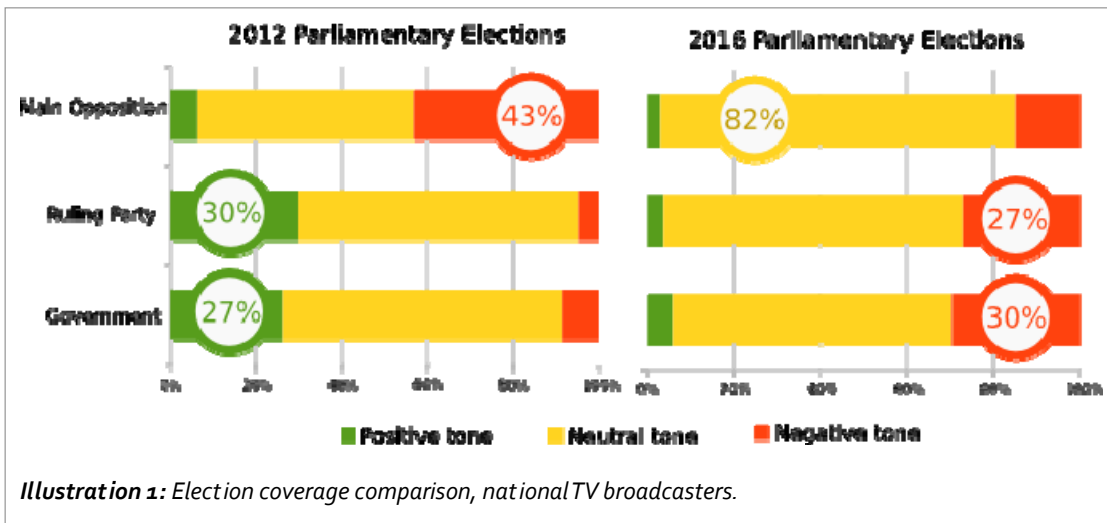

***Illustration 1:** Election coverage comparison, national TV broadcasters.*

The above illustration shows the negative coverage of the main opposition party was significantly smaller in 2016 as compared to that in 2012. Neutral coverage tone prevailed. Media also became more critical to the government and the ruling party.

The positive trends were common across all media segments but print media. Loosing its importance over past few years, a lot of newspapers became much more oriented towards smaller marginalised public groups.

Illustration 2: *Election coverage figures, print media*
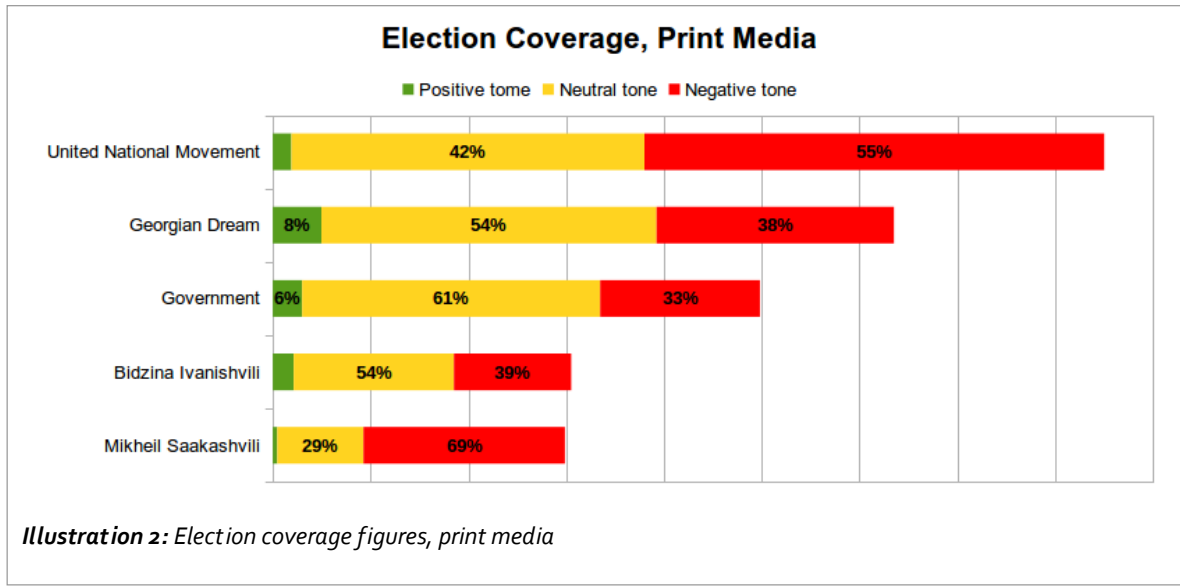
The illustration above provides the length of coverage and attitudes towards the main election subjects and influencers in print media. Overly lengthy and negative coverage of the main opposition party is obvious.

In spite of the defiant behaviour of the print media, it could not affect the overall positive development of media because of its very limited direct influence over the population. Therefore the overall positive trend of media coverage is unaffected.

The above was identified not only by EU/UNDP media monitoring project, but also by other election international observers such as OSCE/ODIHR as well as NATO, European Parliament, and Council of Europe, represented in different capacities within the observation mission of the 2016 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia. Thus, the statement of International Election Observation Mission indicates that the "parliamentary elections of 8 October 2016 had been competitive, well-administered, and fundamental freedoms had been generally respected"[1].

In 2016 IREX Media Sustainability Index (MSI) Georgia retained its place in the category of "nearly sustainable system" moving it up from the "unsustainable mixed system" in 2012. However, there has been a minor decline in 2016 in comparison to 2014 related primarily to financial sustainability of different media sources.

Outputs under Outcome 2: *A project kick-off conference, 5 public events - presentations followed by discussions, and an information meeting for media professionals (all held in Tbilisi); 1 public presentation and discussion with Ajara's regional media (held in Batumi); The activities were widely followed by media. A number of Reflections in media and live broadcasting of interviews with EU/UNDP leaders, project team, and monitoring organisations along with freely available 6 monitoring reports and a final report.*

Involvement of citizens as the primary consumers of the information and key target audience was promoted. A large scale elections MM of Georgian TV, Radio, Print and Online media enabled Georgian citizens to have access to more professional and balanced news reporting before and after 2016

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[1]   http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/273221

Parliamentary elections. Media itself was also involved in the discussions and the project provided them with an opportunity to publicly respond to the findings of the MM.

The findings , namely those related to a) quantitative time allocation balance among political subjects; b) media reporting about usage of administrative resources; c) substance (i.e. electoral programmes, platforms and messages) vs. references to other non-substantive matters (i.e. personality characteristics, etc.) were discussed publicly by the representatives of the civil society, media experts, and all interested audiences. This helped informing the discussions on following subjects: political neutrality of journalists and their ability to reflect all important opinions across the political spectrum; the ability of journalists to set the agenda for news and the level of professional and neutral evaluation of the issues included in the news report; self-censorship; information flow; spin doctoring; black PR; propaganda; types of hidden advertisement; hate speech.

The MM reports and findings were placed online at the interactive and easily accessible information platform http://www.mediamonitor.ge which has been maintained by UNDP after the completion of the previous undertakings. The data was organized in the user-friendly manner to provide an opportunity for an average user to filter the information customized to their own interest. The platform gave the opportunity for various interested stakeholders – Georgian public, media, authorities, CSOs, international organizations as well as all other interested players abroad – to view the results and make conclusions about the media situation in the country. It allowed the stakeholders to track appropriate tendencies in Georgian media. The platform was designed in an open data format allowing the monitoring organizations to administer their respective information.

The project farther promoted the public awareness on MM through posting updates and references about all major project developments such as monitoring reports, announcements and reports of public events, links to news articles and reports on a) the Project's Facebook page with 1,059 followers, b) the UNDP's corporate Facebook page with 12,233 followers. In addition to the Facebook postings, periodic email messages were sent to more than 200 recipients.

The table below shows the monthly visitors data http://www.mediamonitor.ge provided by Webalizer Stats installed on the server for the period of 20 May – 31 December 2016.

Month	Visits
December, 2016	10,256
November, 2016	10,088
October, 2016	**12,751**
September, 2016	10,704
August, 2016	11,236
July, 2016	10,564
June, 2016	8,078
May, 2016	3,496
Total visitors	**77,173**

Table 1: *MediaMonitor.ge stats for 20 May - 31 december 2016*

Outputs under Outcome 3: *3 training cycles for media monitors, 4 performance evaluation meetings and 2 lessons learned meetings.*

A chance of conducting a large-scale election MM facilitated the institutional development of selected local CSOs, enhanced their monitoring and watchdog skills. The CSOs also had a chance to further sharpen their skills at the advance MM training, ongoing performance evaluation and training sessions, data management and visualisation training, and lessons learned session after the monitoring.

They were actively supported by the international media expert, who worked with the media monitoring CSOs in order to ensure that the Project's data collection and analysis activities result in reliable and verifiable outputs. The Expert helped to hone CSO skills and knowledge through: a) Reviewing the existing data selection, processing, and reporting procedures and tools, b) Providing expert review and assessment of media monitoring reports, c) Implementing performance analysis, and d) Providing mentoring to the partner CSOs on different media monitoring modalities on the basis of the findings from the above MM reports.

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

3.1 Contracting CSOs & Recruiting Media Monitors

The following organisations were selected as partners of the project: Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics (TV news and talk shows monitoring), Internews – Georgia (Radio news monitoring), and Civic Development Institute (CDI) (Online and print media monitoring). Fundamental capacities of CDI and Internews have already been built within the previous rounds of similar joint undertakings by EU and UNDP. As regards the GCJE, this organisation was also trained by the Slovak organization "Memo 98", which was partnered by UNDP for the development of media monitoring methodology and had a wealth of experience of implementing thematic media monitoring.

A standard Micro-Capital Grant Agreement (MCGA) was established between UNDP and the partner CSOs to implement media analysis. The Grant Agreement set out: the responsibilities of each party, the activities to be undertaken, the outputs to be produced, the performance criteria for the release of future tranches of funding, duration of activities, reporting arrangements. The agreement covered the costs of salaries, office rent, office services and consumables, internet and communication expenses, and purchase of media archival services.

To be eligible under the MCGA, costs must be verifiable and traceable to the activities being implemented, comply with the requirements of national tax legislation, and be incurred during the duration of the action. More importantly, all grant recipient institutions should have a system for regular reporting on the quality of its services, outreach and financial performance. Therefore, prior to designing the agreement, a CSO Capacity Assessment was prepared by AG International Consulting for all partners. The assessment provided positive feedback on relevant skills and capacities of the organizations.

	TV news	TV talk-shows	Radio	Newspapers	Online
Number of monitors	6	8	3	4	8

Overall, the monitoring team consisted of 33 persons - 29 Monitors and 4 Team Leaders.

3.2 Adapting Media Monitoring Methodology

A special methodology was established to monitor each media sphere, which has been in line with the internationally recognized MM methodology practiced by the Slovak organization "Memo 98". It includes quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component comprises the time allocated to a subject, direct and indirect speech and the tone of coverage. Components of the qualitative monitoring are: balance, accuracy, fact-based coverage, manipulation with footage and music, hate speech and others. The quantitative data are provided in the diagrams, which are attached to the reports. The complete information on methodology can be obtained at the following project webpage: http://www.mediamonitor.ge/en/methodology.

In consultations with the director of "Memo 98" the methodology was adapted to take into consideration all the lessons learned from the previous years. The following amendments were made: (a) the previous five-tier assessment of tone (positive, rather positive, neutral, rather negative, and negative) was downscaled to three (positive, neutral, and negative) in order to decrease subjectivity for quantitative assessments; (b) the sequence of news was added to the qualitative component of the data analysis form; (c) focus on regions of Georgia was added to the news reporting.

3.3 Identifying Media Sources

To address the challenges of the fragmentation of media landscape in Georgia the Project applied a complex, multifaceted methodology to the selection of most important news sources to be monitored, as to calculate their user base, geographical coverage, and social media infiltration. In April 2016 IPM research of on-line and printed media commissioned - the research used the method of population surveys. During the media identification sources identification stage the report of another large-scale public opinion survey, commissioned by IRI was published. The report provided good check-points for the project team. In addition, TV media experts consulted to assess user base of particular media outlets and evaluate their direct or indirect influence over the media environment. The list of media sources developed and streamlined.

The number of TV and on-line media has significantly increased as compared to the previous rounds of media monitoring.

- *TV Channels* – around 90% of Georgia's population get news from TV broadcasters. The Project used the combination of a) a population survey, and b) expert interviews to come out with 11 highest ranking TV channels to monitor. It shall be noted that the expert interviews reflected the results of the audience measurement by both "TVMR" and "Tri Media Intelligence" companies.
- *Online media* – around 25% of Georgia's population get news from on-line news sources. The project used the combination of a) an IPM population survey, b) Alexa.com ranking, c) Top.ge ranking, and d) Facebook sharing statistics to come out with 17 on-line news sources to monitor.
- *Print media* (8% of public recognition) sources were ranked after the results of the IPM population survey. 7 top newspapers were chosen.
- The number of *Radio Stations* (4% of public recognition) remained the same (12 stations) as during the previous monitoring cycles.

TV	Radio	Print Media	Online media
GCJE	Internews	CDI	CDI
1 Channel-1 (Georgian Public Broadcaster) 2 Rustavi-2 3 Imedi 4 Maestro 5 Kavkasia 6 Obiektivi 7 Ajara 8 Tabula 9 GDS 10 TV Pirveli 11 TV-25	1 Radio-1 (Georgian Public Broadcaster) 2 Imedi 3 Fortuna 4 Tavisupleba (Radio Liberty) 5 Palitra 6 The First Radio 7 Maestro 8 Kalaki 9 Ajara (Batumi) 10 Hereti (Lagodekhi) 11 Atinati (Zugdidi) 12 Rioni (Kutaisi)	1 Rezonansi 2 Alia 3 Kviris Palitra 4 Akhali Taoba 5 Asaval-Dasavali 6 Kronika Plus 7 Guria News	1 Allnews.ge 2 Ambebi.ge 3 Droni.ge 4 Etanews.ge 5 Info9.ge 6 Interpressnews.ge 7 Marshalpress.ge 8 Netgazeti.ge 9 Newposts.ge 10 News.ge 11 Palitratv.ge 12 PIA.ge 13 Presa.ge 14 Reportiori.ge 15 Tabula.ge 16 Civil.ge 17 Dfwatch.net

Table 2: *List of selected media sources*

3.4 Identifying Media Monitoring Subjects

Based on the previous experience, the list of monitoring subjects should be maintained as a living document providing an opportunity to add or remove subjects during the process.

High fragmentation of a political spectrum was a distinctive feature of the 2016 Parliamentary elections. Established political groups and coalitions were splitting up into numerous entities pursuing their separate goals. The project has started with monitoring of 32 institutions and political parties. The final report analysed media coverage of the following 53 subjects:

1. President of Georgia;
2. Prime Minister of Georgia;
3. Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia;
4. Government of Georgia (Ministers, Ministries, Governors);
5. Independent Members of the Parliament;
6. Local Authorities (self-governments, gamgebelis, mayors);
7. Ajara AR Government;
8. Central Election Commission;
9. Ajara AR Supreme Election Commission;
10. Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia;
11. Election Bloc United National Movement;
12. Mikheil Saakashvili;
13. Bidzina Ivanishvili;
14. Republican Party;
15. Irakli Alasania – Free Democrats;
16. Election Bloc Paata Burchuladze – State for people;
17. Shalva Natelashvili – Labour Party;
18. Election Bloc David Tarkhan Mouravi, Irma Inashvili – Alliance of Patriots, Unites Opposition;

19. Election Bloc Nino Burjanadze – Democratic Movement;
20. National Forum;
21. Election Bloc Kakha Dzagania, Soso Shatberashvili, Paata Jibladze, Archil Benidze – Leftis Assliance;
22. Election Bloc Topadze, Industrials – Our Motherland;
23. Jondi Baghaturia – Georgian Dasi;
24. Tamaz Mechiauri – For United Georgia;
25. David Tevzadze – For Peace in Georgia;
26. Peoples rule;
27. United Communist Party of Georgia;
28. Georgian Idea;
29. Independent Majoritarian MPs;
30. Georgian Dream Coalition;
31. Girchi;
32. New Georgia;
33. Neutral Georgia;
34. State for People Party;
35. Conservators;
36. Serve Georgia;
37. Election Bloc Vashadze, Japaridze, New Choice;
38. Way of Georgia;
39. Free Georgia;
40. New Rights;
41. National Democratic Party;
42. Social Democrats;
43. Christian Democratic Movement;
44. European Democrats;
45. Happy Georgia;
46. Green Party;
47. Whites;
48. Georgian Party;
49. People's Party;
50. Reformators;
51. Imedi;
52. Centrists;
53. Civil Alliance for Freedom.

3.5 Website and Facebook Page Activated

For the wider outreach of MM results a special bi-lingual website - www.mediamonitor.ge and a Facebook page - https://www.facebook.com/Mediamonitor.ge were created back during 2010 election cycle to provide an easy access to the monitoring reports for the various interested stakeholders such as media representatives, experts, NGOs, researchers and public at large. The website served as a platform for the MM reports and provided full access to the quantitative and qualitative data including all charts and diagrams as well as contained comprehensive information on the monitoring methodology and the project itself. Besides the EU/UNDP MM reports the website also hosted links to the other MM reports that were produced with the financial support of other donor organizations such as the MM of hate speech, election MM from the ethics standpoint, monitoring of paid political advertising and others.

To make the website more informative and attractive for the users a special Media Monitoring Online Data Analysis (MODA) Web Application was developed in 2013. MODA is a bilingual (Georgian-English) web application, which ensures real time analysis of media monitoring results. The MODA interface is extremely user-friendly and intuitive, compatible with all major web browsers/systems. The web application enables users to access and analyse results of media monitoring. The analysis may include: frequencies of allocated time/space and their breakdown by tone per monitoring subject as well as per media outlet. MODA also includes grouping and comparison modules. The grouping module allows users to create groups of media outlets and/or monitoring subjects and make analysis on the groups easily. Furthermore, the comparison module provides a platform for versatile analysis, comparing two or more media outlets (or groups of media outlets) as well as monitoring subjects (or groups of monitoring subjects). The comparison module is a way to analyse results in a comparative manner efficiently, without manual grouping and regrouping of data.

The website was activated in May 2016 and MODA was updated in line with the changes of the media monitoring methodology.

The website gave opportunity to the interested stakeholders including international players to view the available MM data and make conclusions about the media situation in the country.

3.6 Capacity Building of CSOs

ODA training: a training for newly acquired media monitors of CSOs on using Online Data Analysis tool was organised at the office of Civil Development Institute. The team leader of the CDI, a long-time partner of EU/UNDP Media Monitoring provided the training.

Performance evaluation and MM training: the full day training was held in Marco Polo hotel Gudauri, Georgia on 5th of August 2016 for 35 media monitors of the project partner CSOs. The training was organised to ensure that the existing monitoring system was able to output reliable data, and that monitoring organizations possess adequate skills to efficiently cope with the perplexed environment. The training cycle was be led by the international expert. It was split into the following three stages:.

1. On the first stage the monitors presented their main challenges in monitoring.
2. On the second stage the international expert provided his feedback on the reports and on how to tackle the identified issues.
3. On the third stage, he provided additional insights into the monitoring improvements and changes in the methodology, on the movement from descriptive to analytic reporting, as well as on using the media monitoring as an advocacy tool.

Data management and visualisation training: To farther enhance skills of partner CSOs for the forthcoming rounds of media monitoring, a three-day training on data management and visualisation was held in partnership with JumpStart on 19-20 December in Marriott Tbilisi.

Performance evaluation meetings: The meetings with the international expert was organized on 12 September (UN house), 11 October (UN house), 14 November (UN House), and 15 December (Rooms Hotel) with the CSO team leaders and the ongoing process of media monitoring quality of the released reports and presentations as well as measures for their improvement were discussed and agreed.

Lessons learned meetings: A day and a half workshop was organized with the project partners on 19 - 20 November 2016 in Telavi and was attended by 22 representatives of MM CSOs. The meeting reviewed the main findings across the monitored media types, decided upon recommendations to be present at the 15 December closing event of the project, and agreed on the uniform design and content structure of the forthcoming final publication. The partners also reviewed and agreed over the time-frame of the final report submission. Another lessons-learned workshop was organised with CSO partners on 23 December in Lopota and was devoted to inquiring possibility of developing guidelines for media monitoring that would make it possible to check MM findings against. The issue was discussed with the partner CSOs in light of the forthcoming media monitoring rounds.

3.7 MM Reports Development

The MM reports were developed Georgian civil society organizations (CSOs): Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics (TV news and talk shows monitoring), Internews – Georgia (Radio news monitoring), and Civic Development Institute (CDI) (Online and print media monitoring). The reports were then sent to UNDP for feedback, comments, and clarifications before their finalisation.

A special schedule for submitting and finalising the reports was established:

Period of Monitoring		Report	Report	
Start	End	Submission	Finalisation	Comments
20 May	10 July	18 July	21 July	First report, 51 days coverage
11 July	30 August	6 September	8 September	Second report, 50 days coverage
31 August	25 September	1 October	5 October	Third report, 25 days coverage + presentations on consolidated findings
26 September	2 November	7 November	14 November	Fourth post-elections (+ second rounds) report, 42 days coverage
10 October	25 October	27 October	28 October	Special report on the main findings of the second-round elections, 15 days coverage
Final report		1 December	15 December	Presented on a final conference

Table 3: *MM reports submission schedule*

Four interim reports, one final report and one special report on the second round of the elections were prepared.

In order to prepare reports the partner CSOs needed to download and process data from the Online Data Analysis (ODA) system. The volume of generated information in ODA has reached swaggering 326,617 recorded cases by November 2016.

MM reports were regularly updated on the project website, recorded on flash drives and distributed in all public events, as well as delivered electronically to every monitored media outlet. The online versions of the publications in Georgian and English languages are available on the website www.mediamonitor.ge.

The final reports and major findings of the MM were compiled in publications. The printed versions in Georgian language were distributed at the final presentation events as well as delivered to every monitored media outlet.

3.8 Press-Conferences and Presentations

During the reporting period numerous press-conferences and presentations were held to announce the start of the MM as well as communicate major findings of the pre-election or final MM reports to all stakeholders including media, civil society, local or international organizations, and general public.

On **20 May 2016** the *Janos Herman,* Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, and *Shombi Sharp,* Deputy Head of UNDP in Georgia, announced the start of a new media monitoring at the first press conference of the Project, held in Radisson Blue Iveria hotel. The event was widely attended and covered by almost all media outlets. "With parliamentary elections ahead, we once again underline the crucial importance of free media and reporting of a high quality. We are proud to support credible, professional media monitoring which will allow open dialogue about the media and contribute to free

and fair elections in Georgia." Ambassador Janos Herman commented about the launch of the initiative.

The opening press conference was followed by a more detailed meeting with the media representatives, including their management and journalists, where the project scope and details of methodology was discussed. The meeting was held on **25 May 2016** at Rooms Hotel, Tbilisi.

The presentation of the first MM findings covering the period of 20 May – 10 July 2016 was held on **22 July 2016** in Marriott Courtyard. *Carlo Natale,* Deputy Head of Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, and *Natia Natsvlishvili,* UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in Georgia welcomed up to 80 invited guests (representatives of diplomatic missions,

Illustration 3: H.E. Janos Herman and Mr Shombi Sharp opening the first press-conference, 20 May 2016

international organizations, local CSOs, and media outlets), as well as journalists of all main print and electronic media. The partner CSOs presented findings of the first six weeks of monitoring on TV news, radio, print, and online media and distributed the reports. The presentations were followed by lively discussion and exchange of ideas among the project team and the invited guests.

The press conference on 9 September 2016 organised at Radisson Blu Iveria hotel presented and discussed monitoring reports covering the period of 11 July – 30 August 2016. The monitoring of TV channels now included prime time political talk shows in addition to daily news. Up to 90 invited guests (diplomatic missions, international organizations, local CSOs, and media outlets), as well as journalists of all main print and electronic media were present. Shombi Sharp, Deputy Head of UNDP in Georgia, and Dorota Dlouchy-Suliga, Head of Political Section of the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, opened the event with welcome remarks.

Illustration 4: Presentation at the 22 July 2016 event

The media monitoring reports covering the period from from 31 August through 25 September was released during the press conference organised on **6 October 2016** at Radisson Blu Iveria hotel. The presentations of the team of media monitors featured cumulative findings for the period of 20 May – 25 September 2016. In addition, some preliminary findings of the pre-election weeks, September 25 – October 5, was also discussed to reflect growing polarisation and political bias in some media sectors related to the increased political temperature before elections.

The event was chaired by HE Janos Herman, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, and *Mr Niels Scott,* Head of UNDP in Georgia.

"2016 Parliamentary elections in Georgia are the first election round since signing the Association Agreement with the European Union. Georgia has a great chance to consolidate its democratic gains achieved during the previous elections, and enhance its international standing as electoral democracy. Media performance and media freedom will play a significant role in achieving this success," commented HE Janos Herman, Ambassador of the

Illustration 5: H.E. Janos Herman and Mr Niels Scott at the 6 October 2016 MM event.

European Union to Georgia on the eve of the 2016 Parliamentary elections. Mr Niels Scott emphasized the role of the EU/UNDP initiative by stating that "Specific examples and analysis included in the media monitoring reports assist the media in performing its duties during elections paying more attention to the cases of unbalanced coverage and hate speech. One of the most important goals of media monitoring is to stir proactive public discussion and contribute to establishing accountable and responsible relations between the media and society" .

On **13 october 2016** the Project organised a round-table in Batumi with regional media outlets from Ajara's Autonomous Republic. Information about the Project, findings of media monitoring, identified issues, and possible mitigation measures were discussed with the governing board and employees of the TV channel "Ajara" of the Georgia's Public Broadcaster, "TV 25", Radio "Ajara", Batumi bureau of the newspaper "Netgazeti", and other representatives of the print and online media outlets based in Batumi. The event was attended by 25 people. It initiated a regional-level discussion on media professionalism and reporting standards. This was especially important as UNDP planned to extend its media monitoring activities to the forthcoming 2017 local elections, where the regional media would play much important role.

The monitoring reports on media coverage of the parliamentary elections covering the period from 26 September until 2 November 2016 were presented and discussed on **15 November 2016** in Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Tbilisi. The first recommendations for media agencies on improving standards of election media coverage were also presented by the international expert Mr Rasto Kuzel of "Memo 98". Mr Carlo Natale, Deputy Head of Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, and Mr Shombi Sharp, Deputy Head of UNDP in Georgia, opened the event.

The final reports of media monitoring, released and discussed at a press conference **on 16 December 2016** in Radisson Blu Iveria, acknowledged the progress made by the Georgian media in recent years, and highlighted challenges on the way to quality reporting and professional and ethical media culture of Election reporting is more balanced, informative and pluralistic than in 2012. However, despite the substantial progress the presentations of the partner CSOs indicated that there were some cases of polarized coverage, especially in a pre-election month and before the second round. There also were cases of hate speech, especially in printed press. Articles prepared under commercial contracts were

not sufficiently separated from the editorial content, especially in the online media, and media needed to pay more attention to in-depth coverage of political programmes.

The international expert of the project, Mr Rasto Kuzel of "Memo 98" delivered his final set of recommendations on media independence & diversity, public service broadcasting, media regulator, as well as specific recommendations for TV, Radio, Online, and Print media.The event was chaired by *HE Janos Herman,* Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, and *Mr Niels Scott,* Head of UNDP in Georgia, who have also reflected upon the successful completion of the media monitoring activities. "Media freedom and pluralism are fundamental values in our cooperation

Illustration 6: The final MM event, 16 December 2016

with Georgia. I am pleased that positive trends were observed, pointing to more balanced and diverse reporting in media during the election period. This positive dynamic contributes to further strengthening of democracy in Georgia," said HE Janos Herman. Mr Scott especially highlighted the scope of the work that the project partners dealt with. "Findings of the election media monitoring have been informed by the tremendous job of collecting and analysing up to 300 thousand media monitoring cases, undertaken by our partner civil society organizations. The EU-UNDP media monitoring has become an essential part of election cycles in Georgia equally useful and beneficial for the media and public," said he.

4. VISIBILITY

The Media Monitoring project had high publicity and visibility. The visibility was deeply embedded in the activities of the project.

During the MM 6 large-scale and 1 regional **public events** were organised, which were closely followed by the Georgian media.

The first kick-off event informed public about the launch of media monitoring and highlighted the role of the EU support in the implementation of the initiative. All large-scale public events were attended and welcomed by top-level leadership of both EU and UNDP. Their messages to the participants of the events and comments and interviews with Georgian media enhanced the EU identity of the MM project and provided insights about its place and role in the larger context of EU assistance policies in Georgia.

Below is the list of press conferences and information about the top-level representatives of both EU and UNDP leading the event:

	EU	UNDP
20 May 2016, Radisson Blu	HE Janos Herman, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia	Mr Shombi Sharp, Deputy Head of UNDP
22 July 2016, Marriott Courtyard	Mr Carlo Natale, Deputy Head of Delegation	Ms Natia Natsvlishvili, UNDP Resident Representative a.i.
9 September 2016, Radisson Blu	Ms Dorota Dlouchy-Suliga, Head of Political Section of the Delegation	Mr Shombi Sharp, Deputy Head of UNDP
6 October 2016, Radisson Blu	HE Janos Herman, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia	Mr Niels Scott, Head of UNDP
15 November 2016 , Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Tbilisi	Mr Carlo Natale, Deputy Head of Delegation	Mr Shombi Sharp, Deputy Head of UNDP
16 December 2016, Radisson Blu	HE Janos Herman, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia	Mr Niels Scott, Head of UNDP

The role of EU in funding and supporting the project, project aims, findings of the Media Monitoring, and comments of EU/UNDP leadership in reflection of the findings were detailed in invitation letters, press releases and media advisories developed jointly by UNDP and EU and distributed prior and during the public events.

A special **mail list** was developed before the launch of media monitoring. The list included 206 email addresses of key representatives of media outlets, media regulatory bodies, civil society organisations, diplomatic missions, donors, and international organisations. Invitations to public events, event reminders, press releases, and MM reports were sent to the list. Moreover, a special software was used to send out personalised emails so that the message included name and proper salutation of a recipient.

Illustration 7: Sample of a personalised email invitation
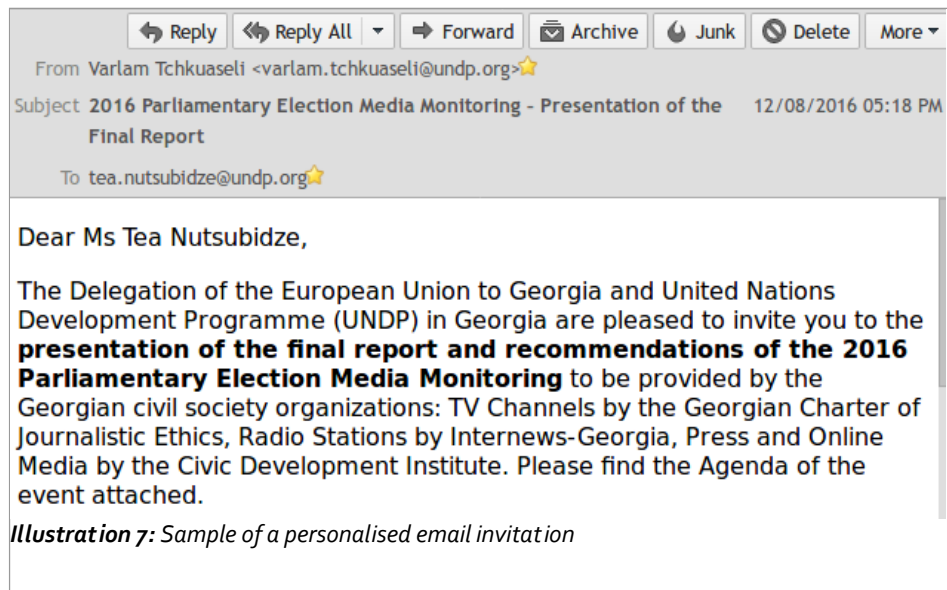
6 Media Monitoring reports were prepared. Their development and finalisation schedule was closely aligned with the dates of the public events (see above Table 3: MM reports submission schedule). The MM reports were regularly updated on the project website and Facebook page, recorded on USB memory sticks and distributed in all public events, as well as delivered electronically .

The EU visibility was farther promoted through posting events announcements, updates, MM reports, and references about all major project developments on the Project's **Facebook** page with 1,059 followers, and the UNDP's corporate Facebook page with 12,233 followers, as well as on the Project's **website** http://www.mediamonitor.ge with 10,000 monthly visitors in average during the MM (see above Table 1: MediaMonitor.ge stats for 20 May - 31 december 2016).

All printed and electronic materials, including visibility materials – a banner, folders, notebooks, pens, and USB memory sticks – followed the visibility standards of the EU and were developed in cooperation with the EU Delegation. They showcased the EU logo, and wherever possible, reference to the EU funding.

All print publications of the project included the EU logo, indication that the project was funded by the EU, and the reference that the content of publication by no means reflected the views of the European Union.

5. LIST OF ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Financial Report

Annex 2 – Activity Report of Mr. Rastisval Kuzel of "Memo 98", International Expert of the project.

Annex 3 - "Towards improved standards in media coverage of next elections", recommendations delivered to the Georgian media during final press conference by Mr. Rastisval Kuzel of "Memo 98", International Expert of the project.

Annex 4 - "Coverage of the 2016 Elections, Summary Report", final report of Mr. Rastisval Kuzel of "Memo 98", International Expert of the project.