



Financial Transparency of Media 2019

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2019

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www.mdfgeorgia.ge

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INTRODUCTION

The present report on financial transparency of the media includes data from 2019. The Media Development Foundation (MDF) releases its reports on financial transparency of the media annually to explore, on the one hand, declared revenues of broadcast media and on the other, the practice of allocating budgetary funds for advertising and dissemination of information in media outlets.

The introductory part of the report discusses key findings of the study and regulations; its first part reviews financial revenues of broadcasters, whom the law obliges to file relevant declarations; the second part reviews the practice of allocating public funds for advertising and dissemination of information in various types of media outlets. A separate chapter analyzes social media spending, including budget contracts with media outlets on dissemination of information in various Facebook groups and pages.

METHODOLOGY

The report mainly rests on mixed methodology: analysis of documents and, in specific cases, content analysis.

Analysis of documents included documents available in an electronic database of the State Procurement Agency and the National Communications Commission, also additional data requested from public agencies and information available in the public domain.

According to Article 70/4 of the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, within 15 days after the end of each quarter, a broadcaster shall submit the reporting forms to the National Communications Commission, containing information on quarterly revenues. Within seven days after receiving the reporting forms the Commission shall publish the reporting data.

The Georgian Public Broadcaster and Public Broadcaster Adjara TV were instructed to submit statistical reporting forms to the National Communications Commission based on the latter's decision dated February 11, 2016¹. Until then, only the entities having authorization / license in the electronic communications sphere, as well as the entities owning broadcasting licenses had an obligation to submit statistical reporting forms.

According to the amendments made to the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting on February 21, 2018, the budgetary funding of GPB constitutes no less than 0.14% of the country's GDP set for previous year. Thus, the budget is increasing along with the GDP growth. With the same legislative amendments, the Parliament supported the amendments to the Law on Broadcasting (article 64), giving the Public Broadcaster additional time for placing commercial ads².

The present report involves all categories of declared revenues of broadcast media, including budgetary revenues of the Georgian Public Broadcaster and Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster. Moreover, revenues of broadcast media involve incomes from advertising, sponsorship, donations from owners of broadcasters and other persons, content selling, selling airtime, teleshopping, technical service, product placement, announcements, hiring archives, web banner, interactive, public funding and other sources³.

Content analysis. Analysis of media content was carried out by applying the principle of random sampling and based on the contracts between administrative bodies and media outlets. It aimed at clarifying what type of media content was financed from the budget.

¹ <https://www.comcom.ge/ge/legal-acts/commission/solutions/2016-95-19.page>

² <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3966451?publication=0#DOCUMENT:1;>

³ <https://www.comcom.ge/ge/legal-acts/solutions/2019-237-19.page>

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MAIN FINDINGS

Following trends were revealed based on analysis of 2019 data:

- The revenues of TV broadcasters made up GEL 139 million in 2019 that exceeds the 2018 figure by GEL 3 million. The growth of revenues was driven by the emergence of two new opposition affiliate TV channels on the market – Mtavari Arkhi and Formula, as well as the owner investment.
- Georgian Public Broadcaster has the largest share (GEL 51 million) of revenues, while Imedi TV (GEL 26.7 million) and Rustavi 2 TV (GEL 23.1 million) held a dominant position among private televisions. Noteworthy that Rustavi 2 TV changed ownership in July 2019.
- According to the dynamics of recent years (2016-2019), a market share of the Public Broadcaster is increasing, while revenues of Rustavi 2 TV are decreasing. Slight decrease has been revealed in case of Imedi TV and slight and gradual growth has been observed in case of TV Pirveli.
- Like in previous years, Obieqtivi TV received most of its revenues in the form of donations, comprising 90.8% of total revenues. A four-year observation over the TV channel shows that it becomes increasingly dependent on subsidies, whereas the sources of financing are not transparent. It is worth noting that total revenues of Obieqtivi TV have almost doubled over the past years (2015-2019).
- In 2019, regional broadcasters received GEL 10,342,437 in total revenues. Public Broadcaster Adjara TV accounts for the largest share – 74.7%.
- In 2019, revenues of radio stations decreased by GEL 0.5 million compared to 2018. Like in previous years, Radio Holding Fortuna still held a dominant market position (51%), while Public Broadcaster Adjara Radio held a dominant market position (53.1%) among regional radios.
- In 2019, budgetary organizations signed contracts worth GEL 6,581,303 with media outlets for the purpose of advertising and information services. Nationwide and mixed coverage televisions account for 31% of the total amount; online media - 27.7%; social media – 16.1%; regional televisions – 12.2%; print media – 6.4%; mixed contracts – 4.2%; radio stations – 2.4%.
- The largest share of service contracts worth GEL 997,616 went to Imedi TV among nation TV channels and in case of regional televisions, like in 2016-2018, it was again Kvemo Kartli channel (GEL 220,000), constituting 90% of its total revenues. The biggest budget contract was signed with Radio Holding Fortuna (GEL 46,856), while the largest share was allocated to Palitra Media Holding (GEL 349,275) among online editions. As far as national print media is concerned, newspaper Rezonanzi has the lead in the value of contracts (GEL 72,593), and newspaper Borjomi (GEL 25,000) in case of regional publications.
- The Georgian National Tourism Administration has the biggest spending (GEL 397 500) in social media advertisement, followed by Public Communication Development Agency Tbilisi Mayor Office (GEL 170 000).
- Analysis of the 2019 budget data has revealed a new tendency: three online news agencies (Guardian.ge, For.ge and Stv.ge) were detected obliged to share materials to various Facebook groups and pages, in addition to dissemination of news on their own webpages, upon the instructions of state agencies under the service contract agreements.
- According to the obtained documents, three online news agencies were tasked to share information to 20 Facebook groups and **seven** pages in total. In addition, the Akhalkalaki Municipality stresses in its response that Facebook group *Open Source Agency* with the 300,425 members is not accessible anymore and groups indicated in the email had twice more members prior to summer 2019, when Facebook removed many of them.
- Administrative bodies were allocating budgetary funds to Guardian.ge and Stv.ge in exchange for publishing information in pro-government groups and pages, among others “Bidzina Ivanishvili’s

Friends on Facebook,” “Kakha Kaladze Tbilisi Mayor,” “Bidzina Ivanishvili My Fellow Citizen” and “Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and Current Issues.”

- “[This is Georgia](#)” that was indicated in the information provided by the Khobi Municipality and where Stv.ge is tasked to place information is a closed Facebook group apparently affiliated with the Alliance of Patriots party. The list of Facebook groups provided by the Akhalkalaki City Hall also involves a closed group “[the United National Movement 2015](#)”, where Guardian.ge is tasked to place information should be affiliated with UNM.
- For.ge and its affiliated Facebook pages and groups, that have signed budget contracts, as well as the page targeting government opponents ([დავასრულოთ](#)) spread the video discrediting civil society organizations with the headline “How the National Movement grabbed the non-governmental sector” in a coordinated manner. Pro-government Imedi TV and Post TV, as well as news agencies PIA, Marshallpress, reportiori and Kartuli Azri provided one-sided coverage of the film created by “დავასრულოთ.”
- Along with covering the ruling party’s Zugdidi majoritarian candidate in a positive light, Stv.ge receiving budgetary funding for sharing information in facebook groups, was discrediting opposition candidates with the following headlines: “Hunter for cows and budget thief” – social media reactions to Gigi Ugulava’s nomination,” “Prior to meeting with his voters, the National Movement candidate goes shopping with his wife,” “Village trustees claim that Lelo does not need advocacy,” “The National Movement names quarantined Malkhaz Jalagonia as its majoritarian candidate in Zugdidi.”
- Like in 2014-2018, in 2019, budget organizations continued to sign contracts with media outlets known for their anti-Western editorial policy, spreading disinformation and using hate speech.

I. DECLARED REVENUES OF BROADCAST MEDIA

TV broadcasters. According to the data of the National Communications Commission⁴, the revenues of TV broadcasters made up GEL 139 million in 2019 that exceeds the 2018 figure (GEL 136 million) by GEL 3 million. The growth of revenues was driven by the emergence of two new TV channels on the market – Mtavari Arkhi and Formula, as well as the owner investment.

According to the data for 2019, Georgian Public Broadcaster has the largest share (GEL 51 million) of revenues that exceeds the 2018 revenues (GEL 47.6 million) by GEL 3.4 million⁵.

Among private televisions, Imedi TV (GEL 26.7 million) and Rustavi 2 TV (GEL 23.1 million) held a dominant position. Revenues of Imedi TV and Rustavi 2 TV decreased by GEL 2 million and GEL 9.1 million, respectively, compared to 2018. Noteworthy that Rustavi 2 TV changed hands shortly after the European Court of Human Rights ruled⁶ on July 18, 2019 that there had been no breach in fair trial guarantees in Rustavi 2 ownership dispute. Thus, the data show the financial situation existing under different managements.

Imedi TV and Rustavi 2 TV are followed by two pro-opposition TV channels founded in 2019: Mtavari Arkhi⁷ (GEL 5.7 million), founded by Nika Gvaramia, former director general of Rustavi 2 (51%), and other owners,⁸ and Formula TV⁹ (GEL 5.2 million), the controlling interest (51%) of which is owned by Davit Kezerashvili who served as Defense Minister in the National Movement's government. In both cases, donations by owners were the main source of the broadcasters' revenues (Mtavari Arkhi – GEL 3.95, Formula – GEL 4.85 million).

A breakdown of other broadcasters' revenues is as follows: TV Pirveli (GEL 4.2 mln), whose revenues increased by GEL 0.9 mln year-on-year, mainly at the expense of advertisements; Silknet (GEL 3.2 mln); Obieqtivi (GEL 2.2 mln); GDS TV (GEL 1.8 mln) and Setanta Georgia¹⁰ (GEL 1 mln). The revenues of other TV channels with annual revenues not exceeding GEL 0.7 million made up GEL 4.3 million in total.

The category "other TV channels" also includes pro-government POS TV¹¹, which launched online broadcasting in 2017 and received a general broadcasting license on November 21, 2019¹², becoming financially accountable. POS TV's declared revenues made up GEL 32,542 in the last quarter of 2019.

⁴ Last access 24 September 2020 <https://analytics.comcom.ge/ka/statistics/?c=broadcasting&f=revenue&exp=tv&total=total&sid=818053>

⁵ According to the amendments made to the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting on February 21, 2018, the budgetary funding of GPB constitutes no less than 0.14% of the country's GDP set for previous year. Thus, the budget is increasing along with the GDP growth.

⁶ <https://bit.ly/3IDIYGj>

⁷ <http://mediameter.ge/ge/media-profiles/mtavari-arki>

⁸ As a result of changes carried out at the public registry on September 15, 2020, distribution of the shares looks as follows: BGIM LLC – 39%, Bakur Jakhiaia – 37%, Nika Gvaramia – 12%, Nikoloz Sisauri – 3%, Giorgi Rurua – 2.5%, Mari Ana Rurua – 2.5%, University of Georgia – 2%, Teimuraz Vasilidze – 1%, Benmont LLC – 0.2%, Maguli Kharebava – 0.2%, Omega Motor Group – 0.2%, Matrix – 0.2% and Monte LLC – 0.2%. <https://bit.ly/3nwbAmy>

⁹ <http://mediameter.ge/ge/media-profiles/pormula>

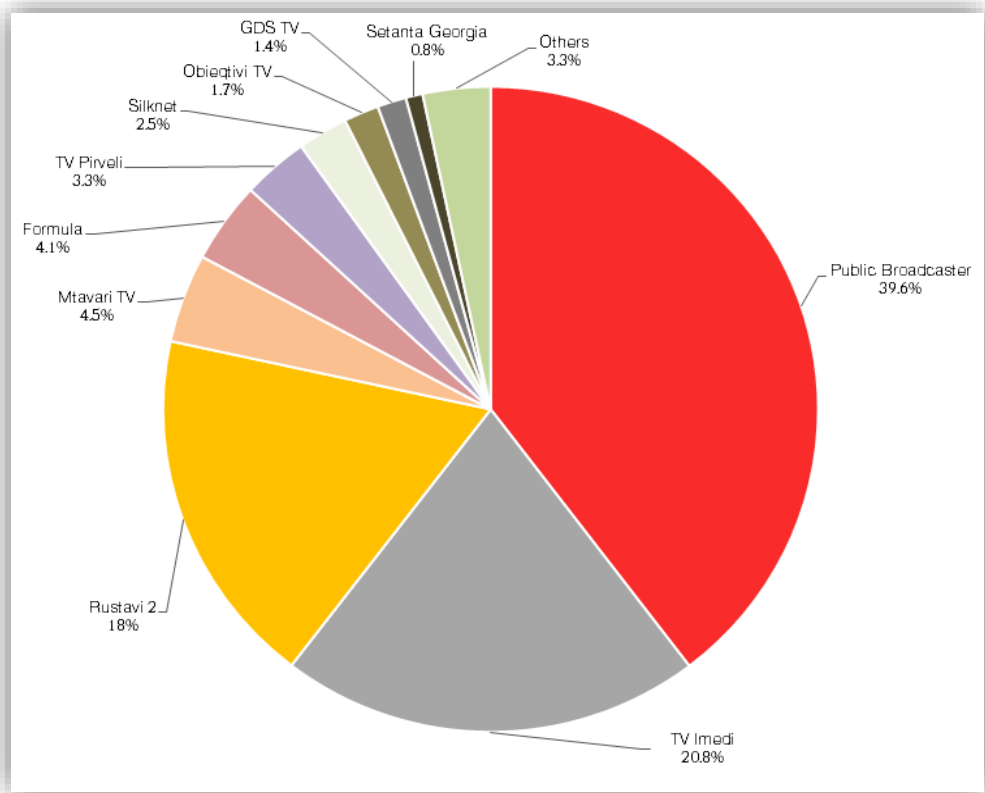
¹⁰ <https://setanta.ge/about-us>

¹¹ Temur Charelashvili is the executive director and 28% shareholder of POS TV. Shalva Ramishvili owns 24% of the TV channel. Nugzar Rukhadze and Zviad Bliadze own 16% each. Ana Shengelia and Vakhtang Komakhidze are the owners of 8% of shares each.

<http://mediameter.ge/ge/media-profiles/pos-tv-pos-tv>

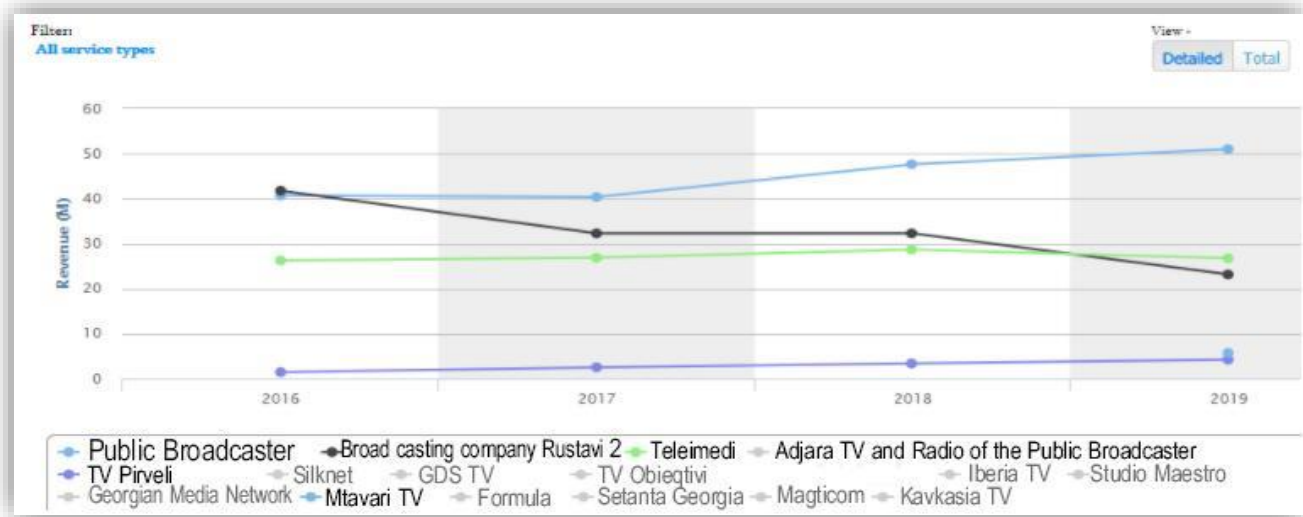
¹² <https://comcom.ge/ge/legal-acts/solutions/2019--19-1-653.page>

Chart 1.1. Revenues of nationwide and mixed coverage broadcasters in 2019, by media outlets



According to the dynamics of recent years, a market share of the Public Broadcaster is increasing, while revenues of Rustavi 2 TV are decreasing. Slight decrease has been revealed in case of Imedi TV and slight and gradual growth has been observed in case of TV Pirveli.

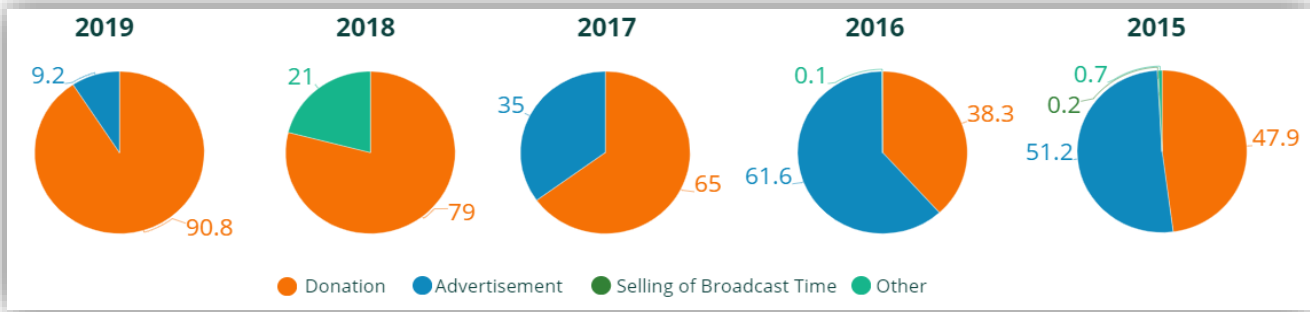
Chart 1.2. Dynamics of revenues of broadcasters in 2016-2019



Revenues of Obieqtivi TV. Like in previous years, Obieqtivi TV received most of its revenues in the form of **donations**, comprising 90.8% (GEL 2,029,415) of total revenues. GEL 234,415 of these donations came from the owner of the broadcaster while the remaining GEL 1,795,000 came from other persons, whose

names remain unidentified. A four-year observation over the TV channel shows that it becomes increasingly dependent on subsidies, whereas the sources of financing are not transparent.

Chart 1.3. Sources of revenues of Media Union Obieqtivi in 2015-2019

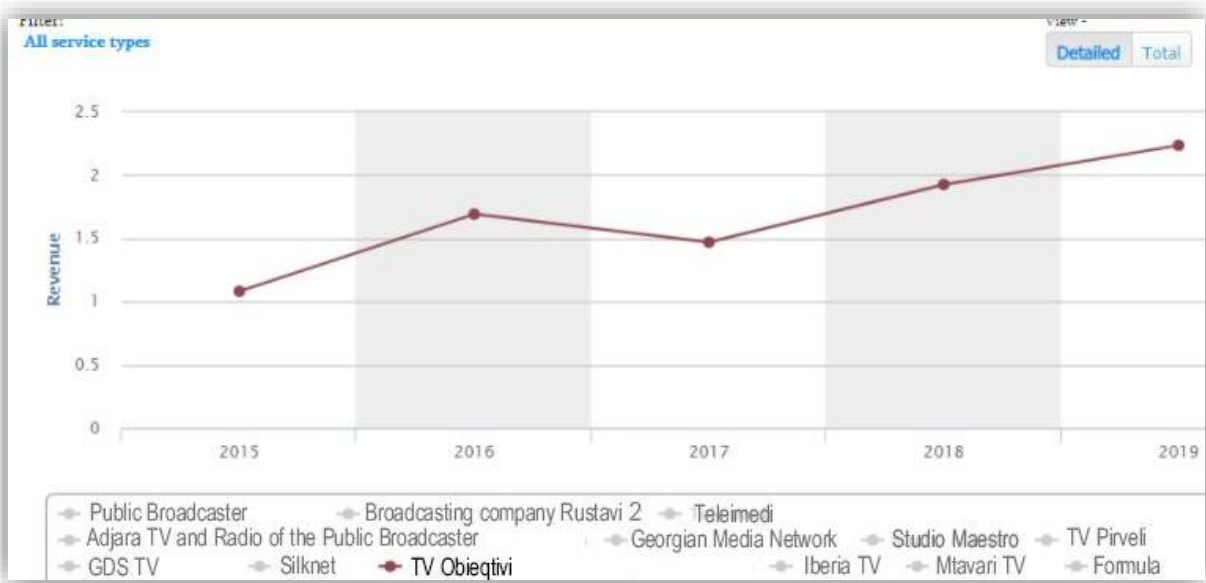


It is worth noting that total revenues of Obieqtivi TV have almost doubled over the past years (2015: 1,080,873, 2019: 2,235,533).

Table 1.2. Revenues of Obieqtivi TV in 2015-2019

Year	Obieqtivi
2019	2 235 533
2018	1 925 974
2017	1 469 125
2016	1 691 397
2015	1 080 873

Chart 1.4 Dynamics of revenues of Obieqtivi TV in 2015-2019

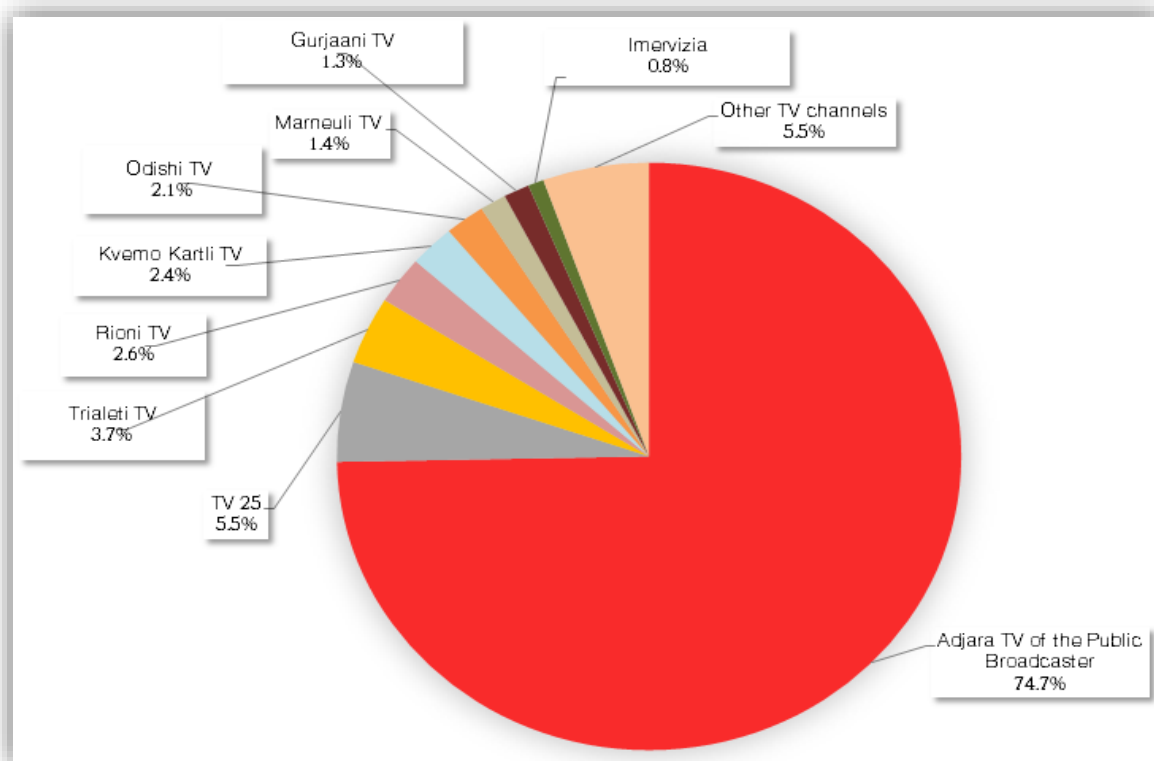


Source: Analytical portal of the National Communications Commission

Regional TV broadcasters. In 2019, regional broadcasters received GEL 10,342,437 in total revenues. Public Broadcaster Adjara TV accounts for the largest share – 74.7% (GEL 7,730,689), followed by:

- **Batumi:** TV 25 (GEL 569,946) -5,5%;
- **Gori:** Tele Radio Company Trialeti (GEL 384,909) - 3,7%;
- **Kutaisi:** Rioni TV (GEL 272,577) - 2,6%;
- **Kvemo Kartli television** (GEL 243,389) - 2,4%;
- **Zugdidi:** Odishi TV (GEL 213,936) - 2,1%;
- **Marneuli TV** (GEL 141,254) - 1,4%;
- **Gurjaani** (GEL 137,794) -1,3%,
- **Chiatura:** Imervizia (GEL 85,092) - 0.8%;
- Revenues of other TV channels, which do not exceed GEL 86,000, totaled GEL 562,852.

Chart 1.5. Revenues of regional TV channels in 2019, by media outlets



Radio stations. In 2019, revenues of radio stations decreased by GEL 0.5 million compared to 2018 and made up GEL 9,814,772. In 2018, this figure stood at GEL 10,033,353. It is worth noting that a declining tendency has been observed in the revenues of radio stations since 2015.

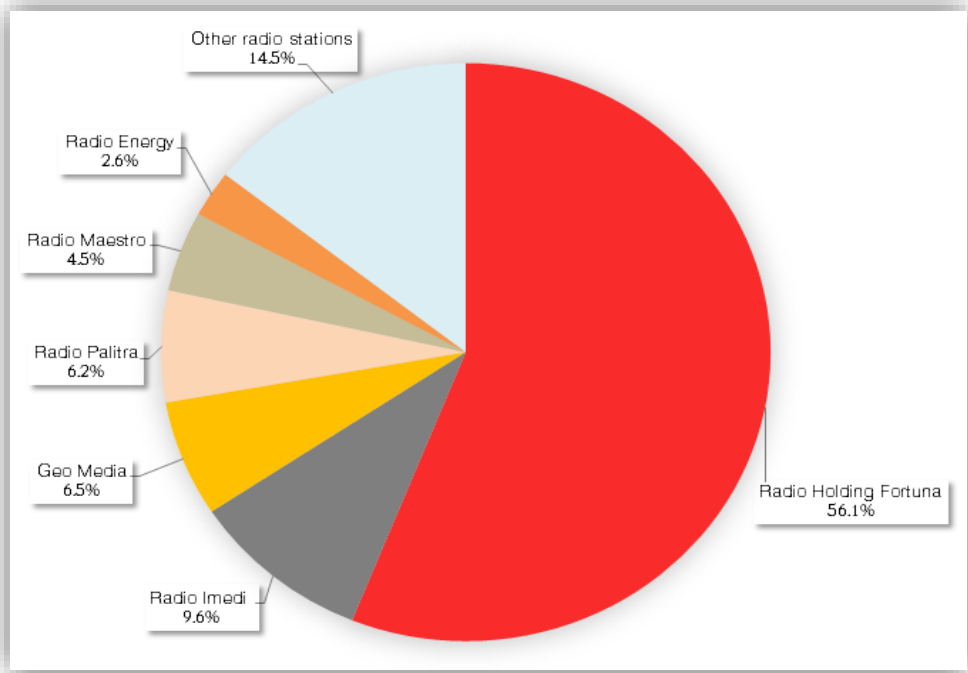
Chart 1.6. Radio revenues in 2015-2019



Source: Analytical portal of the National Communications Commission

Like in previous years, Radio Holding Fortuna still held a dominant market position (51%) with its revenues reaching GEL 5,017,118. The company's revenues increased by GEL 256,570 compared to 2018. Advertising (85%) and sponsorship (15%) represent the important sources of Radio Fortuna's revenues. It is followed by Radio Imedi with GEL 859,553, though its revenues decreased by GEL 91,905 compared to 2018. Radio Apkhazetis Khma¹³ comes next with GEL 582,238, followed by Radio Palitra¹⁴ (GEL 557,457), Radio Maestro¹⁵ (GEL 401,727) and Radio Energy¹⁶ (GEL 233, 235); revenues of other radio stations totaled GEL 1,293,355.

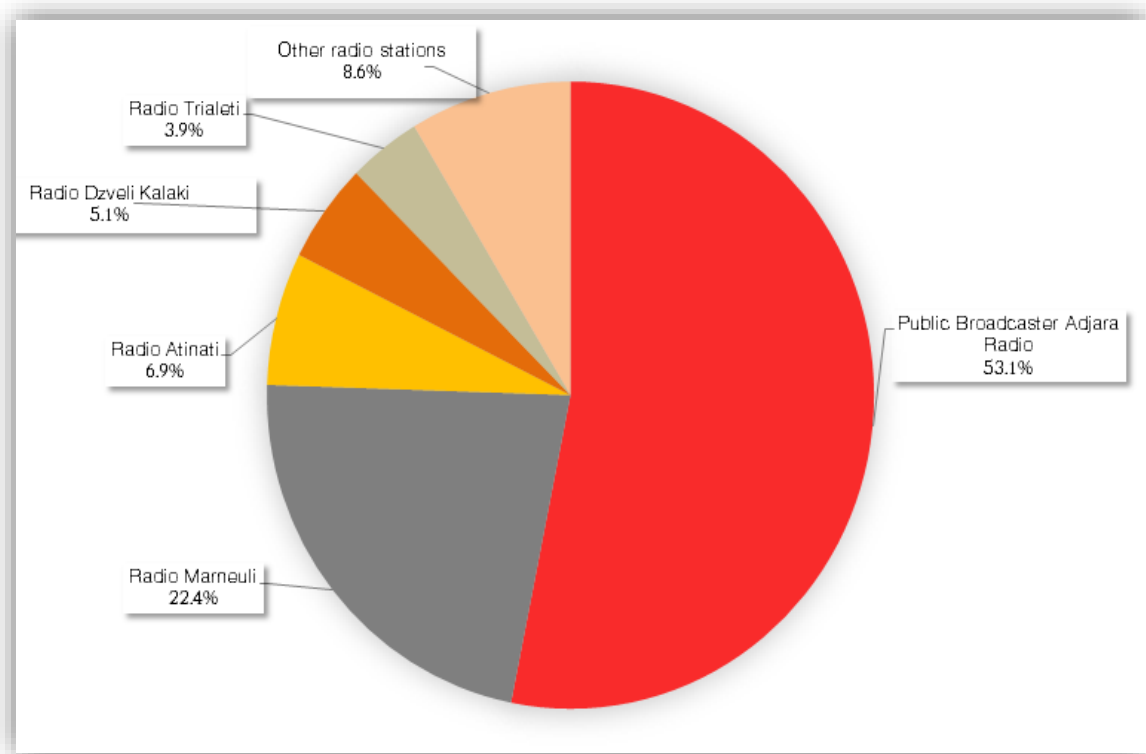
Chart 1.7. Revenues of nationwide and mixed coverage radios in 2019



Regional radio stations. Revenues of regional radio stations totaled GEL 870,088. Public Broadcaster Adjara Radio holds a dominant market position (53.1%) with its revenues reaching GEL 461,930. It is followed by Radio Marneuli (GEL 194,536), Radio Atinati (GEL 59,634), Dzveli Kalaki (GEL 44,689) and Radio Trialeti (GEL 33,610). Revenues of other regional radio stations made up GEL 75,688.

¹³ Geo Media LLC, <https://registry.comcom.ge/>
№B 93 broadcasting license owned by Media Center for Open Abkhazia NNLE was transferred to Geo Media LLC, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4160842?publication=0>
¹⁴ Radio Center Plus LLC (FM 103.9), http://www.radiopalitra.ge/doc/7_15_2020_shesab_dec_radio_n.pdf
¹⁵ Georgian Radio LLC, <http://radiomaestro.ge/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/qartuli-radio-shesabamisoba-weriltan-ertad-2019.pdf>
¹⁶ Company MediaStream, <http://www.nri.ge/>

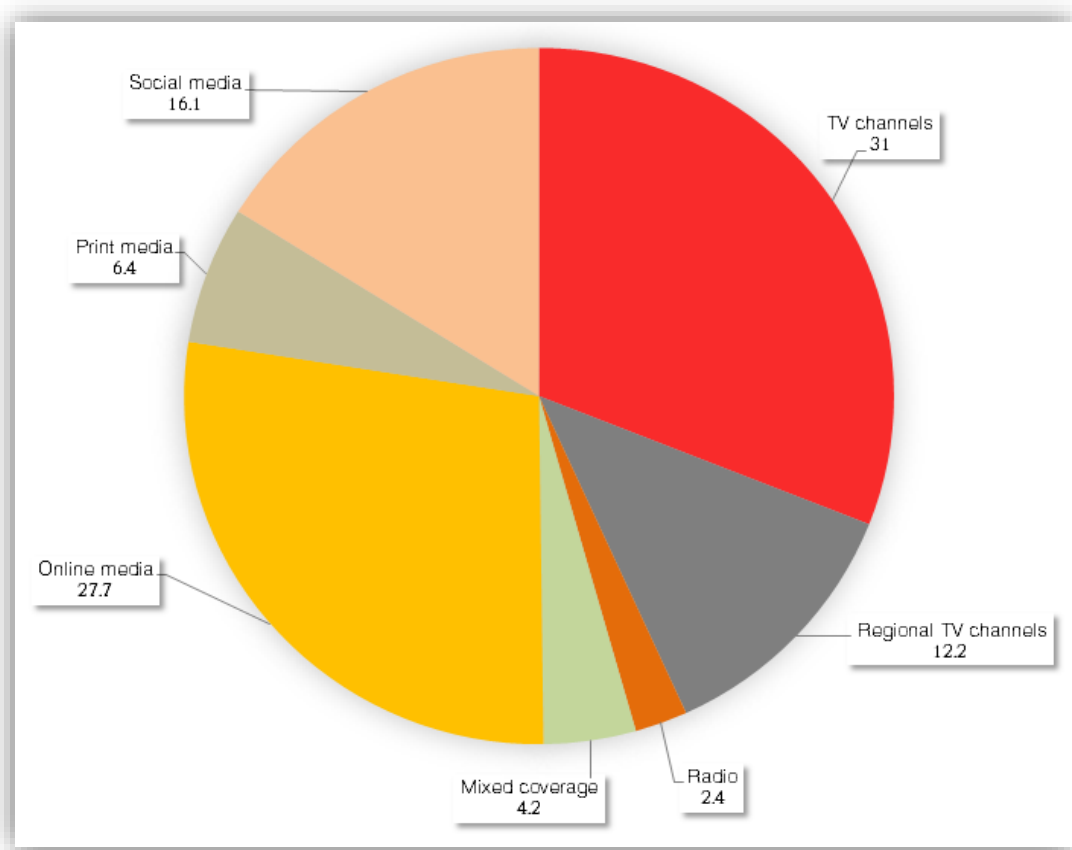
Chart 1.8. Revenues of regional radio stations in 2019, by media outlets



II. Practice of Allocating Public Funds for Advertising and Dissemination of Information in Media Outlets

Unified data. According to the data available in the electronic database of the State Procurement Agency, in 2019, budgetary organizations signed contracts worth GEL 6,581,303 with media outlets for the purpose of advertising and information services. Nationwide and mixed coverage televisions account for 31% of the total amount (GEL 2,038,526); online media - 27.7% (GEL 1,821,334); social media – 16.1% (GEL 1,036,416); regional televisions – 12.2% (GEL 805,223); print media – 6.4% (GEL 428,051); mixed contracts – 4.2% (GEL 273,884); radio stations – 2.4% (GEL 154,580). Mixed contracts involve various types of media outlets. Since some contracts did not allow identifying how the budgetary funds were distributed among media outlets, this amount was categorized separately as “mixed contracts.”

Chart 2.1. Distribution of budgetary contracts by types of media outlets, 2019



2.1 Broadcasters

TV broadcasters. According to the data available in the electronic database of the State Procurement Agency, in 2019, budgetary organizations signed contracts with TV broadcasters totaling GEL 2,843,749. The largest part of this amount - GEL 2,038,526 went to nationwide and mixed coverage televisions, followed by regional televisions with GEL 805,223. Among televisions, the largest share of television contracts worth GEL 997,616 went to Imedi TV, followed by Rustavi 2 (GEL 667,894), Pulse TV (GEL

110,000) and TV Pirveli (GEL 107,120). Other televisions¹⁷, whose revenues were less than GEL 10,000 in total, received funds worth GEL 15,667 for advertising services.

Some budgetary contracts did not allow identifying how the budgetary funds were distributed among media outlets; therefore, this amount was categorized separately as “joint contracts.” The contract signed between L. Sakvarelidze National Center for Disease Control and Public Health and Better Fly LLC (contract price GEL 9,900) envisaged carrying out an information media campaign in TV talk shows.

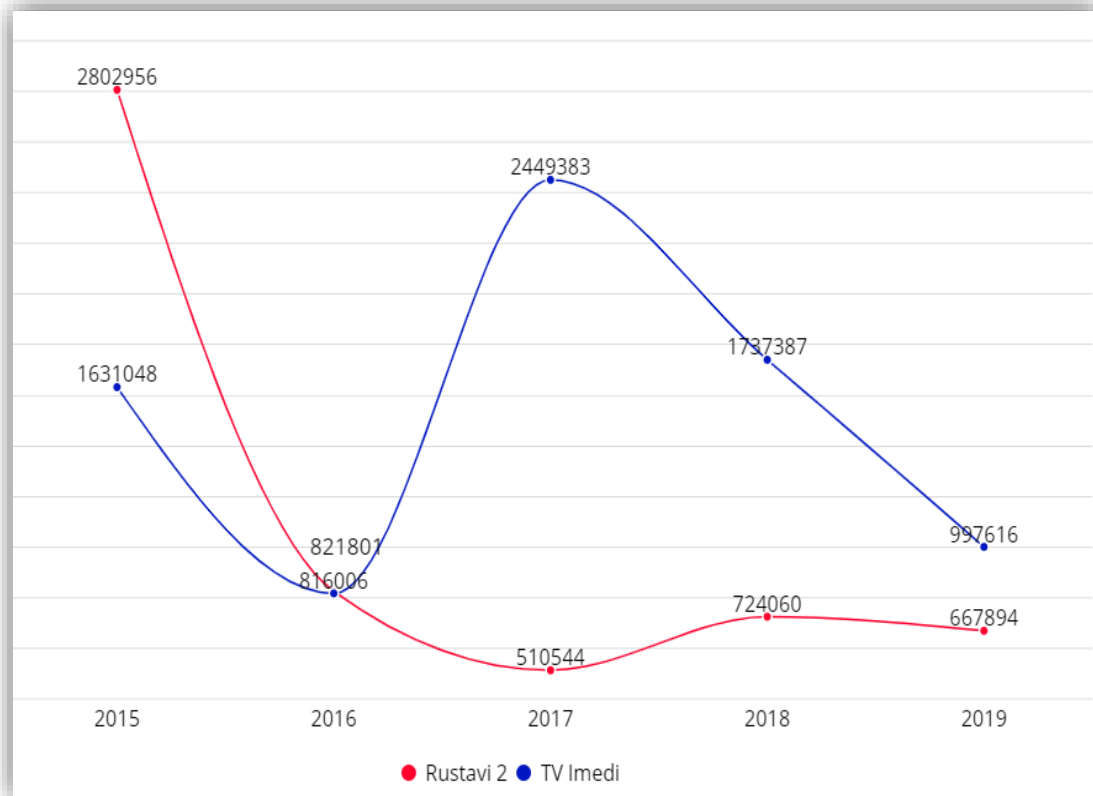
Table 2.1. Budget allocation for advertising to nationwide and mixed coverage broadcasters, 2019

TV channel	Amount
Imedi	997,616
Rustavi 2	667,894
Pulse TV	110,000
TV Pirveli	107,120
Public Broadcaster	46,403
GDS	37,644
Mtavari Arkhi	21,703
Maestro	14,153
Kavkasia	10,426
Other	15,667
Joint contracts	9,900

Compared to 2018, in 2019, two large televisions – Imedi TV and Rustavi 2 TV received less budgetary funds for advertising. Sharp reduction in budgetary funds allocated to Rustavi 2 TV has been observed since 2016, while an increasing tendency observed in case of Imedi TV in 2017 was followed by gradual reduction.

¹⁷ Palitra TV, Kartuli Arkhi, Agrogaremo TV

Chart 2.2. Dynamics of distribution of budgetary funds for advertising among Rustavi 2 and Imedi in 2015-2019



Regional TV broadcasters. Local municipalities and their subordinate agencies account for the largest share (88%) of contracts signed with regional TV broadcasters (total amount – GEL 805,223). Like in 2016-2018, Kvemo Kartli television again received the largest budgetary financing among regional TV broadcasters (GEL 220,000), constituting 90% (GEL 243,389) of total revenues.

Kvemo Kartli television is followed by Rioni TV – GEL 79,578; Marneuli TV – GEL 76,469; Gurjaani – GEL 69,652; Imervizia – GEL 63,300; Parvana – GEL 50,000; Borjomi – GEL 28,170; Bolneli – GEL 26,542; Zari – GEL 25,542; Metskhre Talga – GEL 21,597. Other televisions¹⁸, whose revenues were less than GEL 20,000, received less than GEL 59,333 in total, for advertising services.

In 2019, joint contracts (several companies) were signed with regional TV channels by the following intermediary companies: RegionMediaMarket LLC¹⁹ (GEL 41,000), Komshi LLC²⁰ (GEL 25,000) and Alliance of Broadcasters NNLE²¹ (GEL 19,040).

Based on the signed contracts, the companies placed information services worth GEL 85,040 in total on various regional channels.

¹⁸ Odishi, Argo, Egrisi, TV 25, ATV 12, Kolkheti 89, Mega TV, Dia, Adjara TV, Borjomi, Zari, Metskhre Arkhi, Guria TV, Jikha, Tanamgzavri, Tok TV, LTV, Ialoni TV

¹⁹ Contract with Public Service Development Agency

²⁰ Contract with L. Sakvarelidze National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, LEPL

²¹ Contract with Creative Georgia, LEPL

Table 2.2. Distribution of budgetary allocations for advertising among regional televisions, 2019

Regional televisions	Amount
Kvemo Kartli television	220,000
Rioni	79,578
Marneuli	76,469
Gurjaani	69,652
Imervizia	63 300
Parvana	50 000
Borjomi	28 170
Bolnisi	26 542
Zari	25 542
Metskhre Talga	21 597
Other televisions	59 333
Joint contracts	85 040

Radio stations. Contracts signed with radio stations totaled GEL 154,580. The biggest budget contract was signed with Radio Holding Fortuna (Fortuna, Fortuna +, Ar Daidardo, Avto Radio – GEL 46,856), followed by Radio Imedi - GEL 24,344, Radio MBC – GEL 10,980, Apkhazetis Khma – GEL 10,915, Radio Palitra - GEL 9,150, Radio Maestro – GEL 8,825, Radio Atinati – GEL 6,150, Radio Dardimandi – GEL 2,790 and Radio Rioni – GEL 1,520; revenues received by other radio stations through budget contracts (not exceeding GEL 1,000) totaled GEL 2,050. In case of radio stations, L. Sakvarelidze National Center for Disease Control and Public Health signed a joint contract (providing services on several radio stations, not allowing to identify how the funds were distributed among these radio stations) with Komshi LLC (contract price GEL 31,000).

Table 2.3. Distribution of budgetary funds among radio stations, 2019

Radio stations	Amount
Radio Holding Fortuna	46,856
Radio Imedi	24,344
Radio MBC	10,980
Apkhazetis Khma	10,915
Radio Palitra	9,150
Radio Maestro	8,825

Radio Atinati	6,150
Dardimandi	2,790
Rioni	1,520
Other radio stations	2,050
Joint contracts	31,000

2.2. Online media

According to the data available in the electronic database of the State Procurement Agency, a total of GEL 1,821,334 was allocated to online media outlets for the purpose of advertising and dissemination of information. The largest share (GEL 349,275) was allocated to online editions incorporated in Palitra Media Holding (IPN, PalitraTV.ge, Kvirispalitra.ge, Bpn.ge, Ambebi.ge, Allnews.ge, Mshoblebi.ge), followed by Ipress.ge and those media outlets, which are named as partners on Ipress.ge's website and with whom mainly joint contracts were signed (ibusiness.ge; iregions.ge; imtavroba.ge²²; mpress.ge²³) – GEL 79,786; Kvira.ge and affiliated kids.kvira.ge, region.kvira.ge city.kvira.ge – GEL 60,400; Guardian.ge – GEL 39,997; Newspress.ge and NSP.ge – GEL 38,993 (including GEL 11,520 with region.ge); PIA and affiliated edition (Daijesti.ge) – GEL 33,378; GHN- GEL 36,613, Primetime.ge- GEL 36,519; BM.GE – GEL 32,305; reportiori.ge (qartuliazri.ge, cnobisfurceli.ge) – GEL 30,019; Netgazeti.ge and Batumelebi.ge – GEL 27, 025; Expressnews and affiliated media outlets (Economic.ge; 1news.ge) – GEL 23,805; Accent.com.ge-GEL 22,154; Newposts.ge – GEL 20,171; For.ge – GEL 20,410. Other media outlets, the amount of whose contracts is less than GEL 20,000, received a total of GEL 406,902. They are categorized in the group of mixed contracts.

Some budgetary organizations cooperate with news agencies through intermediaries; therefore, it is complicated to search full information in the electronic database of the State Procurement Agency about what amounts were transferred to specific media outlets. We categorized such contracts in the group of joint contracts (total cost – GEL 169,455). In 2019, IPM Market Intelligence Caucasus LLC²⁴ signed 57% (GEL 96,819) of such contracts; Clip Art LLC²⁵ – 29% (GEL 49,690); Better Fly²⁶ – 9% (GEL 15,260) and other companies²⁷ - 5% (GEL 7,686).

Contracts on media monitoring and information services were also signed through the intermediaries (IPM Market Intelligence Caucasus LLC and PR Consulting Group LLC). In addition, the amounts of monitoring and information services are not separated in contracts. Neither do they indicate which media outlets were asked to provide information services. IPM Market Intelligence Caucasus LLC signed contracts with the Ministry of Justice of Georgia (GEL 53,460); the Staff of Tbilisi Sakrebulo (GEL 58,800); the Staff of the Parliament of Georgia (GEL 45,700); the Ministry of Finance of Georgia (GEL 34,431); the State Service

²² Ipress.ge affiliated news agencies

²³ Ipress.ge partners news agencies

²⁴ With Georgian Oil and Gas Corporation, Public Communication Development Agency, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

²⁵ With Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission and International Education Center

²⁶ With L. Sakvarelidze National Center for Disease Control and Public Health

²⁷ Georgian Regional Media Association, Top Group LLC, Komshi LLC, Artinfo Georgia, Georgian Idea LLC

for Veterans Affairs (GEL 47,796). Further, PR Consulting Group LLC signed a contract worth GEL 110,540 with the Georgian Government Administration.

Table 2.4. Budget allocation for advertising and information distribution services in online media, 2019

Online media	Amount
Ipn and affiliated media outlets	349,275
Ipress and affiliated news agencies	79,786
Kvira.ge and affiliated kids.kvira.ge, region.kvira.ge city.kvira.ge	60,400
Guardian	39,997
Newspress.ge (including GEL 11,520 with region.ge);	38,993
Pia and affiliated edition (Dajesti.ge)	33,378
GHN	36,613
Primetime	36,519
BM.GE	32,305
Reportioti (qartuliazri.ge, cnobisfurceli.ge)	30,019
netgazeti.ge; batumelebi.ge;	27,025
Expressnews and affiliated media outlets	23,805
accent.com.ge	22,154
Newposts.ge	20,171
For.ge	20,410
Information service and media monitoring	394,127
Other	406,902
Joint contracts	169,455

2.3. Print media

As far as print media is concerned, newspaper Rezonanzi has the lead in the value of contracts (GEL 72,593), followed by Sakartvelos Respublika²⁸ (GEL 55,525), Kviris Palitra (GEL 37,575), Versia (GEL 30,000), Vrastan (GEL 16,000), OK (12,000), Sakartvelos Rkinigza (10,000), WHERE (GEL 8,740),

²⁸ This amount includes the information service with the National Agency of Mines provided through Kviris Palitra.

Gurjistan (GEL 8,000), Gault & Millau (GEL 6,540), Professional (GEL 6,500), Msoplio 2019 tsels” (GEL 5,300), Akhali Ganatleba (GEL 4,035). The category “other” unites those newspapers, whose contracts are worth less than GEL 4,000, among them Veluri Buneba, Forbes Georgia, Entrepreneur, Akhali Gazeti, Georgian Bus passenger magazine, Georgian Medical News, Experimental and Clinical Medicine, totaling GEL 68,718.

Table 2.5. Budget allocations for advertising in newspapers, 2019

Print media	Amount
Rezonansi	72,593
Sakartvelos Respublika	55,525
Kviris Palitra	37,575
Versia	30,000
Vrastan	16,000
OK	12,000
Sakartvelos Rkinigza	10,000
Where	8,740
Gurjistan	8,000
Gault & Millau	6,540
Professional	6,500
Msoplio 2019 tsels	5,300
Akhali Ganatleba	4,035
Other	68,718

As for regional print media, the largest value contracts were signed with newspaper Borjomi (GEL 25,000), followed by Literaturuli Meskheti (GEL 13,700), Svaneti (GEL 13,000), Ambrolauris Moambe (GEL 11,988), newspaper Martvili (GEL 10,300), Akhali Sakartvelo (GEL 9,100), Guria News (GEL 8,395), Below 21 (GEL 6,800), newspaper Adjara da Adzharia (GEL 6,110), Alioni (GEL 3,660), Guriis Moambe (GEL 3,460), Lanchkhutis Moambe (GEL 1,505); other newspapers, whose revenues are below GEL 1,500, signed contracts worth GEL 5,345 in total

Table 2.6. Budget allocation for advertising in regional newspapers, 2019

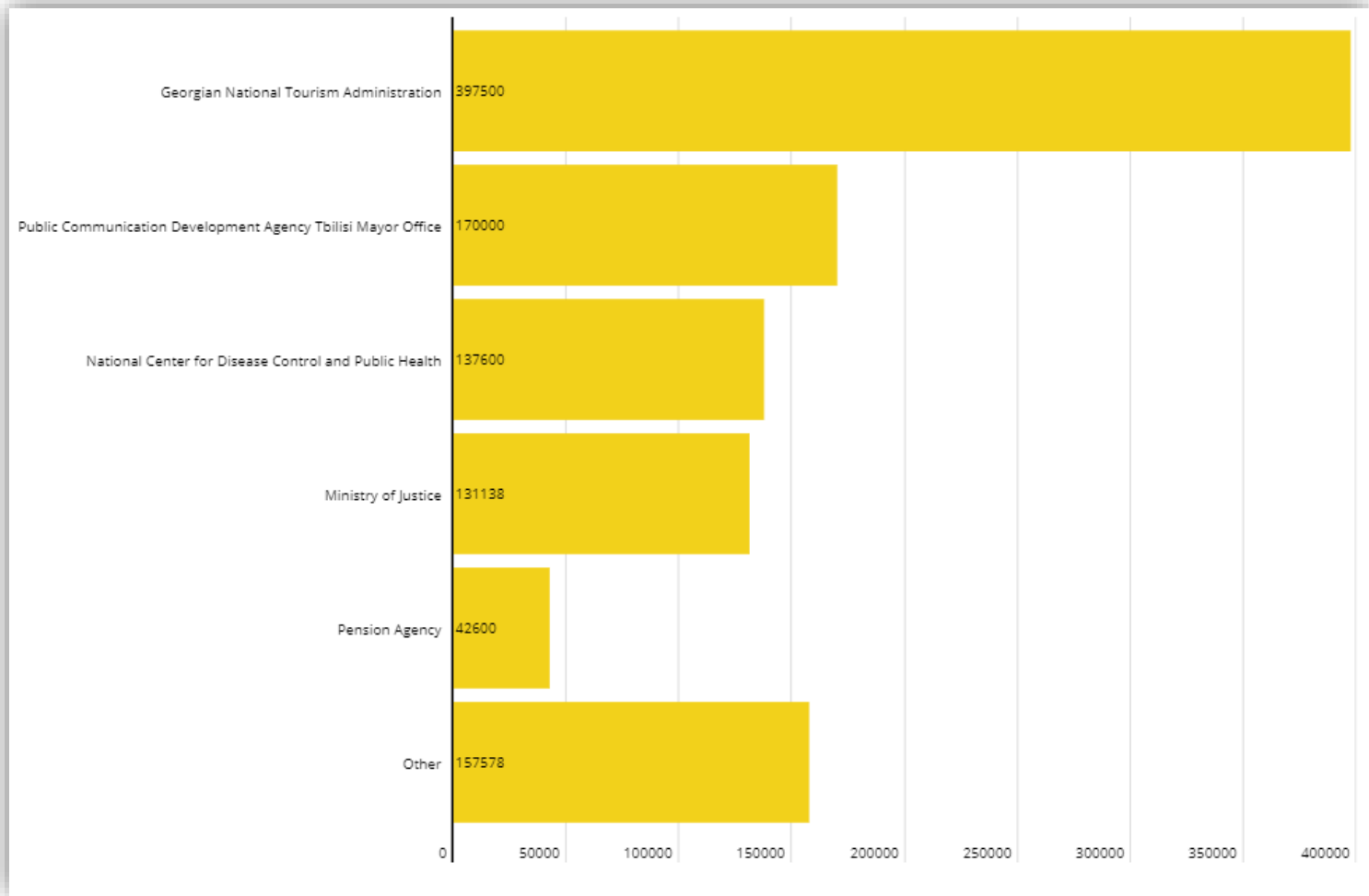
Regional newspapers	Amount
Borjomi	25,000
Literaturuli Meskheta	13,700
Svaneti	13,000
Ambrolauris Moambe	11,988
Newspaper Martvili	10,300
Akhali Sakartvelo	9,100
Guria News	8,395
Below 21	6,800
Newspaper Adjara	6,110
Alioni	3,660
Guriis Moambe	3,460
Lanchkhutis Moambe	1,505
Other	5,345

2.4. Social media

According to the data available in the electronic database of the State Procurement Agency, in 2019, budgetary organizations allocated GEL 981 865 for facebook and instagram social media services. United contracts worth GEL 54 551 alongside facebook and instagram covered LinkedIn, Google and youtube services too.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration has the biggest spending (GEL 397 500) in social media advertisement, followed by Public Communication Development Agency Tbilisi Mayor Office (GEL 170 000); National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (GEL 137 600); Ministry of Justice (GEL 131 138) and Pension Agency (GEL 42 600).

Chart 2.3. Budget allocation for advertising in social media, 2019



2.5. Budgetary funds allocated to news agencies for dissemination of information in Facebook groups and pages

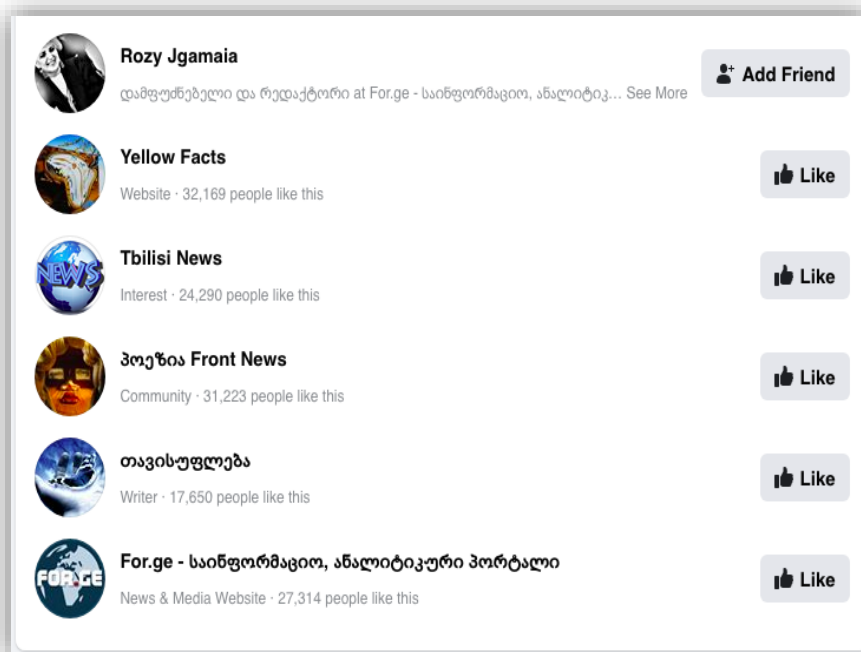
Analysis of the 2019 budget data has revealed a new tendency: besides placement of materials on a respective news agency’s website, information service contracts of state agencies oblige media outlets to place materials in various **Facebook groups and pages**. The present chapter additionally discusses the 2020 data involving those media outlets, whose contracts with administrative bodies obliged them to spread materials on various social accounts.

In 2019-2020, budgetary organizations (Municipalities of Akhalkalaki, Terjola and Khobi, National Screening Center and State Military Scientific-Technical Center DELTA (STC Delta)) signed contracts totaling **GEL 27,854** with three online news agencies - Guardian.ge, For.ge and Stv.ge (2019 – GEL 15,477; 2020 – GEL 12,377). Besides dissemination of information, the contracts envisaged sharing of materials to various Facebook groups and pages upon the instructions of public agencies. According to the contracts with the Akhalkalaki and Khobi Municipalities, besides official Facebook pages of media outlets, relevant materials should have been placed in popular political or other Facebook groups with total members exceeding 500,000.

Table 2.7. Contracts on sharing information to Facebook groups and pages in 2019-2020

Media	Contractor	Contract price 2019	Contract price 2020
Guardian.ge Ltd Meurve	Akhalkalaki Municipality	4 900	4900
Guardian.ge Ltd Meurve	Terjola Municipality	4 500	
Guardian.ge Ltd Meurve	STC Delta	2 277	2277
Stv.ge Samegrelo media organization	Cultural-Educational Public Center of Khobi Municipality	1 800	3000
For.ge	National Screening Center	2 000	2200
		15 477	12 377

Specific Facebook pages and groups, where media outlets had to place materials, were indicated only in the contracts with the National Screening Center NNLE and Kavshiri Presa – Sakartvelo NNLE (For.ge). In particular, the contract signed with For.ge envisages the dissemination of materials in the following Facebook pages (Yellow Facts, Tbilisi news , თავისუფლება, პოეზია Front news) and group (პოზიტივი). Noteworthy that all the four pages and one group are affiliated with For.ge, because in their “About us” sections, all of them indicate www.for.ge as their web addresses. Facebook group “პოზიტივი” (Positive) notes that it is administered by Rozy Jgamaia, founder and editor at For.ge, as well as by the above mentioned four pages run by For.ge.



Infographics 1. Pages and group affiliated with For.ge

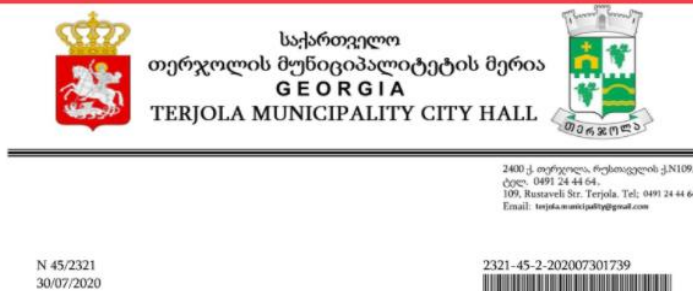


To find out on which Facebook accounts the information envisaged by the contracts was placed, the Media Development Foundation requested information from Akhalkalaki, Terjola and Khobi Municipality City Halls, as well as STC Delta. The latter is the only agency that did not provide data, while the Akhalkalaki Municipality City Hall responded via email.

According to the obtained documents, three online news agencies were tasked to share information to 20 Facebook groups and seven pages in total.

Screen 2. Letters received from budgetary organizations on sharing information to Facebook pages and groups

The Letter from the City Hall of Terjola Municipality to the Media Development Foundation (30/07/2020)



შედიისა და განვითარების ფონდის ოფისს
ქალაქი თერჯოლა

თქვენი, წერილის პასუხად გაცხადებთ, რომ თერჯოლის მუნიციპალიტეტის მერიისა და მას
„მეურვეს“ შიშის გაფორმებული კონტრაქტის საფუძველზე ხდებოდა ინტერვიუების,
საინფორმაციო ხასიათის წერილების, ფოტოების განთავსება ვებ გვერდზე.
გარდა ამისა, ხელშეკრულება ითვალისწინებდა ინფორმაციის გაზიარებას facebook - ის
სხვადასხვა პოპულარულ პოლიტიკურ თუ სხვა ჯგუფებში, საერთო ჯამში 500000 წევრით.
მოწოდებული, ანუ მას „მეურვე“, თერჯოლის შესახებ ინფორმაციის ათავსება შემდეგ
ჯგუფებში-ჯამში 500000 წევრით: „თავისუფალი სივრცე“, „გიორგი მარგველაშვილი გისმენო,
მეგობრებო“, „კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი“, „პიძინა ივანიშვილი ჩემი თანამოქალაქე,
„პროტესტი“, „ღია წყაროების სააგენტო“ და სხვა.
რაც შეეხება ბმულებს, იმის გამო, რომ ყოველდღიურად მრავალი ინფორმაცია თავსდება და
ზიარდება აღნიშნულ ჯგუფებში, შესაბამისი ბმულის მოწოდებას ვერ შევძლებთ.

მანუარ რიბაძე

მუნიციპალიტეტის მერიის მოადგილე



The Letter from the City Hall of Khobi Municipality to the Media Development Foundation (24/07/2020)



ს ა ქ ა რ თ ვ ე ლ ო ადგილობრივი თვითმმართველობა სოხის მუნიციპალიტეტის მერია



KA990138374045320

მისამართი: ქ. სოხი, ყოფილი დიდუბის ქ. №13/1; ინტელექტი: 5800; ტელეფონი: +995 414 220801;
ვებ-გვერდი: www.khobi.gov.ge; ელექტრონული ფოსტა: office@khobi.gov.ge

№ 03/1942

24 / ივლისი / 2020 წ.

შეიძინა განვითარების ფონდის იურისტის ქალბატონ მარიამ პატარიძეს

ქალბატონ მარიამ,

თქვენი 2020 წლის 13 ივლისის პასუხად გაცნობებით, რომ რომ აკიპი სოხის მუნიციპალიტეტის კულტურულ-საგანმანათლებლო საზოგადოებრივი ცენტრისა და აკიპი „სამეგრელოს მედია ორგანიზაციის“ შორის საინფორმაციო მომსახურების გაწევასთან დაკავშირებული ხელშეკრულების (CMR1901209312) საფუძველზე, ახალი ამბების ინტერვიუების, საინფორმაციო სახითის წერილების განთავსებას მიმწოდებელი რეგულარულად ანთავსებდა Facebook-ის სხვადასხვა 500 000-ზე ნაკლები წევრის მქონე ჯგუფებში.

„ახალი ამბების სააგენტო“ (<https://www.facebook.com/achaliambisi/>); „ქიმი სოხში“ (<https://www.facebook.com/chemi.sokhi/>); „საგვითი დღეს“ (<https://www.facebook.com/sagvithi.dges/>); „კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი“ (<https://www.facebook.com/mayor1952614838291953/>); „ეს საქართველო“ (<https://www.facebook.com/thisgeorgia1959114475915945/>).

სერიოზული მითითებები მიმართულებით გამოთვლილია მუნიციპალიტეტის მესხეთ დიდი რაოდენობისა და მოსახლეობის ინფორმაცია, რომელიც ხელსაყრელად შესაძლებელია შესაბამის მასალაზე გადასვლით.

რაც შეეხება მას „მეგრეს“ აკიპი სოხის მუნიციპალიტეტის კულტურულ-საგანმანათლებლო საზოგადოებრივი ცენტრისა და მას „მეგრეს“ შორის ხელშეკრულება არ გაფორმებულა.

პატივისცემით,

სოხის მუნიციპალიტეტის მერი



გონივრება

The Letter from the City Hall of Akhalkalaki Municipality to the Media Development Foundation (19/08/2020)

მოგესალმებით,

ახალქალაქის მუნიციპალიტეტის მერიასა და მას „მეგრეს“ შორის დადებული # 4 ხელშეკრულების თანახმად, მას „მეგრეს“ მ პირნილიად შესაძლებელია მასზე ხელშეკრულებით ნაკისრი ვალდებულება და განთავსება ინფორმაციები ახალი ამბების სააგენტო GUARDIAN.GE-ზე და ასევე გამოქვეყნება შესაბამისი ბმულები Facebook-ის სხვადასხვა პოპულარულ პოლიტიკურ თუ სხვა ჯგუფებში, რომელთაც საერთო ჯამში 500 000-ზე მეტი წევრი ჰყავს.

გთხოვთ, იხილოთ Facebook-ის რამდენიმე ჯგუფის სახელწოდება, სადაც განთავსდა სააგენტო GUARDIAN.GE-ზე გამოქვეყნებული ინფორმაციების ბმულები - Facebook-ზე დარეგისტრირებული „საინფორმაციო სააგენტო კარდიანის“ სახელწოდებით, რომელიც Facebook-ის ადმინისტრაციამ რამდენიმე თვის წინათ წაშალა და ამჟამად ინფორმაციის ბმულები ქვეყნდება „სააგენტო გარდიანის“, „საინფორმაციო სააგენტოს“ და „ახალი ამბების სააგენტოს“ მიერ GUARDIAN.GE-ზე ჯგუფების ჩამონათვალი, სადაც ბმულები გამოქვეყნდა ან იქვე კიდევ ქვეყნდება:

წილს რუსთავი - 19,827 წევრი

თავისუფალი სიყრდ - 970 წევრი

პოლიტიკა & საზოგადოება - 46,205

გთხოვთ მარცვლილი გისმენთ მეგობრები - ამჟამად 23,440 წევრი

ზიძინა ივანიშვილის მეგობრები ფეისბუქზე - ამჟამად 33,103 წევრი

ერთიანი ნაციონალური მოძრაობა 2015 - ამჟამად 5,159 წევრი

პრემიერი ირაკლი ღარიბაშვილი & აქტუალური თემები - ამჟამად 8,164 წევრი

„მოქალაქე“ არასამთავრობო ორგანიზაცია - ამჟამად 19,222 წევრი

ქართულია მოდელი ცენტრი Georgian World Center გამართულია - ამჟამად 18,337 წევრი

Georgia - საქართველო - ამჟამად 33,060 წევრი

პროტესტი Protest! Протест! - ამჟამად 18,488

ქართული ინტერნეტი ამერიკაში - ამჟამად 58,541 წევრი

რუსთავი 21 / rustavi 21 - ამჟამად 56,737 წევრი

ემიგრანტის პირადი სიყრდ - ამჟამად 25,715

კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი - ამჟამად 42,310 წევრი

მალა ერთობაშია ქართული ემოციონები - ამჟამად 7,543 წევრი

ღია წყაროების სააგენტო - შევსდა 300,425 წევრი - ამჟამად, ამ ჯგუფს ან სახელი აქვს შეცვლილი ან არ იქნებოდა.

შენიშვნა: აღსანიშნავია, რომ ზემოთაღნიშნულ ჯგუფებს, თითოეულს, 2019 წლის ზაფხულამდე თითქმის 2 ჯერ მეტი წევრი ჰყავდა, ვიდრე დღეს, მიგრამ „ფეისბუქს“ ბევრი მათგანი წაშალა.

ის, თუ კონკრეტულად რა მასალები განთავსდა დასაბუთებული ხელშეკრულების ფარგლებში, „ფეისბუქს“ შესაბამის ჯგუფებში, ინფორმაციების ჩამონათვალი შევიღითა იხილოთ წვენი ახალი ამბების სააგენტოს ვებ გვერდზე, www.guardian.ge - რუბრიკაში - რეგიონები.

Electronic correspondence of the Media Development Foundation to the City Hall of Akhalkalaki Municipality



In addition, the Akhalkalaki Municipality stresses in its response that Facebook group *Open Source Agency* with 300,425 members is not accessible anymore and groups indicated in the email had twice more members prior to summer 2019, when Facebook removed many of them.

ღია წყაროების სააგენტო - ჰყავდა 300,425 წევრი - ამჟამად, ამ ჯგუფს ან სახელი აქვს შეცვლილი ან არ იძებნება.

შენიშვნა: აღსანიშნავია, რომ ზემოთაღნიშნულ ჯგუფებს, თითოეულს, 2019 წლის ზაფხულამდე თითქმის 2-ჯერ მეტი წევრი ჰყავდა, ვიდრე დღეს, მაგრამ „ფეისბუქმა“ ბევრი მათგანი წაშალა.

As shown in the tables (1, 2) and infographics, administrative bodies were allocating budgetary funds to Guardian.ge and Stv.ge in exchange for publishing information in pro-government groups and pages, among others “ბიძინა ივანიშვილის მეგობრები ფეისბუქზე (Bidzina Ivanishvili’s Friends on Facebook),” “კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი (Kakha Kaladze Tbilisi Mayor),” “ბიძინა ივანიშვილი ჩემი თანამოქალაქეა (Bidzina Ivanishvili My Fellow Citizen²⁹)” and “პრემიერი ირაკლი ღარიბაშვილი და აქტუალური თემები (Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and Current Issues).”

Infographics 2. Placement of information by Guardian.ge and Stv.ge in pro-government groups and pages



Table 2.8. Facebook pages where three online news agencies are tasked to spread information under budget contracts

Administrative body	Media	Various thematic Facebook pages	Ruling party-affiliated Facebook page
Khobi Municipality City Hall	Stv.ge	1. <u>ზუგდიდი • დღეი / Zugdidi • Today</u>	
National Screening Center	For.ge	1. Yellow Fact 2. Tbilisi news 3. თავისუფლება 4. Front News 5. პოეზია Front News	

²⁹ According to the information provided by the Terjola Municipality, “Bidzina Ivanishvili My Fellow Citizen” is a Facebook group; however, only the Facebook page with the same name can be searched.

Terjola Municipality City Hall	Guardian.ge		2. <u>ბიძინა ივანიშვილის ჩემი თანამოქალაქეა</u>
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Table 2.9 Facebook groups where three online news agencies are tasked to spread information under budget contracts

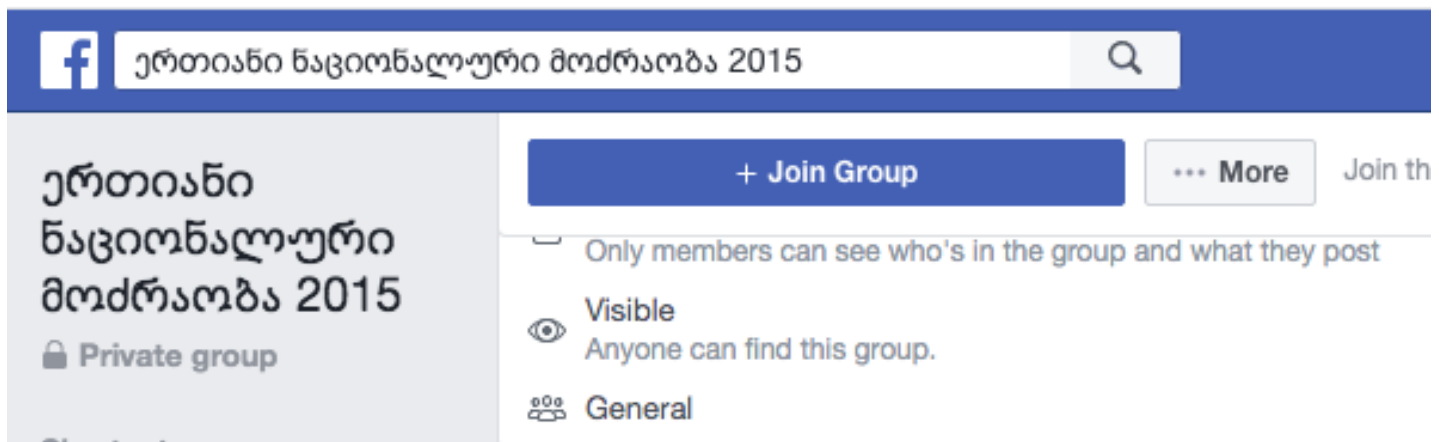
Budgetary organizations	Media	Ruling party-affiliated Facebook groups	Opposition-affiliated Facebook groups	Various thematic groups
Akhalkalaki Municipality City Hall	Guardian.ge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>ბიძინა ივანიშვილის მეგობრები ფეისბუქზე (Bidzina Ivanishvili's Friends on Facebook)</u> <u>მოქალაქე არასამთავრობო ორგანიზაცია (NGO Citizen)</u> <u>გიორგი მარგველაშვილი გისმენთ. მეგობრებო (Giorgi Margvelashvili Listens You Friends)</u> <u>კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი (Kakha Kaladze Tbilisi Mayor)</u> <u>პრემიერი ირაკლი ლარიბაშვილი და აქტუალური თემები (Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and Current Issues)</u> <p>Closed group</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>ერთიანი ნაციონალური მოძრაობა 2015 (United National Movement 2015)</u> <p>Closed group</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>თავისუფალი სივრცე (Free Space), one of admins: guardian.ge</u> <u>პოლიტიკა და საზოგადოება (Politics and Society) Closed group</u> <u>პროტესტი! Протест!</u> <u>ნიუს რუსთავი (News Rustavi)</u> <u>რუსთავი 21-rustavi 21</u> <u>ქართველთა მსოფლიო ცენტრი Georgians World Center Всемирный центр грузин Gürc</u> <u>Georgia საქართველო</u> <u>ქართველი ემიგრანტები ამერიკაში (Georgian emigrants in USA)</u> <u>ემიგრანტის პირადი სივრცე (Emigrants' personal space)</u> <u>ძალა ერთობაშია ქართველი ემიგრანტები (Strength in Unity Georgian Emigrants)</u> <u>ღია წყაროების სააგენტო (Open Source Agency)</u>
Terjola Municipality	Guardian.ge	კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი (Kakha Kaladze Tbilisi Mayor)		თავისუფალი სივრცე (Free Space)

ty City Hall		გიორგი მარგველაშვილი გისმენთ, მეგობრებო (Giorgi Margvelashvili Listens You Friends)		პროტესტი (Protest) ღია წყაროების სააგენტო (Open Source Agency)
Khobi Municipality City Hall	Stv.ge	კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი (Kakha Kaladze Tbilisi Mayor)	2. <u>ეს საქართველოა (It's Georgia)</u> - closed group apparently affiliated with the Alliance of Patriots	12. <u>ჩემი სოხუმი (CYXYMI)</u> -closed group
National Screening Center	For.ge			13. <u>პოზიტივი (Positive)</u>

“ეს საქართველოა” that was indicated in the information provided by the Khobi Municipality and where Stv.ge is tasked to place information is a closed Facebook group apparently affiliated with the Alliance of Patriots party. The group uses the photo depicting a protest rally with the flags of the Alliance of Patriots party as its cover photo. One of its admins, Dare Shengelia frequently shares the posts of Alliance of Patriots and its affiliated Obieqtivi TV to her own Facebook page.



The list of Facebook groups provided by the Akhalkalaki City Hall also involves a closed group “ერთიანი ნაციონალური მოძრაობა 2015 (the United National Movement 2015)”, where Guardian.ge is tasked to place information. Rati Cxomelidze is its admin. The last post is dated 2016, whereas the profile contains few photos and information.



Guardian.ge news agency was registered at the public registry on June 15, 2006³⁰. Malkhaz Oniani is a 100% shareholder of the news agency. Malvina Tugushi serves as the director. Tugushi is a shareholder of a number of businesses (Mehr Sam Successful LLC³¹, Euromax Pharmaceuticals LLC³², Geopack Holding LLC³³, Angel Winds LLC³⁴, R.K.@M LLC³⁵) with Iranian, Indian and Pakistani business partners. Malkhaz Oniani also owns 50% of shares of Iverioni news agency³⁶ and the remaining 50% is owned by the founder of the news agency, Zaur Nachkebia³⁷. Iverioni was founded in autumn 2012. Previously it was named news agency Iveroni and was financed by Russian-based Georgian businessman Mindia Gulua. Iveroni news agency, like its successor Iverioni, was led by Zaur Nachkebia³⁸. According to the study conducted by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), Nachkebia is affiliated with pro-Russian media outlet Geworld.ge.

Administrative bodies signed GEL 50,766 and GEL 39,997 contracts with Guardian.ge on providing information services in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

For.ge was registered at the public registry in 2010 using the name of “Kavshiri Presa – Sakartvelo³⁹.” Rozeta Jgamaia, Giorgi Iakobashvili and Besarion Gabunia are its founders. Rozeta Jgamaia and Giorgi Iakobashvili – both are members of the news agency’s board - together with Ia Metreveli and Ioseb Manjavidze established a non-governmental organization “Davasrulut” (Let’s Finish) NNLE on August 7, 2020 with the only goal to finish the National Movement⁴⁰. The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) has revealed three Facebook pages („არქივი • Archive“, „პოლიტიკური მოთვალთვალები“, „დავასრულეთ“) affiliated with the organization “Davasrulut” and involved in a coordinated discrediting campaign targeting the opposition⁴¹. Further, the identification data of the same organization are provided in the information about the entity that ordered the ad.

³⁰ Guardian.ge, extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/34CuvVR>

³¹ Extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/3d4hxSX>

³² Extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/34uM74k>

³³ Extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/2Sw7rAG>

³⁴ Extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/34sMbRY>

³⁵ Extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/34sLSGO>

³⁶ <http://iverioni.com.ge/>


³⁷ Iverioni’s extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/2HbTTID>

³⁸ <https://idfi.ge/public/upload/Meri/Russian%20Influence%20on%20NGOs%20and%20Media.pdf>

³⁹ Extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/2YEmCLG>

⁴⁰ <https://formulanews.ge/News/35102>

⁴¹ The organization “Davasrulut” is behind the sponsored discrediting Facebook campaign <https://bit.ly/3IRKX9U>



დავასრულეთ

@davasrutot5

12 მოწონება • ბლოგერი

გვერდის გამჭვირვალობა იხილეთ მეტი

📅 გვერდი შეიქმნა 18 სექ. 2020

📝 გვერდის სახელი არ შეიცვალა

📍 ამ გვერდის მმართველი ადამიანების ძირითადი ქვეყნის/რეგიონის მდებარეობა მოიცავს: Georgia (2)

გვერდის მიერ სოციალური პრობლემების, არჩევნების ან პოლიტიკის შესახებ რეკლამებზე...

4 აგვ. · 2020 - 5 ოქტ. 2020
საქართველო

≤100 \$


დანაზარელების დეტალების ნახვა

გვერდის მიერ ახლახან დაზარალებული თანხა სოციალური პრობლემების, არჩევნების ან პოლიტიკის შესახებ...

7 დღე · 29 სექ - 5 ოქტ. 2020
საქართველო

≤100 \$

დანაზარელების დეტალების ნახვა



არქივი • Archive

@arkivi1

16,378 მოწონება • პირადი ბლოგი

გვერდის გამჭვირვალობა იხილეთ მეტი

📅 გვერდი შეიქმნა 14 იანვარი. 2020

📝 გვერდის სახელი შეიცვალა 1 დრო

📍 ამ გვერდის მმართველი ადამიანების ძირითადი ქვეყნის/რეგიონის მდებარეობა მოიცავს: Georgia (4)

გვერდის მიერ სოციალური პრობლემების, არჩევნების ან პოლიტიკის შესახებ რეკლამებზე...

4 აგვ. · 2020 - 5 ოქტ. 2020
საქართველო

347 \$


დანაზარელების დეტალების ნახვა

გვერდის მიერ ახლახან დაზარალებული თანხა სოციალური პრობლემების, არჩევნების ან პოლიტიკის შესახებ...

7 დღე · 29 სექ - 5 ოქტ. 2020
საქართველო

196 \$

დანაზარელების დეტალების ნახვა



პოლიტიკური მოთვალთვალები

@politikurimotvairale

17,893 მოწონება • პირადი ბლოგი

გვერდის გამჭვირვალობა იხილეთ მეტი

📅 გვერდი შეიქმნა 13 იანვარი. 2020

📝 გვერდის სახელი არ შეიცვალა

📍 ამ გვერდის მმართველი ადამიანების ძირითადი ქვეყნის/რეგიონის მდებარეობა მოიცავს: Georgia (3)

გვერდის მიერ სოციალური პრობლემების, არჩევნების ან პოლიტიკის შესახებ რეკლამებზე...

4 აგვ. · 2020 - 5 ოქტ. 2020
საქართველო

≤100 \$

დანაზარელების დეტალების ნახვა

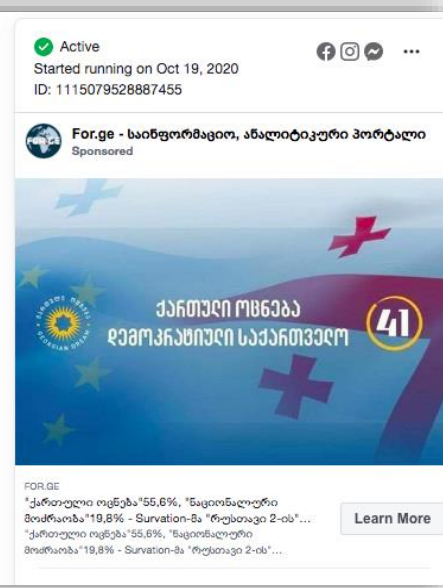
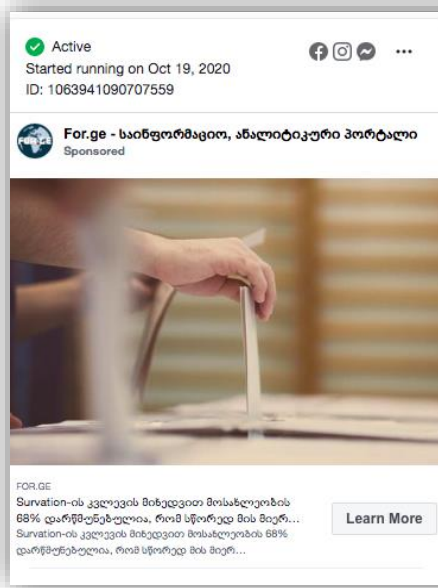
გვერდის მიერ ახლახან დაზარალებული თანხა სოციალური პრობლემების, არჩევნების ან პოლიტიკის შესახებ...

7 დღე · 29 სექ - 5 ოქტ. 2020
საქართველო

≤100 \$

დანაზარელების დეტალების ნახვა

For.ge signed GEL 13,988 and GEL 20,410 contracts with budgetary organizations in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The posts portraying the government's activities in a positive light were published as a sponsored post on For.ge, for instance: the statement by EU High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell headlined "Georgia shows democratic force, economic development; the European Union will continue to support Georgia today and always"; Rustavi 2-commissioned public opinion poll on elections, where Georgian Dream takes the lead with 55.6%.



For.ge and its affiliated Facebook pages and groups (Yellow Facts, Tbilisi news, თავისუფლება, პოეზია Front news, პოლიტიკი), that have signed budget contracts, as well as the page targeting government opponents (დაგასრულოთ) spread the video discrediting civil society organizations with the headline “How the National Movement grabbed the non-governmental sector” in a coordinated manner. For.ge⁴² was the first to spread the video trying to portray Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Transparency International Georgia, ISFED, EPRC, MDF and other organizations as orchestrated by the National Movement. The posts published on Facebook pages of For.ge and “დაგასრულოთ” are sponsored. Pro-government Imedi TV⁴³ and Post TV, as well as news agencies PIA, Marshallpress, reportiori and Kartuli Azri provided one-sided coverage of the film created by “დაგასრულოთ.”

Gia Iakobashvili who was elected as a member of the Georgian Public Broadcaster's Board of Trustees in 2017 is known for his homophobic and insulting public comments⁴⁴.



⁴² <https://bit.ly/3dJRD7o>

⁴³ <https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/63641/natsionalebis-mier-mitatsebuli-mesame-seqtori?fbclid=IwAR2cyC0qTLo9fYIRR7PINpIJKJli-Op678T90DqF0jCluuHQYvyQOUvMMw#!?type=1&page=1>

⁴⁴ Liberali (6 July 2017), “Who is a new member of GPB’s Board of Trustees and why did the Parliament elect him?” <http://liberali.ge/articles/view/30258/vin-aris-sazmaus-sameurveo-sabchos-akhali-tseври-da-ratom-airchia-is-parlamentma>

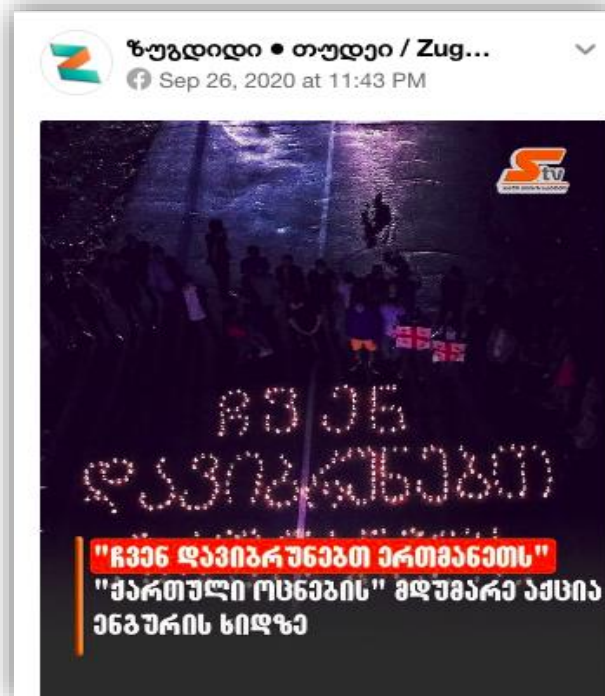
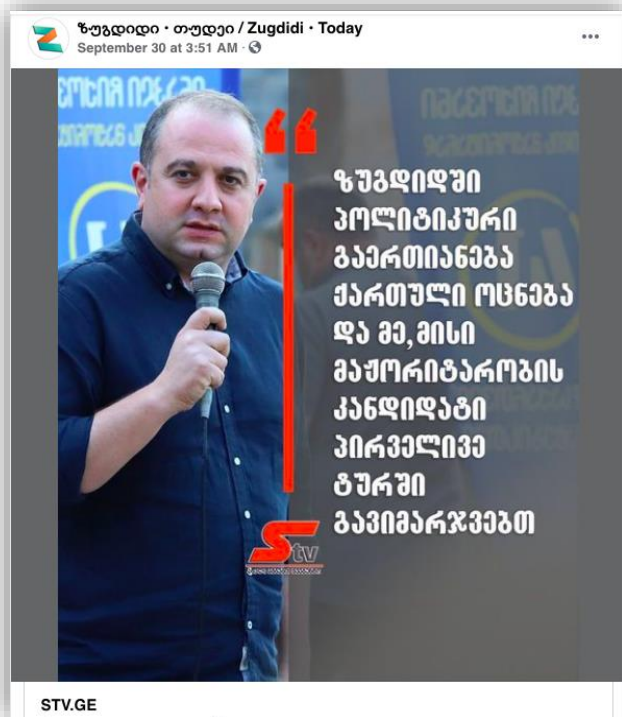
Stv.ge – Samegrelo media organization (Stv.ge) was registered at the public registry on September 20, 2012⁴⁵. Malkhaz Basilaia is its director. As a result of reorganization carried out in February 2019, the organization changed the name of its website and currently it is operating with the name Stv.ge. Previously, it operated with the name www.smo.ge.

Stv.ge signed GEL 10,650 and GEL 17,150 contracts with budgetary organizations in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

During the pre-election period, Samegrelo media organization is actively covering the campaign meetings held by the ruling party's Zugdidi majoritarian candidate, Irakli Chikovani. According to CrowdTangle, the leading content discovery and social monitoring platform, from September 1 to October 18, a total of 737 interactions can be searched about Chikovani on Facebook pages of Stv.ge and [ზუგდიდი • თუდღი / Zugdidi • Today](https://www.facebook.com/ZugdidiToday) and most materials are positive or neutral.

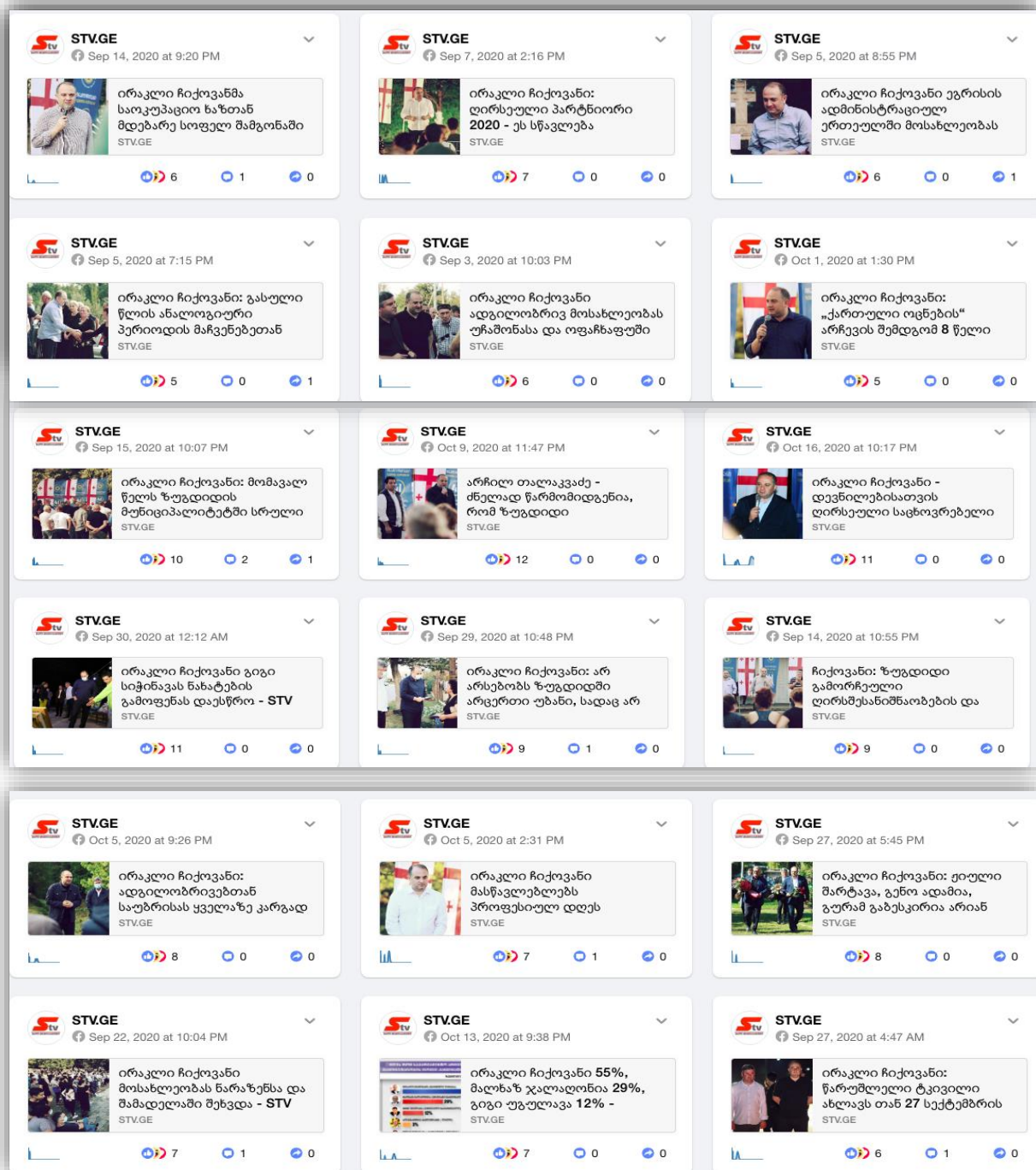


At the same time, videos and infographics created by Stv.ge are frequently posted on Facebook page Zugdidi Today. The infographics below quotes Georgian Dream's candidate as saying that the ruling party and its majoritarian candidate will win in the very first round; the video depicts the ruling party's event in connection with the fall of Sokhumi, also featuring Georgian Dream's majoritarian candidate⁴⁶.



⁴⁵ Extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/3gtZOPP>

⁴⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/721504154952934/posts/1140662696370409>



Along with covering the ruling party's candidate in a positive light, Stv.ge posts materials discrediting opposition candidates with the following headlines: "Hunter for cows and budget thief" – social media reactions to Gigi Ugulava's nomination,⁴⁷ "Prior to meeting with his voters, the National Movement candidate goes shopping with his wife"⁴⁸, "Village trustees claim that Lelo does not need advocacy"⁴⁹, "The National Movement names quarantined Malkhaz Jalagonia as its majoritarian candidate in Zugdidi"⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ <https://bit.ly/34LiFbW>

⁴⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/1240421019315214/posts/3660600780630547>

⁴⁹ <https://bit.ly/3nZjCjN>

⁵⁰ <https://bit.ly/3jf3sDK>



2.6. Budget contracts with media outlets using hate speech, fanning anti-Western sentiments and spreading disinformation

Like in previous years, administrative bodies do not have clear-cut criteria⁵¹ for selecting beneficiary media outlets; neither are their decisions based on audience research or the needs of the target audience. Furthermore, a policy of non-discrimination, which is envisaged by recommendation No.7 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)⁵² and which recommends the CoE member states to respect anti-discrimination approaches, is not promoted either.

Like in 2014-2018, in 2019, budget organizations continued to sign contracts with media outlets known for their anti-Western editorial policy, spreading disinformation and using hate speech. Among these media outlets are:

⁵¹ MDF (2016) Practice of allocating budgetary resources among media for the release of information and advertisement, 2016, http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/library/31/file/eng/MDF_TI-ENG.pdf

⁵² Paragraph 9, p.6, paragraph 16, p.7, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-7-revised-on-national-legislatio/16808b5aae>

1. Newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika (55,525) notorious for spreading homophobia, conspiracy theories and idolizing Stalin. Though to a lesser extent compared to previous years, the media outlet still spreads anti-Western content.
2. Online media outlets Kartuli Azri and Reportioti (30,019) known for spreading disinformation and conspiracy theories about the coronavirus and 5G technology, as well as for discrediting the government's opponents⁵³.
3. Marshalpress (12,806) is involved in the campaigns discrediting the government's opponents⁵⁴ and simultaneously it is a frequent source of disinformation about COVID-19 and other issues⁵⁵.

Table 2.10. Budget contracts with media outlets using hate speech, fanning anti-Western sentiments and spreading disinformation

Media outlet	Price of service contract	Budget organization
Newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika	55,525	National Environmental Agency; Roads Department of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure; Georgian Academy of Agricultural Sciences; Ministry of Finance and Economy of Adjara Autonomous Republic; Ministry of Education and Culture of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia; Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission; Sakpatenti; National Agency of Mines and other subordinate or local government services
Reportiori (qartuliazri.ge, cnobisfurceli.ge ⁵⁶)	30,019	Special Penitentiary Service; Academy of Ministry of Finance; Saburtalo Municipal Government (Gangeoba); Office of the Minister of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia for Building Trust and Reconciliation; Khobi Municipality City Hall; STC Delta; Sokhumi State University and other subordinate or local government services
Marshalpress news agency	12,806	Special Penitentiary Service; Defense Institution Building School; National Food Agency; My Lawyer NNLE; Adigeni Municipality City Hall; Keda Municipality

Sakartvelos Respublika. Various central and local government bodies signed contracts worth GEL 55,525 with the newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika (see table 2.1). Besides direct contracts with various public

⁵³ <http://mythdetector.ge/ka/myth/sakhelisuplebo-da-antiliberaluri-jgupebis-organizebuli-kampania-respublikelebis-cinaaghmdag>

⁵⁴ <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/pro-government-pages-share-fake-account-using-ruruas-name-coordinated-manner>

⁵⁵ <http://mythdetector.ge/en/profile/marshalpress>

⁵⁶ cnobisfurceli.ge is indicated in the contract of the Ministry of Corrections of Georgia with Reportioti and Kartuli Azri. The page, however, is not currently available.

agencies, in 2019, like in previous years, Sakartvelos Respublika also received budgetary allocations through the mediation of Kviris Palitra LLC. In particular, Kviris Palitra LLC won the tender on information services announced by the National Agency of Mines. However, as seen from the delivery and reception act, advertising materials were published in Sakartvelos Respublika (contract price – GEL 33,086).

მიღება-ჩაბარების აქტი
N19-010401/36

ქ. თბილისი 15.10.19 წ.

წინამდებარე აქტი შედგენილია მასზედ, რომ სსიპ „წიაღის ეროვნული სააგენტო“-სა („შემსყიდველი“) და შპს „კვირის პალიტრა“-ს („მიმწოდებელი“) შორის 2019 წლის 4 იანვარს გაფორმებული „სახელმწიფო შესყიდვის შესახებ“ N19-010401 ხელშეკრულებისა და სატენდერო დოკუმენტაციის შესაბამისად მიმწოდებელმა შემსყიდველს გაუწია შემდეგი სახის მომსახურება: ბეჭდურ პრესაში (გაზეთი „საქართველოს რესპუბლიკა“) განცხადებების გამოქვეყნება, კერძოდ:

2019 წლის 12 ოქტომბრის გაზეთში ფართობი 9000 სმ² X 0,1270 =1143 (ერთი ათას ას ორმოცდასამი ლარი) დღგ-ს გარეშე.

მომსახურების საერთო ღირებულება შეადგენს ფართობი 9000 სმ² X 0,1270 =1143 (ერთი ათას ას ორმოცდასამი ლარი) დღგ-ს გარეშე.

ჩაბარა:

შპს „კვირის პალიტრა“-ს

დირექტორი: ნიკოლოზ გაბელაია

მიღა: LTD KVRIS PALITRA Digitally signed by LTD KVRIS PALITRA Date: 2019.10.22 16:34:55 +04'00'

სსიპ „წიაღის ეროვნული სააგენტო“-ს
ლიცენზირების დეპარტამენტის უფროსი ირაკლი გელაშვილი

The newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika publishes homophobic content with the following headlines: “Pride March, which does not roar like a lion, but rather screams like a jackal;” “Hide the men, pederasts are coming;” an op-ed “Do not dub depravity as a human right” in a section “No to LGBT depravity;” “Moral Pederasty” in a section “Torrent of Depravity” and so on.



პრაიდ-მარში, რომელის ლოშივით კი არ ბუხუნებს, აბანოილი ტურასავით კივის

მინდა, ასე თქვი, გინდა – ისე, რუსეთის დუმის დეპუტატ სერგეი გავრილოვის მიერ საქართველოს პარლამენტის სპიკერის სავარძლის „ანექსირებამ“ და ამას მოყოლილმა „ზოგადქართულმა“ ხმაური-ანმა პროტესტმა, რასაც საბოლოოდ ჩასაფრებული ოპოზიციის ლამის პარლამენტში შეჭრა და ხელი-სუფლების გაღმა, მარილზე გასვლა მოჰყვა, დროებით თავიდან აგვარიდა არანაკლებ ღრიალა (და კი-ვანა) დემონსტრაცია და იქ „ქართველ გმირთა მხარე-მცდელების“ გაშლა.

თბილისის კარზე ცისფერ-ვარდისფერი ლგბტ იყო მომდგარი და თვალებს ბილნად აუუფუნებდა. ოღონდ ეს ის ლგბტ აღარ იყო, რომელიც გეახსოვს: მფრთხალი, მორიდებით მახვენარი. ლგბტ-მ უკვე მოიცილა ლედის ფოთოლი ნაჯაფი უკანალიდან, რაც მთავა-რია, ფლანგები გაიმაგრა ტიქყინა, ტელევიკ-რანზე გამოჩენას დახარბებული არასამთავ-რობოებით, სულგაციდული პოლიტიკანებით, „ახალი ფორმაციის“ – თვალში თითქმის საყურისანი ქაბუკებითა და მოხულიგნო ქა-ლი შვილებით.

ნ. 4 გ.



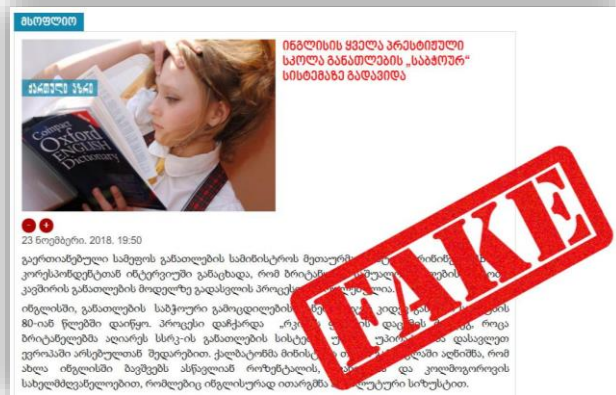
The weekly newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika was founded in 1918. During the Soviet period, it was named Communist. Presently, Sakartvelos Respublika is published by Tanadgoma – 1, LLC with its 100% shares owned by Marina Kandelaki.

Kartuli Azri and Reportiori. Contracts worth GEL 30,019 were signed with Kartuli Azri and Reportiori in 2019. Both media outlets are spreading conspiracy theories⁵⁷ about microchips (“The Pope called on people not to resist microchipping”), coronavirus and 5G⁵⁸ (“South Korean population started to destroy 5G towers”), as well as disinformation about gay pride (“Sandro Bregadze: gay pride is planned in Tbilisi on September 9!”) and Soviet education system (“All prestigious British schools have moved to “Soviet” education center,” according to Russian-language Правда-TV).



⁵⁷<http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/what-scheme-was-used-spread-conspiracy-theories-about-pope-francis-and-chips>

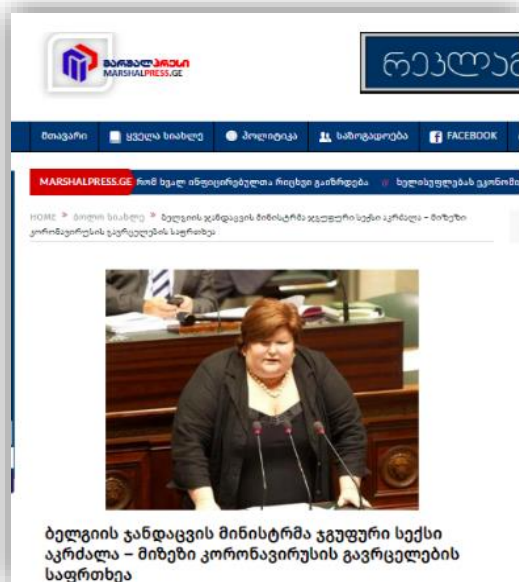
⁵⁸<http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/does-5g-pose-threat-and-technology-linked-covid-19>



Reportiori.ge belongs to Reportioti LLC, which is owned by Nugzar Popkhadze (50%), former secretary of the central committee of the communist party and former director of State TV and Radio Corporation, and Giorgi Mamatsashvili (50%), journalist of Georgian tabloid Asaval-Dasavali. Giorgi Mamatsashvili is a 100% shareholder of Kartuli Azri.

Marshalpress. The news agency signed contracts worth GEL 12,806 in 2019.

Marshalpress spreads disinformation about the coronavirus⁵⁹ and 5G (“Belgium’s Minister of Health bans sexual intercourse between three or more people – coronavirus is the main reason”, “What do 5G networks and Huawei have to do with pandemic? – Statement by the U.S. Secretary of Defense⁶⁰”), as well as against the government’s opponents⁶¹ (“Zhorika Rurua was heroized and compared to Merab Kostava”).



⁵⁹ <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/has-group-sex-been-banned-belgium-due-coronavirus>

⁶⁰ <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/what-did-us-secretary-defense-say-about-5g-and-huawei>

⁶¹ <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/pro-government-pages-share-fake-account-using-ruruas-name-coordinated-manner>



Marshalpress LLC was founded in 2015 and 100% of its shares were owned by Otar Stepanishvili, former Info 9 journalist. Presently, 51% and 49% of shares are owned by Luka Antidze and Mariam Margvelani, respectively.

2.7. Budget contracts with media outlets affiliated with pro-Kremlin propaganda platform Sputnik

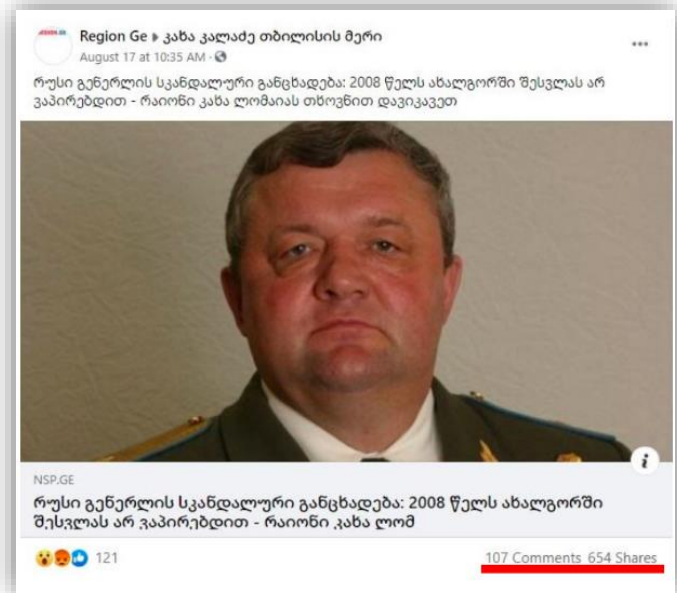
Like in previous years, various ministries and their subordinate agencies concluded contracts worth GEL 38,993 on dissemination of information with online portal Newspress.ge, NSP, including GEL 11,520 contract envisaged cooperation with NSP-affiliated region.ge.

Media outlet	Price of service contract	Budget organization
Newspress.ge, nsp region.ge	38 993	Special Penitentiary Service; Laboratory of Ministry of Agriculture; Finance Ministry's Service Agency; Ministry of Finance and Economy of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia; Defense Institution Building School; Didube Municipal Government (Gamgeoba); Senaki Municipality City Hall; Adjara Cultural Heritage Preservation Agency; Financial and Analytical Service and other subordinate or local government services.

If in previous years the above mentioned media outlets were actively popularizing various projects implemented by pro-Kremlin propaganda platform Sputnik (for example, training on fake news organized

by Anna Belkina, head of RT press office and deputy editor in chief)⁶² about which the Media Development Foundation has written in its earlier reports⁶³, in 2019, Sputnik's propaganda materials were shared less frequently; however, the same outlets again refer to Sputnik as their source⁶⁴.

It is worth noting that on August 17, 2020, NSP.ge and region.ge revitalized the 2012 archival material of Saerto Gazeti in a section "News Retro Media," promoting Russian General Vyacheslav Borisov's version about unleashing the 2008 war. Borisov claims that Russians did not intend to begin the war and they occupied Akhalkalaki only upon the request of then Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia, Kakha Gombakidze⁶⁵.



Aleko Chubinidze, who according to IDFI's data for 2015⁶⁶, worked for Sputnik-Georgia, was seen during the events organized by this media outlet in 2019. Russia Segodnia, founder of Sputnik, posts an announcement on its website about the March 26, 2019 event,⁶⁷ according to which Chubinidze was expected to participate in a roundtable discussion "Information space of Georgia – how to protect yourself against negative."

⁶² RT code: Top manager talked to journalists about "fake news" and "haters" <https://sputnik-georgia.com/reviews/20190608/245524059/RT-kodeqsi-topmenejeri-Jurnalists-feik-niusebsa-da-heiterebze-esaubra.html>

⁶³ http://mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/library/127/file/eng/Eng_financial_transparency.pdf

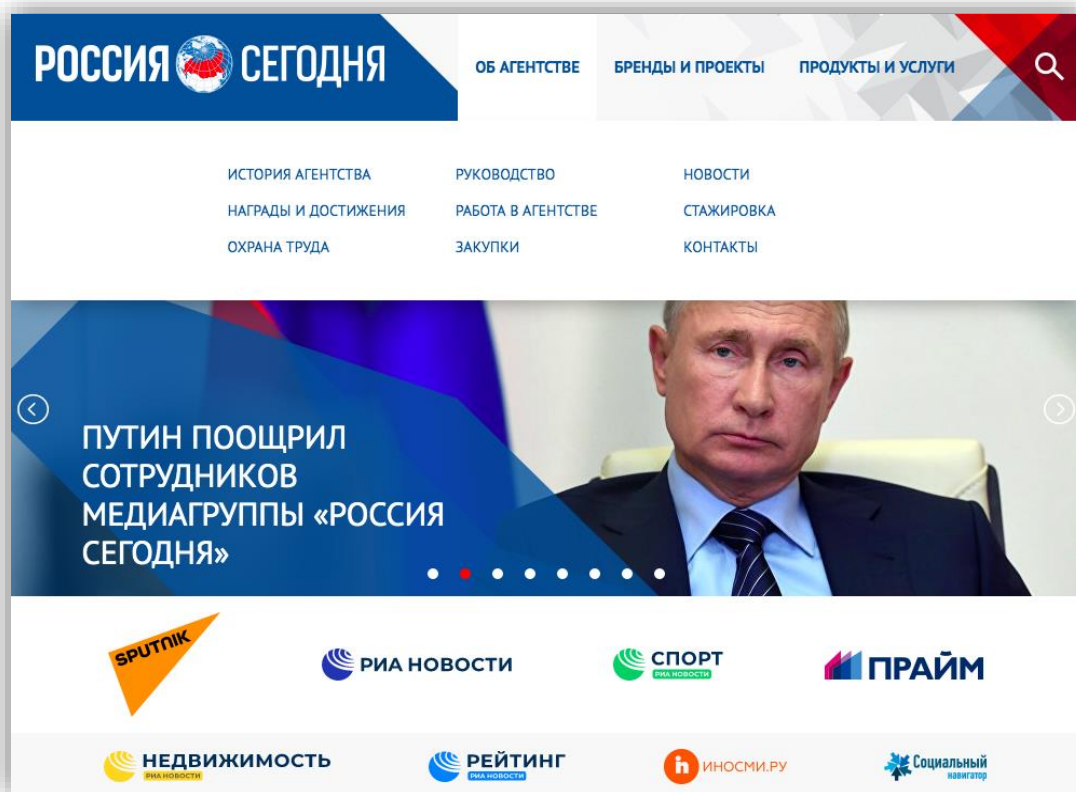
⁶⁴ <http://region.ge/index.php?do=search> <https://bit.ly/3keot2A>

⁶⁵ <https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/who-vyacheslav-borisov-and-who-disseminates-his-2012-statement-about-russo-georgian-war>

⁶⁶ Damoukidebloba.com, Jule 24, 2015 "Who works for Sputnik?"

http://damoukidebloba.ge/c/news/vin_mushaobs?fbclid=IwAR02ApyFaMr5Yds7XEnAfOIeU2Z-i36C1ARQmGRCQ25hyktt6kMOGAzfe8

⁶⁷ http://pressmia.ru/pressclub_foreign/20190326/952290586.html <https://archive.ph/7ue4m>





Круглый стол на тему: "Информационное пространство Грузии: как защититься от негатива?". Медиаэксперты отмечают, что в информационном пространстве Грузии нарастает агрессия. Все больше негативных новостей в СМИ и на телевидении: фильмах и ток-шоу. Как это влияет на поведение людей, их состояние? Какова государственная политика в сфере информации?

Участники:

- публицист, директор Дома-музея Смирновых Байя АМАШУКЕЛИ;
- директор информационного агентства NewsDay Автандил ОТИНАШВИЛИ;
- директор информационного агентства NewsPress Алеко ЧУБИНИДЗЕ;
- журналист Мераб ХАЧИДЗЕ.

Training of SputnikPro project on fake news and anti-crisis PR was held in June 2019 during which Anna Belkina, head of RT press office and deputy editor in chief, talked to journalists about fake news. The following persons participated in the discussion: Aleko Chubinidze (NewsPress), Vaso Kapanadze (NewsDay), Taniel Gagnidze (newspaper Georgia and World), Zaza Davitaia (newspaper Asaval-Dasavali), Koba Bendeliani (Interpressnews), as well as Malkhaz Gulashvili, President of Media Holding Georgian

Times, and Anzor Bitsadze, member of the political council of the United Georgia – Democratic Movement party⁶⁸.

2018	2019
	 <p>© SPUTNIK / VLADIMIR UMIKASHVILI</p> <p>ანა ბელკინა. SputnikPro თბილისში - შეხვედრა მედია-მენეჯერებთან, რედაქტორებთან და ბლოგერებთან</p>

⁶⁸ <https://sputnik-georgia.com/reviews/20190608/245524059/RT-kodeqsi-topmenejeri-Jurnalistsbs-feik-niusebsa-da-heiterebze-esaubra.html>