



Financial Transparency of Media

2016

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INTRODUCTION

The intent behind the present study is to explore the financial revenues of media organizations as well as to probe the practice of allocating public funds for advertisement and dissamination of information in media outlets.

The report is based on desk research of official information received from public institutions upon request, on accessible electronic data available at the web-portal of Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) and State Procurement Agency's database, as well as media reports.

The first part reviews the declared revenues of broadcast media, followed by second part on the practice of allocation of public funds by budgetary organizations for the dissemination of information and advertising in media. The media outlets inciting hate speech and anti-Western sentiments and receiving budgetary contracts are presented separately.

The report covers the period of 2016.

MAIN FINDINGS

Following trends were observed during 2016:

- Revenues of Georgian TV channels increased by GEL 10.8 million in 2016 compared to the 2015. Rustavi 2 still dominated on media market. Imedi TV fell behind Rustavi 2 by 16.2%.
- Although revenues of large national televisions increased, their share on media market declined compared to previous years, because advertising amounts were distributed among other small players.
- Out of TV channels with the highest reported revenues, Obieqtivi is the only television, which received the greatest share of its revenues from donations (38.3%).
- Revenues of radio stations declined by GEL 1.2 million in 2016.
- Although, compared to 2015, in 2016, budgetary organizations' contracts with traditional media organizations was cut down by 2 970 119 lari, the cost of contracts with online media outlets almost doubled in value.
- From the point of TV channels the largest budgetary service contracts were awarded to 'Rustavi 2' and 'Imedi', almost similar in value, similarly from regional television it was 'Qvemo Qartli'.
- From radio organizations 'Imedi' is in the lead receiving the largest share of the state budget service contracts and from online media it is the the outlets included in 'Palitra' media holding.
- In Print media budget service contracts for the largest amount were signed with 'Kviris Palitra', which is again part of 'Palitra' media holding, followed, closely by the newspaper 'Rezonansi', from the regional printing media the pole position goes to 'Literaturuli Meskheti'.
- Budget organizations continue to enter into contracts with such media outlets that use hate speech and fan anti-Western sentiments. In contrast to the previous period, the contractors, in 2016, included an openly pro-Russian edition "Tbilisi 24" which has ties with the pro-Russian political party Centrists. This edition is contracted by the Ministry of Corrections of Georgia for the latter's information campaign.

1. Declared Revenues of Broadcast Media

Summary: Revenues of Georgian TV channels increased by GEL 10.8 million in 2016 compared to the 2015. Rustavi 2 still dominated on media market. Imedi TV fell behind Rustavi 2 by 16.2%. Although revenues of large national televisions increased, their share on media market declined compared to previous years, because advertising amounts were distributed among other small players. Out of TV channels with the highest reported revenues, Obieqtivi is the only television, which received the greatest share of its revenues from donations (38.3%). Revenues of radio stations declined by GEL 1.2 million in 2016.

Television. According¹ to the data of Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC), in 2016 Georgian TV channels reported an accumulated GEL 95.7 mln of revenues. During 2015, GEL 84.9 mln was reported that was by GEL 10.8 mln less.

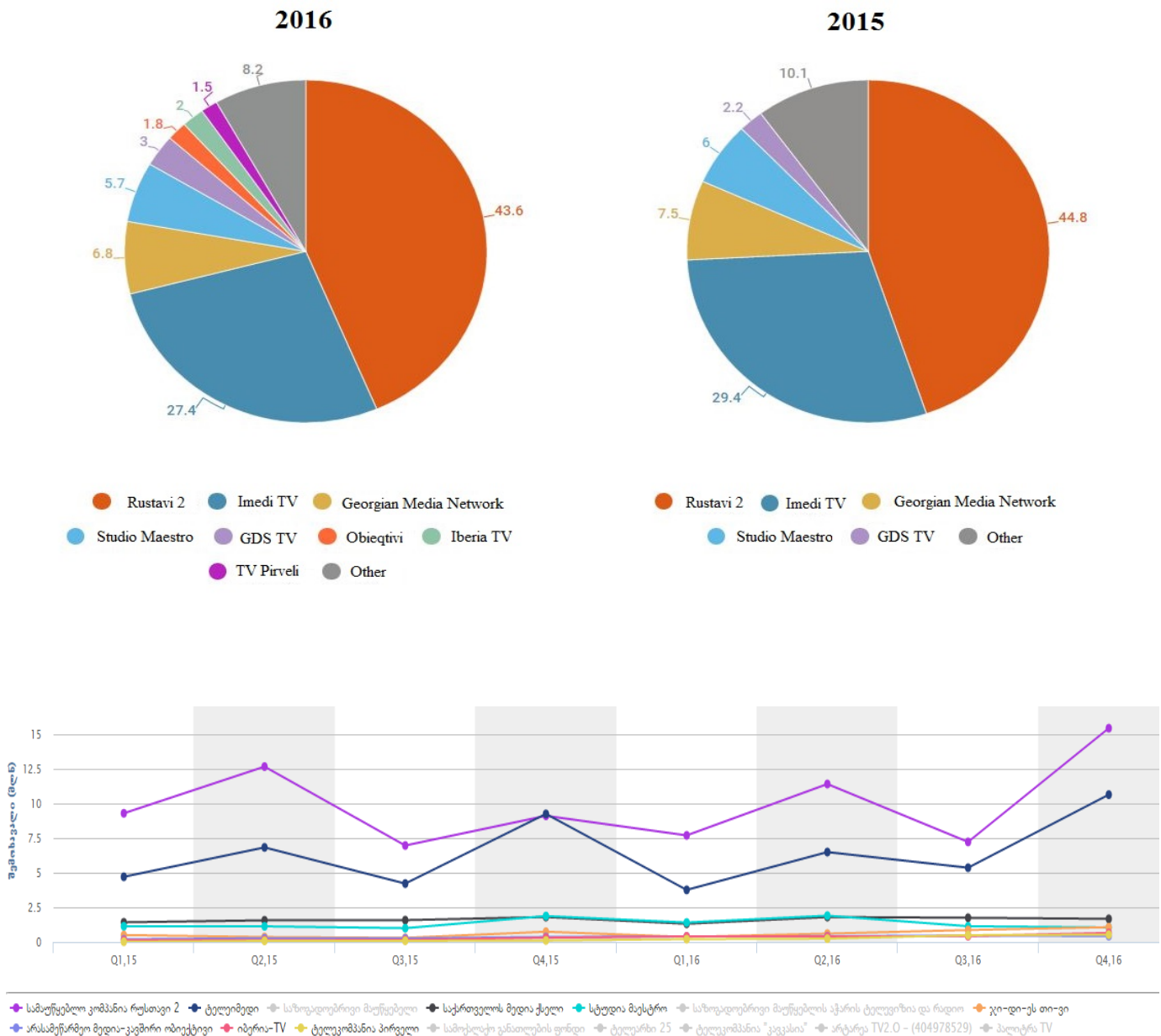
In 2016, Rustavi 2 still dominated on media market. Its revenues increased to GEL 41.7 mln in 2016 that is by GEL 3.7 mln more compared to 2015. Imedi TV falls behind Rustavi 2 by 16.2%. A share of Imedi TV, the second largest TV station, in total revenues increased by GEL 1.2 mln (5%) to GEL 26.2 mln. Georgian Media Network, whose revenues increased mostly at the expense of sale of content, comes next with 6.8%. Its revenues increased by 2.6% y/y to GEL 6 520 873.18.

Revenues of Maestro TV increased by 7.1% (GEL 5 487 945 in 2016); GDS also received increased revenues (by GEL 1 005 099.5) that is by 53.2% more compared to 2015. The both televisions received most of their revenues from TV advertising. It should be noted that GDS received 66% of its revenues (GEL 1 927 534.36) in the third and fourth quarters (July 1 – December 31) with a share of advertising (GEL 1 368 257.23) amounting to 70%.

Although the revenues of eight TV channels with the highest reported revenues increased in 2016, their share on the market declined compared to 2015, because the amounts were distributed among other players. In particular, the share of Rustavi 2 (2015 – 44.8 %, 2016 – 43.6%), Imedi (2015 – 29.4%, 2016 – 27.4%), Georgia Media Network (2015 – 7.5%, 2016 – 6.8%) and Maestro (2015 – 6%, 2016 – 5.7%) declined on the market compared to the previous year.

¹ Last accessed January 31, 2016

Chart 1.1. Revenues of Televisions for 2015 and 2016 by Media Outlets



As Chart 1.1 shows, in 2016 relatively small TV channels gained foothold on the market as separate subjects. These TV channels are: Iberia TV – 2%; Media Union Obieqtivi – 1.8%; TV Pirveli– 1.5%. Total revenues of other televisions, also involving regional media, amounted to 8.2%. Sharp increase in advertising revenues of TV Pirveli (by GEL 1.18 mln – 1036.6%) may be connected with the launch of political programs on the channel (2015 – GEL 113 587.79; 2016 – GEL 1 291 060.94).

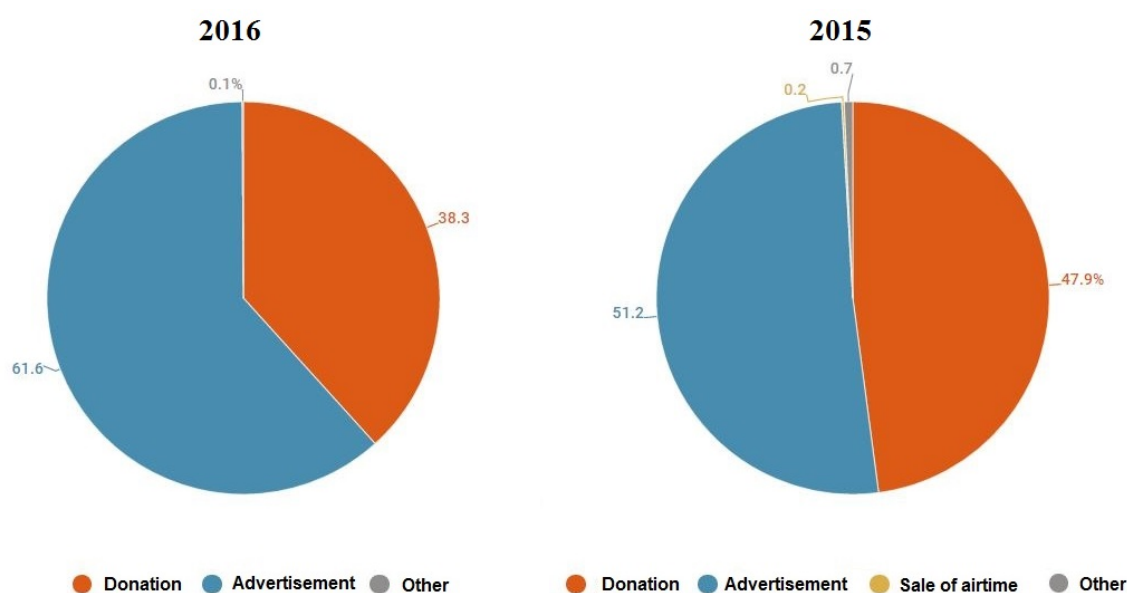
In 2016, TV Pirveli appeared among eight largest televisions in terms of revenues. It should be noted that in 2016 revenues of Tabula TV halved (declined by 54%) to GEL 516 795.42.

Table 1.1. Increase in TV Revenues

Televisions	2015	2016	Growth
TV Pirveli	283 342.03	1 454 392,85	413%
Iberia TV	747 482.28	1 874 729,23	150%
Non-entrepreneurial Media Union Obieqtivi	1 080 873.27	1 691 397	56%

Obieqtivi TV donations. Commercials, sponsorship and sale of airtime are the main sources of revenues for televisions. Among those eight TV channels with the highest reported revenues, which are shown on Chart 1.1, **Media Union Obieqtivi is the only television**, where a significant share of revenues comes from **donations** (38.3%). Donations received by the TV channel in 2015 amounted to 48%, while in 2016 this figure equaled to 38.3%. 8.5% out of this amount was donated by the owner of Obieqtivi TV and 91.5% - by other persons.

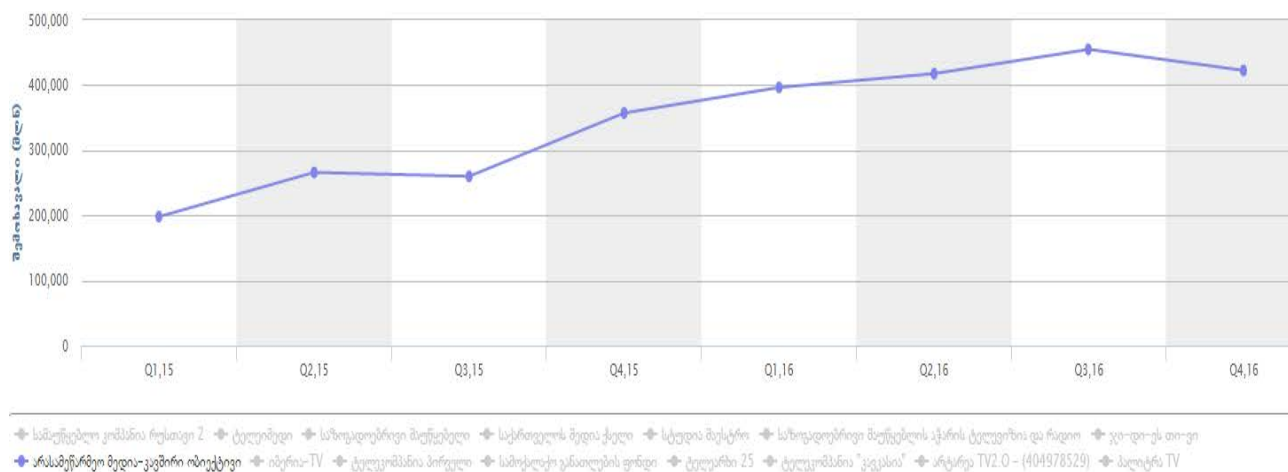
Chart 1.2. Sources of Incomes of Media Union Obieqtivi during 2015 and 2016



It should also be noted that total revenues of Obieqtivi TV channel increased 1.6-fold and equaled to GEL 1 691 397 y/y in 2016, while a share of donations increased by GEL 129 672 y/y in 2016; however, a share of donations in total revenues declined by 9.6% and advertising revenues doubled (increased 1.9-fold) that

may be explained by the 2016 parliamentary elections and inflow of political ads on the market. Media Union Obieqtivi is affiliated with opposition Alliance of Patriots party².

Chart 1.3. Dynamics of Growth of Obieqtivi's Revenues in 2015 and 2016



Media Union Obieqtivi	2015	2016
Advertisement	553 561 GEL	1 042 084 GEL
Donations	517 975 GEL	647 647 GEL
Sale of Airtime	2 119 GEL	0
Other	7 218,27 GEL	1 666 GEL
SUM	1 080 873,27 GEL	1 691 397 GEL

Georgian Public Broadcaster and Adjarian TV and Radio. According³ to the data of Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC), in 2016 Georgian Public Broadcaster reported GEL 40.7 mln of revenues. Revenues received through sponsorship equaled to 3.6%, advertisement – 0.8%; technical services – 0.2%; other revenues – 95.3% (GEL 38768651.47).

According to the information provided by Georgian Public Broadcaster, other revenues include: budgetary funds, grants (programs), liabilities (National Bureau of Enforcement), deposit interests, lease revenues, received penalties and archival services.

² <http://mediameter.ge/ge/media-profiles/obieqtivi>

³ Last accessed february 23, 2016

As for Adjarian TV and Radio, in 2016 its revenues equaled to GEL 6.3 mln (GEL 6 313 269.76).

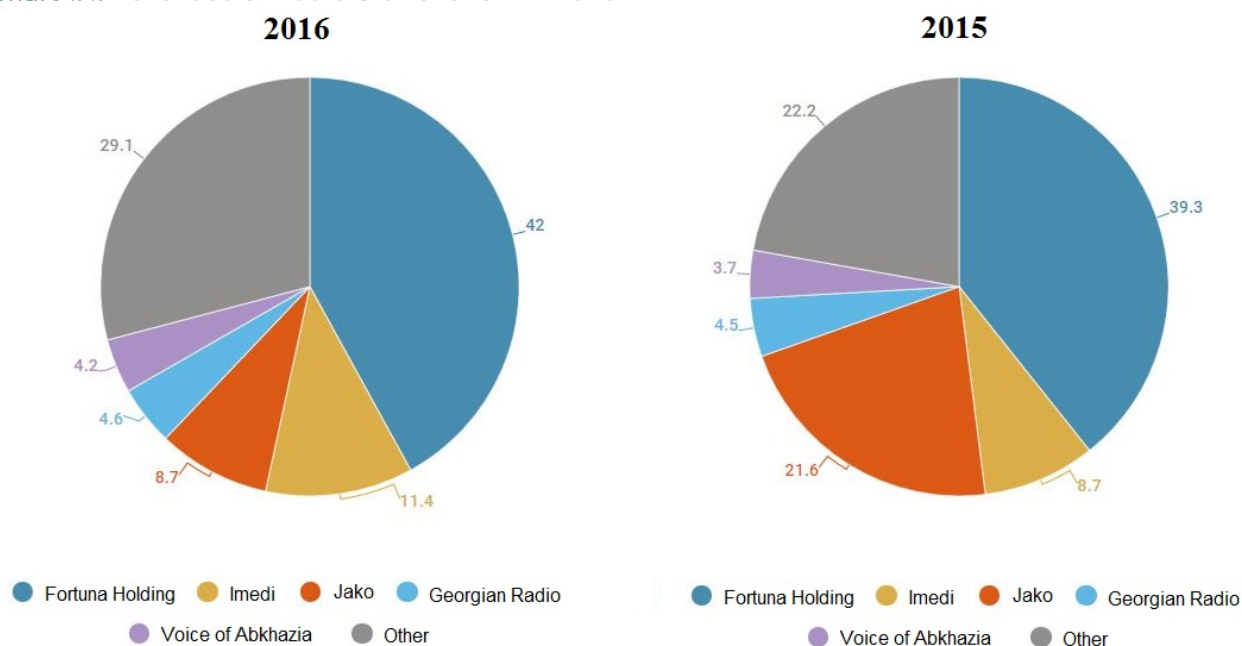
The comparison between the revenues received by Georgian Public Broadcaster and Adjarian TV and Radio in 2016 and 2015 is not provided, because in 2015 these televisions had no obligation to submit reports on revenues to GNCC. By decision⁴ of GNCC dated February 11, 2016, an obligation was imposed on Georgian Public Broadcaster and Adjarian TV and Radio to submit financial reports on revenues to the commission⁵.

Radio broadcasters. Revenues of radio stations decreased by GEL 1.2 mln in 2016 and amounted to GEL 12 034 887.74. In 2015, revenues amounted to GEL 13 227 847.09.

Like in 2015, Radio Holding Fortuna still dominated on the market with revenues amounting to GEL 5 050 494. Although the station's revenues decreased by GEL 151 505 y/y in 2016, its share on the market increased (2015 – 39.3%; 2016 – 42%). Fortuna is followed by Radio Imedi with GEL 1 377 286, whose revenues increased by GEL 230 251 compared to 2015. Commercials (64.5%) and sponsorship (34.6%) were the main sources of revenues for Radio Imedi. Revenues of Cortess-Gidago (Radio Jako) declined by GEL 1.8 mln y/y to GEL 1 052 071.98. The latter received most of its revenues from sale of content (79%).

In 2016, among five radio stations with the highest reported revenues, only two radio stations received increased revenues. In particular, revenues of Radio Imedi increased significantly by 20% (GEL 230 251) and revenues of Voice of Abkhazia increased slightly by 1% (GEL 4 979.96). Georgian Radio (GEL 554 425) replaced Green Wave (GEL 445 364.33) in the list of five stations by the amount of annual revenues in late 2016.

Chart 1.4. Revenues of Radio Stations for 2015 and 2016



⁴ <http://gncc.ge/ge/legal-acts/commission/solutions/2016-95-19.page>

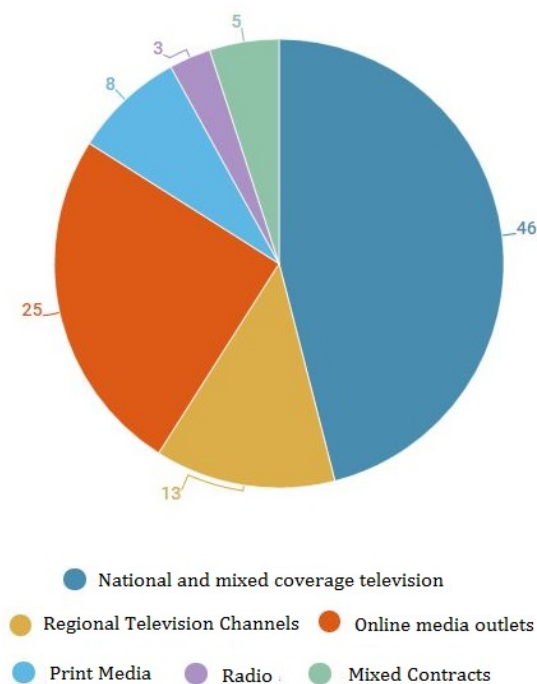
⁵ <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/library/45/file/eng/ENG.pdf> Pre-election Media Environment, Report 2016

2. Practice of allocating public funds among media outlets for the dissemination of information and advertisement.

Summary: Although, compared to 2015, in 2016, budgetary organizations' contracts with traditional media organizations was cut down by 2 970 119 lari, the cost of contracts with online media outlets almost doubled in value. From the point of TV channels the largest contracts were awarded to 'Rustavi 2' and 'Imedi', almost similar in value, similarly from regional television it was 'Qvemo Qartli'. From radio organizations 'Imedi' is in the lead receiving the largest share and from online media it is the the outlets included in 'Palitra' media holding. In Print media contracts for the largest amount were signed with 'Kviris Palitra', which is again part of 'Palitra' media holding, followed, closely by the newspaper 'Rezonansi', from the regional printing media the pole position goes to 'Literaturuli Meskheti'.

Unified data: In 2016, budgetary organizations for the purpose of advertising and information services signed with the media 5 232 608 GEL worth of service contracts. Of the forementioned amount 46% (2 416 232) went to national and mixed coverage television, 13% (662 323) – to the regional channels, 25% (1 293 027) – on Online media, 8% - in print media (445 332), 3% (137 008) - on the radio; 5% (278 686) – was distributed on mixed contracts, which includes various types of media outlets. As it is impossible for some contracts to identify exactly which type of media the money was given to, we have allocated this data in a separate category "mixed contracts".

Figure 2.1. Budgetary contract distribution according to types of media , 2016



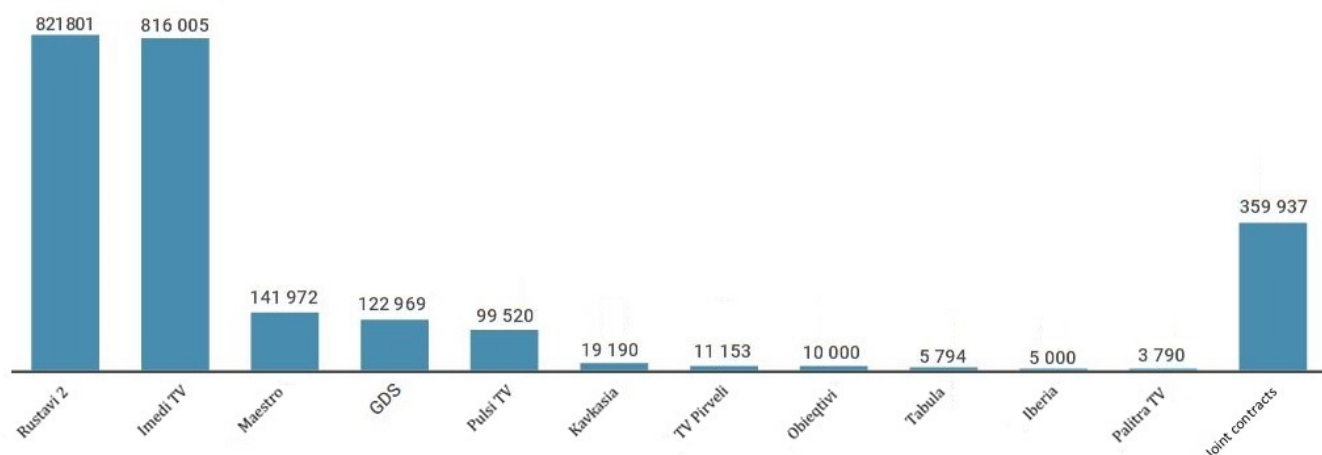
In comparison to 2015 in 2016 budget organizations signed 2 970 119 GEL less contracts in value with the media. However, online media contracts have almost doubled in value showing a 46% increase, while there is only 3% rise with the radios. At the same time television contracts have reduced by 3.5 million in value. In most cases there is no separation of the sponsored articles from editorial content in online and print media. At the same time some contract with regional televisions represent the formalization of interference in their editorial independence.

TV Broadcasters. In 2016, budgetary organizations concluded contracts with television broadcasters with total value of 3 078 555 GEL. The majority of them – 2 416 232 GEL, went to national and mixed television coverage, other – 662 323 GEL for regional broadcasters.

National and mixed television coverage. The largest share of television advertisement contracts for 821 801 GEL were signed with ‘Rustavi 2’, closely followed by ‘Imedi’ with 816 005 GEL. They are followed by: ‘Maestro’ (141 972), GDS (122 969), ‘Pulsi’ (99 520), ‘Kavkasia’ (19 190), ‘TV Pirveli’ (11 153), ‘Obieqtivi’ (10, 000), ‘Tabula’ (5 794), ‘Iberia’ (5 000) and ‘Palitra TV’ (3 790).

The contract between TBC TV Ltd and the Ministry of Justice did not allow the cost of purchase of the service from each media outlet to be clarified (Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro and GDS), so this amount was given the category of ‘joint agreements’.

Figure 2.2. Advertising budget allocation to national and mixed coverage in television, 2016

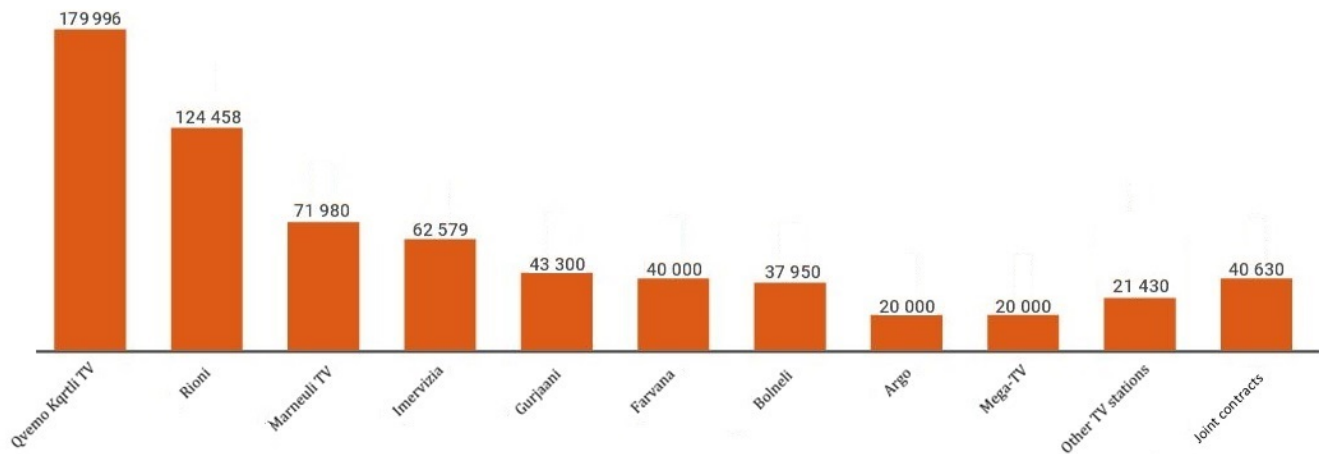


Regional TV. 94% of contracts with regional television news and advertising are assigned by local municipalities and organizations under their supervision.

From Regional broadcasters the most money in 2016 is still received by Qvemo Kartli TV (179 996 GEL), whose total income is 100% out of the 2016 budget, making the contracts a subsidy face wore.

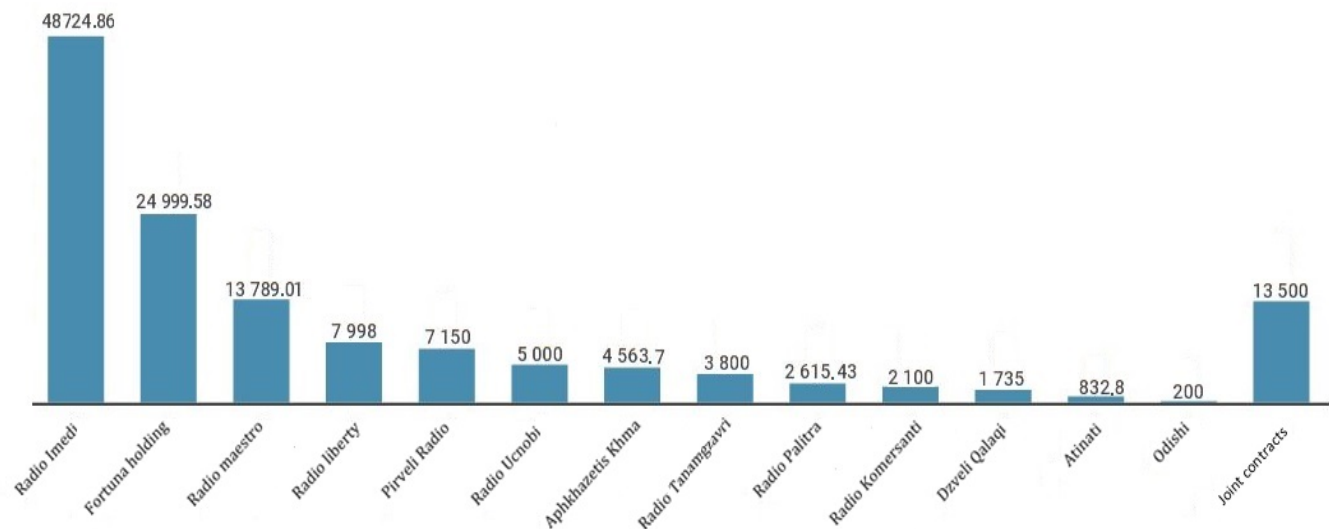
Following Kvemo Kartli TV, is TV station Rioni (Imereti) (124 458) and Marneuli local television (71 980), whose advertisement budget in 2016, compared with 2015 is significantly boosted (2015: 31 725). Other regional television stations the following situation comes to the fore: "Imervizia" – 62 579, "Gurjaani" – 43 300; "Farvana" – 40 000; "Bolneli" – 37 950; "Argo" and "Mega TV" have identical figure – 20 000; Other television stations ("Jikha"; "Kolkheti 89"; "enjoyed"; "Egrisi"; "Mecxre Talgha"; "Borjomi"), received a total of 21 430 worth of advertising contracts. Joint contracts (several companies) by the amount of 40 630 GEL were designated to provide the services.

Figure 2.3. Advertising budget allocation of regional TV stations, 2016



Radio Stations. From Radio Broadcasters the largest budget contract was received by Radio Imedi (48 725 GEL), followed by holding Fortuna (Fortuna, Fortuna +, Ar Daidardo, Avto Radio) – 25 000, Radio Maestro – 13 789, Radio Liberty – 7 998, Pirveli Radio – 7 150; Radio Ucnobi – 5 000; Afkhazetis Khma – 4 564; Radio Tanamgzavri (for the attention of consumers, Ltd.) – 3 800; Radio Palitra – 2 615, Kommersant – 2 100, Radio Dzveli Qalaqi – 1 735, Atinati – 833, the Odishi – 200; By joint contract 13 500 GEL worth of services from several of the radio stations was purchased.

Figure 2.4. Budgetary fund allocation to radio stations.



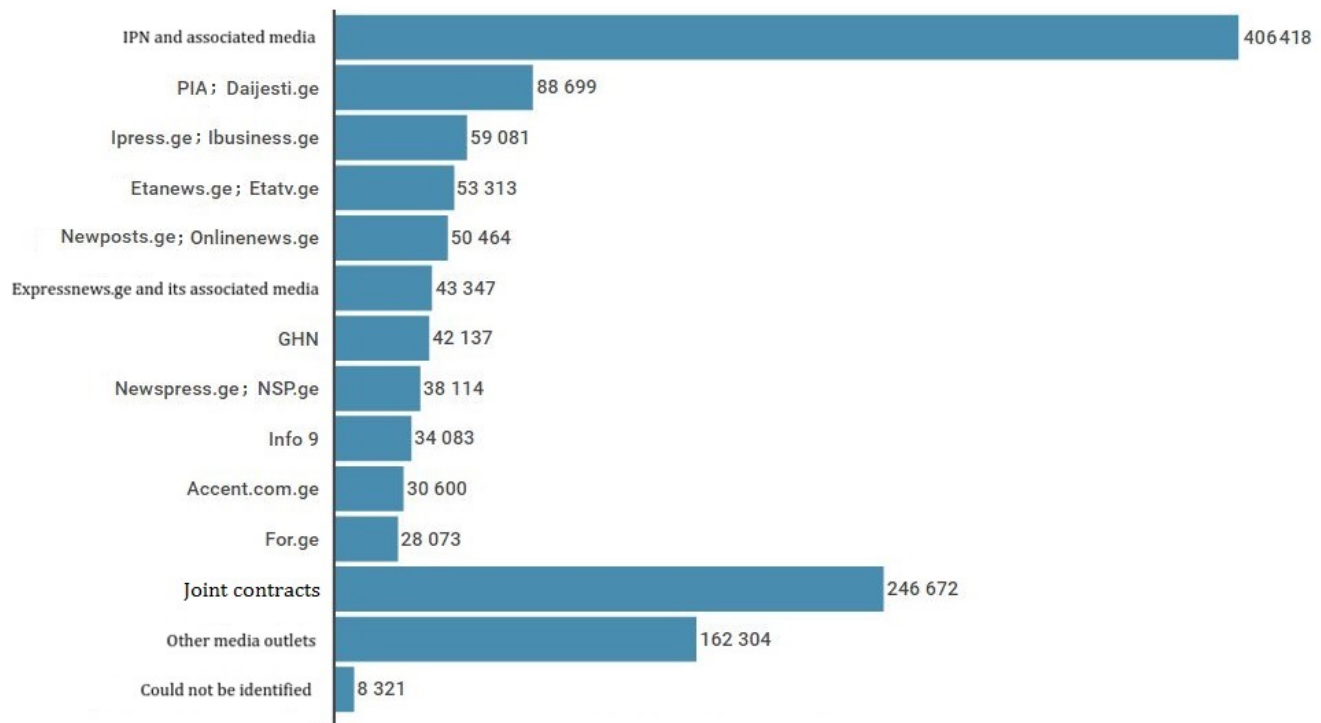
Online Media. Online Media leader in the budget contracts is "Palitra" Media Holding (IPN, PalitraTV.ge, Kvirispalitra.ge, Bpn.ge. Ambebi.ge, Gemrieli.ge) – 406 418 GEL, followed by PIA and related edition (Daijesti.ge) – 88 699 GEL, Ipress.ge and Ibusiness.ge – 59 081 GEL, Etanews.ge and Etatv.ge – 53 313 GEL; Newposts.ge and Onlinenews.ge – 50 464 GEL; Expressnews and its associated media outlets

(Argumenti.ge; Economic.ge; 1news.ge) – 43 347 GEL, GHN – 42 137 GEL; Newspress.ge and NSP.ge – 38 114 GEL; Info 9 – 34 083 GEL; Accent.com.ge – 30 600 GEL; For.ge – 28 073 GEL.

Budget organizations collaborate with online news agencies through intermediary companies, making it very complicated to have full access to retrieve complete information through the Procurement Service database as in which media company the information is published. In 2016, 246 672 GEL worth of such a contracts was given to research company IPM, Ltd. Clip Art Ltd. and GEPRA Ltd., which partially covers the cost of monitoring. Of those only Clip Art Ltd. did not provide the information to MDF- in which media agencies it published budget sponsored material.

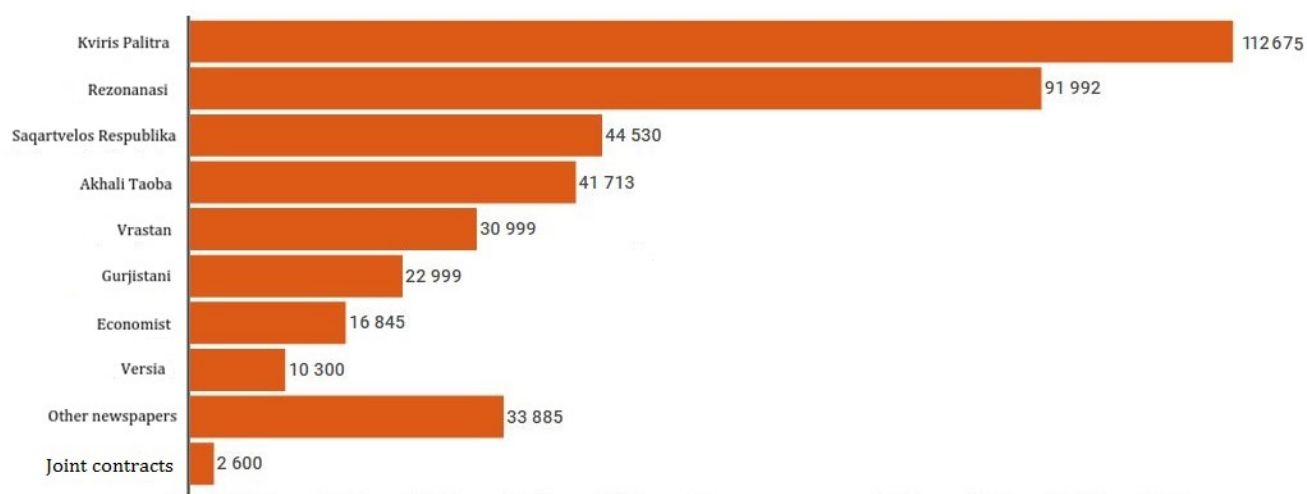
Other media outlets who alone do not make more than 25 000 GEL from the state budget contracts, a total of 162 304 worth of contracts were assigned. 8 321 GEL worth of contracts could not be identified with any specific media outlet.

Figure 2.5. Budget allocation for advertising and information distribution services in online media, 2016



Print media. In the print media the highest cost contract (112 675 GEL) was awarded to ‘Kviris Palitra’, next comes ‘Rezonansi’ (91 992) and "Saqartvelos Respublica" (44 530), the "Akhali Taoba" (41 713), "Vrastan" (30 999), "Gurjistan" (22 999), "Ekonomisti" (16 845), "Versia" (10 300), several media outlets signed a joint contract with 2600 GEL price. The category "other" includes newspapers, whose contracts were paid less than 9000 GEL ("Focus", "Prime Time", Saqartvelos rkinigzis jurnali, Georgia Today, Msofllo 2016), the lump sum of their contracts was 33 885 GEL.

Figure 2.6. Budget allocation of advertising and information distribution services in newspapers, 2016



In regional print media "Literaturuli Meskheti" has lead in the value of contracts signed (10 400), followed by "Egrisi" (3 375), "Akhali Agraruli Saqartvelo" (3 600), "Gazeti Chkhorotsku" (2 500); "Guria News" (1 610), "Ho Da Ara" (1 410). Other newspapers, in total signed the contract for 13 900 GEL.

Figure 2.7. Budget allocation for advertising in regional newspapers, 2016



3. Budget contracts with media outlets using hate speech, fanning anti-Western sentiments and promoting Russian propaganda

Summary: Budget organizations continue to enter into contracts with such media outlets that use hate speech and fan anti-Western sentiments. In contrast to the previous period, the contractors, in 2016, included an openly pro-Russian edition “Tbilisi 24” which has ties with the pro-Russian political party Centrists. This edition is contracted by the Ministry of Corrections of Georgia for the latter’s information campaign.

The monitoring conducted by the Media Development Foundation in 2015⁶ and over the first sixth months of 2016⁷ showed that several budget organizations awarded contracts on placement of advertisements and information to such media outlets which used hate speech and fan anti-Western sentiments. Further study into 2016 data revealed that in addition to the media outlets, which were identified earlier, the openly pro-Russian edition “Tbilisi 24” was contracted by the Ministry of Corrections for the provision of information service both in 2016 and 2017. This edition is connected to the pro-Russian political party Centrists which, in pre-election period, demanded the legalization of Russian military bases in Georgia.

The table below shows those media organizations which distinguished themselves for the use of hate speech and anti-Western editorial policies and had contracts with the budget organizations in 2016:

⁶ MDF (2015), Public Funds for Media Promoting Hate Speech and Anti-Western Sentiments.
<http://mediameter.ge/en/research/public-funds-media-promoting-hate-speech-and-anti-western-sentiments>

⁷ MDF (2016), Practice of allocating budgetary resources among media for the release of information and advertisement.
<http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/31>

Table 3.1. Budget contracts signed in 2016 with such media outlets that used hate speech, fanned anti-Western sentiments and promoted Russian propaganda.

Media outlet	Price of service contract	Budget organization
“Sakartvelos Respublika” newspaper	41 790	Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia; Ministry of Finance and Economy of Autonomous Republic of Adjara; Roads Department of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia; National Bank of Georgia, and other sub-entities and local self-government entities.
Newspress.ge, NSP	37 514	Ministry of Corrections of Georgia; Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia; Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons From the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia; Service Agency of the Finance Ministry of Georgia; LEPL National Center For Educational Quality Enhancement; Ministry of Finance and Economy of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia; Office of the Minister of Confidence-Building and Reconciliation Issues of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and other sub-entities and local self-government entities.
Obieqtivi	10 000	Central Election Commission
Tbilisi 24	3 000	Ministry of Corrections of Georgia

About “Tbilisi 24”: The news agency “Tbilisi 24” Ltd was registered in the civil registry on 26 March 2015. The outlet is owned by Gocha Nachkebia (50%) and Maia Shaishmelashvili (50%). Gocha Nachkebia, who simultaneously serves as the director of “Tbilisi 24,” has ties with Vladimer Bedukadze, one of the leaders of the political party Centrists. Both of them are members of the board of Public Monitoring Center. According to information published on the official webpage of Centrists, Vladimer Bedukadze is the deputy chairman of the political party.

On 12 July, “Tbilisi 24” reprinted an article from the Russian newspaper Vzgliad⁸, which was about Centrists and had the following title: “The first openly pro-Russian party emerged in Georgia”⁹ (В ГРУЗИИ ПОЯВИЛАСЬ ПЕРВАЯ ОТКРОВЕННО ПРОРОССИЙСКАЯ ПАРТИЯ).

⁸ 15 June 2016. <https://vz.ru/news/2016/6/15/816190.html>

⁹ 12 July 2016. <http://bit.ly/2oyl0P2>

Vladimer Bedukadze, who is the author of notorious prison videos, ran for the 2016 parliamentary elections as a candidate on a party list of Centrists. A political advertisement of Centrists aired on the Georgian Public Broadcaster, in which the political party promised voters the payment of 400 GEL worth Russian pensions and legalization of Russian military bases, caused public uproar. Therefore, on 14 August, the Public Broadcaster took the political advertisement off the air. This advertisement is available on the webpage of “Tbilisi 24.”¹⁰

On 16 August, the Central Election Commission (CEC) annulled the registration of Centrists because, according to the data of the National Agency of Civil Registry, the power of the leader of political association and his chairmanship did not have legal force. After the annulment of registration by the CEC, Vladimer Bedukadze ran for the parliamentary elections as a candidate on a party list of “Georgian Communist Party-Stalinists (Ivane Tsiklauri).” The same list included another member of Centrists, the former security minister Tengiz Khachishvili.

On 12 December 2016, the news agency applied to the Georgian National Communications Commission for authorization in the sphere of broadcasting. By a decision of 22 December, the Commission granted authorization to “Tbilisi 24” Ltd in the sphere of broadcasting. According to authorization terms, “Tbilisi 24” shall broadcast in Georgian language for at least six hours per day. It will be distributed via the network of persons authorized for internet technologies and broadcast transit.

Editorial policy of “Tbilisi 24”: The media outlet pursues an openly pro-Russian editorial policy and basing on Russian propagandist media outlets, spreads disinformation about the West. Table 3.2. shows several disinformation detected within the framework of the project Myth Detector, which “Tbilisi 24” spread in 2016 and 2017.

¹⁰ 16 August, 2016. <http://bit.ly/2nvlTZf>

Table 3.2. Disinformation from Russian sources spread by “Tbilisi 24”

Date	Disinformation	Russian primary source cited in material	Identical Russian source
26 March, 2017	During his meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the US President Donald Trump handed her a bill worth 300 billion for NATO services ¹² .	lenta.ru ¹¹	
5 March, 2017	The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria put forward an initiative to open EU refugee camps in Georgia, Egypt and the Western Balkans ¹³ .		Parlamentskaya Gazeta ; Life.ru ; REN-TV ; lenta.ru ; ntv.ru ; Russian-language RT
5 March, 2017	A manipulative title "Russia will not allow the deployment of Syrian refugees to Georgia." ¹⁴	ntv.ru ¹⁴	
26 February, 2017	Fake photo; disinformation that children in a Ukraine's kindergarten, who were tasked to craft cannons, molded phallic shapes which caused outrage in social media and led to a demand that teachers be punished. ¹⁶	Russian-language Facebook group Смейся до слёз	
27 January 2017	Disinformation that fighters of Georgian Legion left Ukraine ¹⁸	Ria Novosti ¹⁷	Novorossia Vision ; Rusnewstoday24
21 December, 2016	Manipulation as if the EU impose an obligation of passportization of pigs on Georgia ¹⁹		
31 October, 2016	Disinformation about the USA granting visa-free travel regime to Belarus ²¹	Russian-language USA Radio ²⁰	rnbee.ru ; Odnoklassniki
29 January, 2016	A Soviet propaganda myth about James Forrestal's Russophobia ²²		„Argumenty i fakty "
16 September, 2016	A CIA agent Sandra Roelofs involved in trade in body organs ²³		TV channel "Zvezda" SLOVO.net.ua

¹¹ 26 March, 2017. <http://bit.ly/2oxpeGJ>

¹² Myth Detector, 28 March, 2017. http://eurocommunicator.ge/eng/view_myth/729/

¹³ Myth Detector, 6 March, 2017. March http://eurocommunicator.ge/eng/view_myth/697

¹⁴ 5 March, 2017. <http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/1779439/>

¹⁵ Myth Detector, 6 March, 2017. http://eurocommunicator.ge/eng/view_myth/697

¹⁶ Myth Detector, 28 February, 2017. http://eurocommunicator.ge/eng/view_myth/693

¹⁷ 26 January, 2017 <https://ria.ru/world/20170126/1486535993.html>

¹⁸ Myth Detector, 2 February, 2017. http://eurocommunicator.ge/eng/view_myth/657

¹⁹ Myth Detector, 23 December, 2016. http://eurocommunicator.ge/eng/view_myth/613

²⁰ <http://usa-radio.com/united-states-announces-no-visa-policy-for-belarus/3/>

²¹ Myth Detector, 28 November, 2016. http://eurocommunicator.ge/eng/view_myth/541

²² Myth Detector, 20 July, 2016. http://eurocommunicator.ge/eng/view_myth/421

²³ <http://bit.ly/2nzCBIC>

Coverage of materials of the Ministry of Corrections in “Tbilisi 24.” The Ministry of Corrections signed contracts with the openly pro-Russian media outlet, with the total value of 3,000 GEL in 2016 and that of 3,387 GEL in 2017. On behalf of the Ministry, the 2016 contract was signed by a Deputy Minister Besik Devdariani while the 2017 contract was signed by a Deputy Minister Teimuraz Mgebrishvili.

„შემსყიდველი“	„მიმწოდებელი“
საქართველოს სასჯელაღსრულებისა და პრობაციის სამინისტრო	შპს „თბილისი 24“
მის: ქ. თბილისი, ს. ეულის ქ. N3 ს/კ 204564934 სახელმწიფო ხაზინა კოდი: ს/კ 220101222; ა/ა 200122900	მისამართი: ქ. თბილისი, აეროპორტის დასახლება კ.126, ბ.1 ს/კ 406143258 სს „თბილისი ბანკი“ # GE69TB7213636080100006
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პიკეტაჟი

Photo 1. The 2016 contract with “Tbilisi 24” signed by Deputy Minister of Corrections Besik Devdariani.

„შემსყიდველი“	„მიმწოდებელი“
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პიკეტაჟი

Photo 2. The 2017 contract with “Tbilisi 24” signed by Deputy Minister of Corrections Teimuraz Mgebrishvili.

The subject matter of the contract is the purchase of the service of news agency. According to information obtained through delivery-acceptance acts, the Ministry publishes information about various activities of entities as well as Minister's comments on the "Tbilisi 24" website.

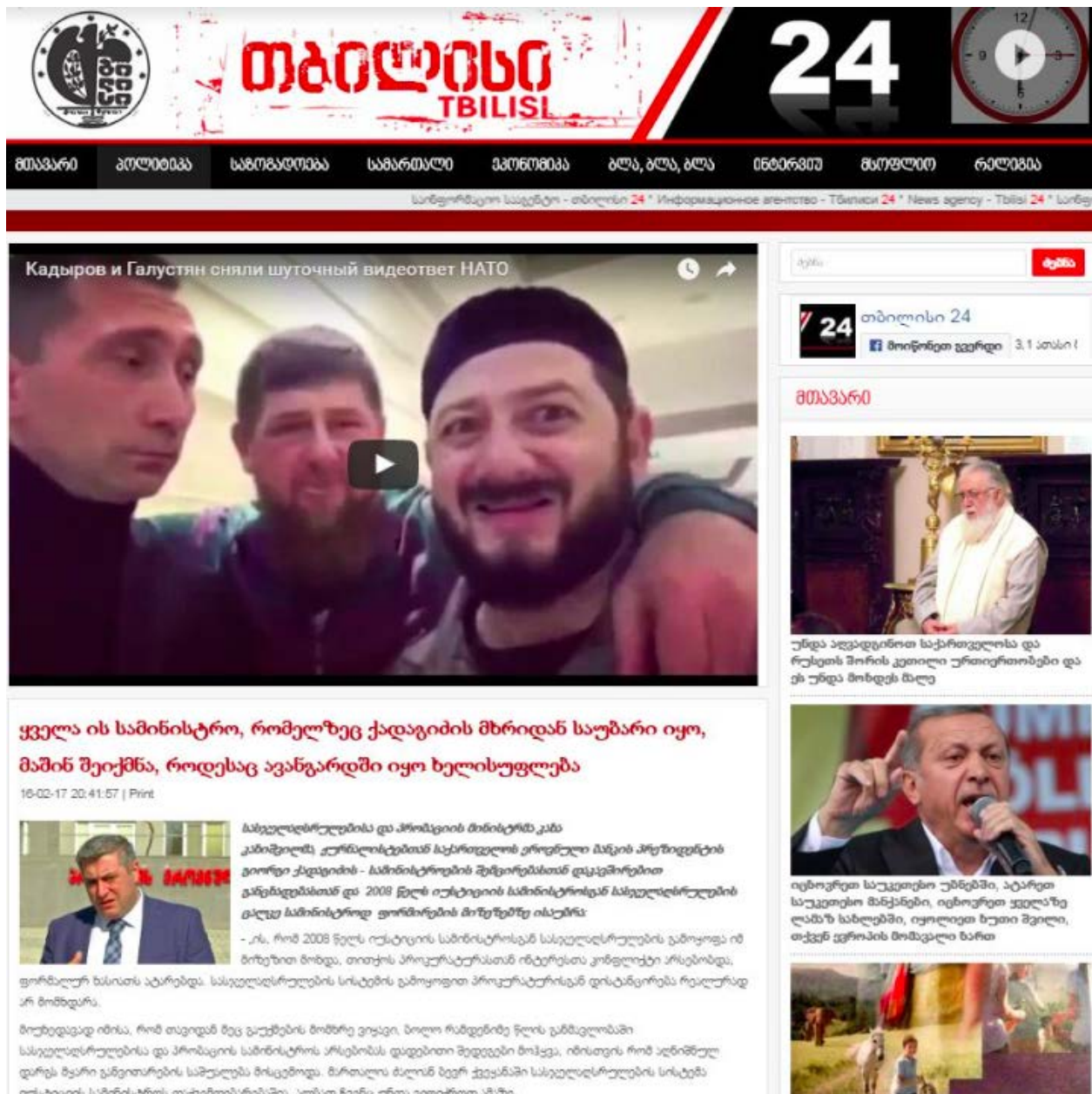


Photo 3. On 17 February 2016, the "Tbilisi 24" website published a comment of Minister of Corrections Kakhi Kakhishvili, also a satire video of Head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov and comedians Mikheil Galustian and Dimitri Grachov about NATO.

Newspress and associated NSP. As Table 3.1. shows, in 2016, various budget organizations had contracts with Infonews Ltd with the total value of 37,514 GEL, which envisaged the provision of information services in online editions Newspress and NSP. On behalf of Infonews Ltd, the contracts are signed by Aleksandre

Chubinidze who, according to 2015 data of damoukidebloba.com, was an employee of propagandist platform Sputnik-Georgia established by the Russian government.²⁴ Detailed information on how Newspress spread materials of Sputnik and anti-Western messages published by Russian propaganda editions, including about Lugar Laboratory, NATO and other topics, is provided in a previous report of the Media Development Foundation.²⁵ The same report explains the ties of Aleksandre Chubinnidze with Democratic Movement – United Georgia, a pro-Russian political party.

Sakartvelos Respublika. The largest contract in terms of value is signed by budget organizations with Sakartvelos Respublika (41,790 GEL). To illustrate a homophobic, xenophobic and anti-Western editorial policy of this newspaper, the MDF study, which was published in 2015²⁶, contains several titles of articles from this edition: “Does the road towards NATO and Europe go through the Georgians’ buttocks?”; “Before we have turned into Sodom and Gomorrah”; “Turned-into-pederast France, Vladimer ‘muzhik’ and a lawyer in Nakhalovka”; „Will Georgia become Chinese or Enchanted?“, et cetera.

²⁴ Damoukidebloba.com, 24 July, 2015. “Who works for Sputnik?” http://damoukidebloba.com/c/news/vin_mushaobs

²⁵ MDF (2016), Practice of allocating budgetary resources among media for the release of information and advertisement. Pg.17. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/31>

²⁶ MDF (2015), Public Funds for Media Promoting Hate Speech and Anti-Western Sentiments. <http://mediameter.ge/en/research/public-funds-media-promoting-hate-speech-and-anti-western-sentiments>