



# FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY of MEDIA 2020

# Financial Transparency of Media

2020

**Authors:**

**Mariam Pataridze, Ani Kistauri**

**Editor:**

**Tamar Kintsurashvili**

**Design:**

**Mariam Tsutskiridze**

**Financial Transparency of Media, 2020**



[WWW.MDFGEORGIA.GE](http://WWW.MDFGEORGIA.GE)  
[WWW.MEDIAMETER.GE](http://WWW.MEDIAMETER.GE)

## Introduction

The following report on the financial transparency of media represents data of 2020. In order to illustrate the extent to which budgetary funding influences the editorial policy of the media or to observe the types of editorial policies the concerned media outlets pursue, it also discusses some examples of media coverage. Released by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) annually, the report explores, 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 and regulations; the 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 budgetary contracts that oblige media outlets to disseminate information in various Facebook groups and pages. The concluding part is devoted to the practice of signing budgetary contracts with anti-Western, anti-disinformation, and hate speech media outlets, including some examples of anti-vaxx content.

## 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, 2016.<sup>1</sup> 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 the 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 ads.<sup>2</sup>

The following 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 sources.<sup>3</sup>

**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.

---

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

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

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

## Table of Contents

<b>Key Findings</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>I. Declared Revenues of Broadcast Media</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>II. Practice of Allocating Public Funds for Advertising and Dissemination of Information in Media Outlets</b> .....	<b>15</b>
2.1 Online Media .....	16
2.2 TV Broadcasters .....	18
2.3 Print Media .....	20
2.4 Social Media .....	21
2.5 Budgetary Funds for Agencies to Disseminate Information on Facebook Pages and Groups.....	22
2.6 Budgetary Contracts with Media Outlets Using Hate speech, Fanning Anti-Western Sentiments and Spreading Disinformation .....	36

## Key Findings

In 2020, the following tendencies became apparent:

- The declared revenues of TV broadcasters made up GEL 176.9 million in 2020 that exceeds the 2019 figure by GEL 37.9 million.
- The increase in the revenues can be linked with the establishment of “Mtavari Arkhi” and “Formula” – two opposition affiliated channels constituted by the former employees and managers of “Rustavi 2,” which changed the owner in 2019, as well as the increase in donations of the Patriarchate TV "Ertsulovneba."
- Compared to 2019, In 2020, the declared revenue of the Georgian Patriarchate Television "Ertsulovneba" increased by 97% at the expense of donations from the owner of the broadcaster.
- According to the 2020 data, Georgian Public Broadcaster still maintains the largest share (36.5%) of the TV market. Among private broadcasters, dominant shares are being distributed among “TV Imedi” - a broadcaster with a pro-governmental editorial policy (17.9%) and the United National Movement affiliate “Mtavari Arkhi” (14.2%).
- As in previous years, in 2020, the primary source of revenue for “TV Obieqtivi” - an affiliate of the pro-Kremlin “The Alliance of Patriots of Georgia” - was donations of the owner and an unidentified person, accounting for 93.3%.
- In 2020, regional broadcasters received GEL 13 912 444 in total revenues, surpassing that of 2019 by GEL 3.6 million.
- In 2020, revenues of radio broadcasters decreased by GEL 2.1 million compared to 2019.
- In 2020, budgetary organizations signed service contracts with TV broadcasters totaling GEL 5 259 287.7. The largest share of this amount - 34% went to online media, followed by national and mixed coverage televisions - 28.1 %, and regional televisions with 15.3 %. 14.7% - on social media; 4.3% - on print media; 2.3% - on mixed contracts; 1.3% was distributed on radios.
- Compared to 2019, service contracts worth GEL 1,322,015.3 less were signed in 2020. It should be noted that only the value of online media contracts has increased, while the value of service contracts for other media has decreased.
- The most significant share of budgetary service contracts went to online publications included in “Palitra Media Holding,” followed by Kvira.ge, Ipress.ge and their affiliate media platforms; Primetime.ge; PIA and Daijesti.ge; Newspress.ge and NSP.ge; Imedinews.ge; Reportiori.ge and others.
- The distribution of budgetary advertisements on TV channels correlates with their ratings, which reflect the reach audience of the TV market by any given channel. Among televisions, the largest share of television contracts worth GEL 702 045 went to Imedi TV, followed by Rustavi 2, Mtavari Arkhi, and TV Pirveli.
- Like in 2016-2019, Kvemo Kartli television again received the largest budgetary financing among regional TV broadcasters, constituting 65% of total revenues.
- The contracts of the Georgian National Tourism Administration had the most valuable advertisements on social media (GEL 179 725); Followed by the Department of Tourism and Resorts of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and the Ministry of Justice of Georgia.

- Similar to 2019, the contracts signed by the administrative bodies on the dissemination of information services also entailed the obligation to share the information on other Facebook groups and pages, in addition to posting the materials on the agency's website.
- One PIA-affiliated advertising agency and 3 such online media outlets have been identified that had an obligation to share the media content of budgetary organizations in various Facebook groups.
- According to the contract signed between Khobi Municipality Cultural and Public Education Center and Samegrelo Media Organization STV.GE should have posted the information on the page **supportive of the Tbilisi mayor** of the “**Georgian Dream**” party and two other private groups. One of them ([ეს საქართველო](#)) [This is Georgia] is supportive of the “**Alliance of Patriots of Georgia**” party and is directed against the United National Movement. The group often displays posts by pro-governmental experts.
- A service contract worth GEL 99 500 signed between Clip-Art LLC and the commission envisaged placement of information on the websites of nine news agencies as well as in five Facebook groups all owned by “Clip-Art.”
- Both Samegrelo Media Organization (STV.ge) and Clip-Art-related agencies (diagestpia and pia) coordinated the distribution of discrediting materials directed to opponents of the ruling party.
- Like in 2014-2019, in 2020, budget organizations continued to sign contracts with some media outlets for the purpose of advertising and dissemination of information. Part of these media outlets was known for their anti-Western editorial policy, spreading disinformation, and using hate speech.
- Along with anti-Western and homophobic messages, the newspaper “Sakartvelos Respublika,” which signed a service contract worth GEL 38 008 from the budget in 2020, also spread conspiracies and disinformation about the coronavirus and vaccination.



## I. Declared Revenues of Broadcast Media

**TV Broadcasters.** According to the data of the National Communications Commission,<sup>4</sup> the revenues of TV broadcasters made up GEL 176.9 million in 2020 that exceeds the 2019 figure (GEL 139 million) by GEL 37.9 million. The increase in the revenues can be linked with the establishment of “Mtavari Arkhi” and “Formula” – two opposition affiliated channels constituted by the former employees and managers of “Rustavi 2,” which changed the owner in 2019, as well as the increase in donations of the Patriarchate TV “Ertsulovneba”.

According to the 2020 data, Georgian Public Broadcaster still maintains the largest share (GEL 59.5 million) of revenues that exceeds the 2019 revenues (GEL 51 million) by GEL 8.5 million.<sup>5</sup>

Among private broadcasters, dominant shares are being distributed among “TV Imedi” - a broadcaster with a pro-governmental editorial policy (GEL 29.1 million) and the opposition party - United National Movement - affiliate “Mtavari Arkhi” (GEL 23.1 million). The latter was founded by Nika Gvaramia (51%), the former director of “Rustavi 2, and other co-owners.<sup>6</sup> The revenue of the TV channel “Mtavari Arkhi” has increased by GEL 17.4 million in 2020, the main source of income - 49.7% - being the donations of its owners (11 520 024 GEL). The revenue of “Imedi TV” has increased by 2.4 million GEL compared to 2019. The next position in the media market is occupied by “Rustavi 2” (14.2 million GEL), whose revenue has been reduced by 8.2 million GEL. Noteworthy, the change of ownership of Rustavi 2 was made on the basis of the decision of the European Court of Human Rights on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019; thus, this data reflects the financial situation created partly under the new management. The following spots in terms of revenue are occupied by “Silknet” (GEL 10.9 million<sup>7</sup>), whose revenue increased by GEL 7.7 million, and “TV Pirveli” (GEL 6.4 million), whose revenues increased by GEL 2.2 million, compared to the previous year, largely due to advertising. The revenue of “Formula,” founded in 2019 and controlled by former Defense Minister Davit Kezerashvili (51%), compared to last year, has been reduced by GEL 0.7 million and totals GEL 4.4 million in 2020. The revenues of other televisions are distributed as follows: “Adjarasport TV” (GEL 2.8 million), “GDS TV” (GEL 2.7 million), “Obieqtivi” (GEL 2.2 million), POS TV (GEL 1.6 million), “Ertsulovneba” (GEL 1.2 million) and “Setanta Georgia” (0.7 million GEL). The revenue of other televisions, not exceeding GEL 0.7 million, totals GEL 3.4 million.

Noteworthy, compared to 2019, the revenue of the Georgian Patriarchate Television “Ertsulovneba” (GEL 27,183) increased by 97% in 2020 at the expense of donations from the owner of the broadcaster

---

<sup>4</sup> Last access 22 September, 2021

<https://analytics.comcom.ge/en/statistics-share/?c=broadcasting&f=revenue&exp=tv&total=total&sid=932488>

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> According to the changes made in the Public Register on September 15th, 2020, the redistribution of shares of the company owners is as follows: BGIM LTD-39%, Bakur Jakhaia -37%, Nika Gvaramia -12%, Nikoloz Sisauri (3%), Giorgi Rurua (2.5%), Marie Ana Rurua (2.5%) and University of Georgia Ltd (2%), Teimuraz Vasilidze -1%, Benmont Ltd-BENMONT-0.2%, Maguli Kharebava -0.2%, Omega Motor Group -0.2%, Matrix - 0.2%, Monte Ltd -0.2%.

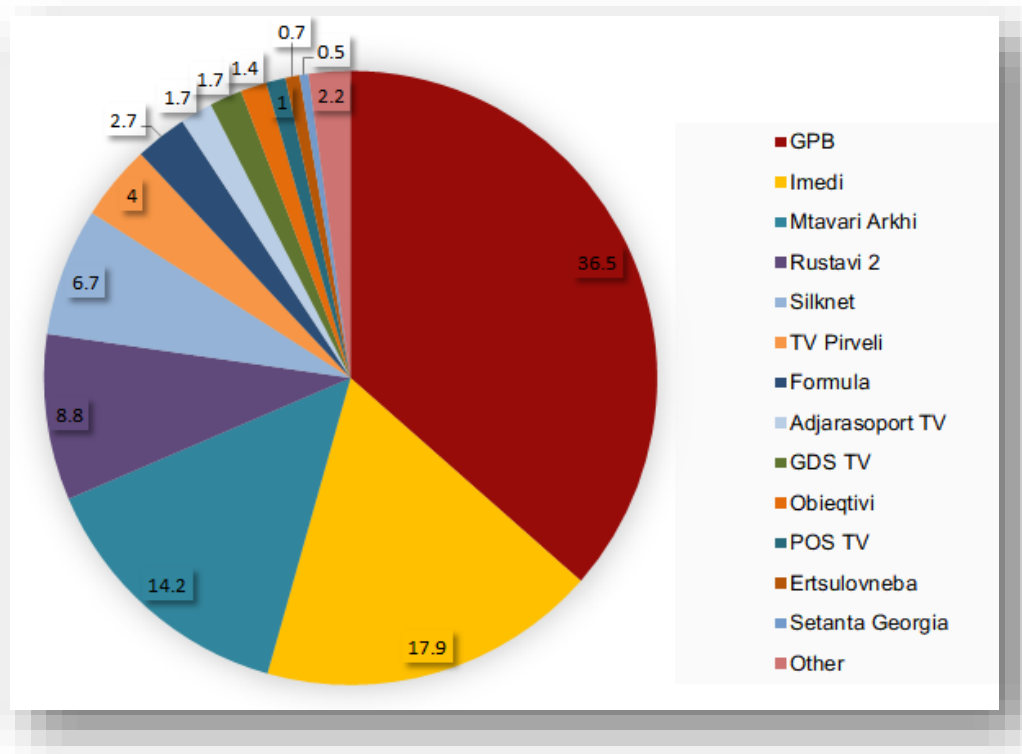
<https://bit.ly/3hSSPZ5>

<sup>7</sup> The selected data includes the declared income of “Silk Media” Ltd for 2020, 100% of which is owned by JSC Silknet; [B21081595 \(napr.gov.ge\)](https://www.napr.gov.ge/B21081595)

and amounted to GEL 1,214,305. The donations of the owner amount to 99.7% of the gross income (GEL 1,210,800).

The revenue of POS TV,<sup>8</sup> which has a pro-governmental editorial policy and received the general broadcasting authorization on November 21st, 2019,<sup>9</sup> has also increased. The declared income of POS TV in 2020 **amounted to GEL 1 680 440.**

**Chart 1.1 Revenues of Nationwide and Mixed Coverage Broadcasters in 2019, by Media outlets**

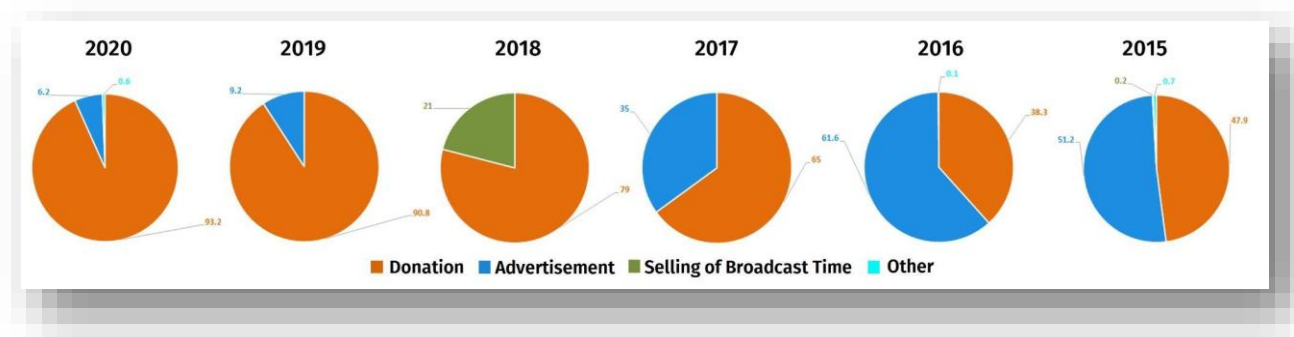


**Revenues of TV "Obieqtivi."** As in previous years, in 2020, the primary source of revenue for "TV Obieqtivi" - an affiliate of the pro-Kremlin "The Alliance of Patriots of Georgia" - was donations accounting for 93.3% (2,090,739 GEL). Of this, GEL 205,336 represented donations from the owner of the broadcaster, while GEL 1,885,403 from unidentified persons. A five-year observation on the TV channel shows that it is becoming increasingly dependent on subsidies while funding sources remain untransparent.

<sup>8</sup> Temur Charelashvili is the executive director and 28% shareholder of "POS TV" Ltd. Shalva Ramishvili owns 24% of the company, Nugzar Rukhadze and Zviad Bliadze own 16% each, Ana Shengelia and Vakhtang Komakhidze own 8% each. <https://bit.ly/3zqLE48>

<sup>9</sup> [On Review of Authorization Application](https://www.comcom.ge/) for POS TV Ltd For Broadcasting - Communications Commission (comcom.ge)

**Chart 1.2 Sources of Revenues of Media Union Obieqtivi in 2015-2020**



Noteworthy, in recent years, the total revenue of the TV company has doubled (2015: 1 080 873, 2019: 2 241 634).

**Table 1.1 Revenues of TV Obieqtivi in 2015-2020**

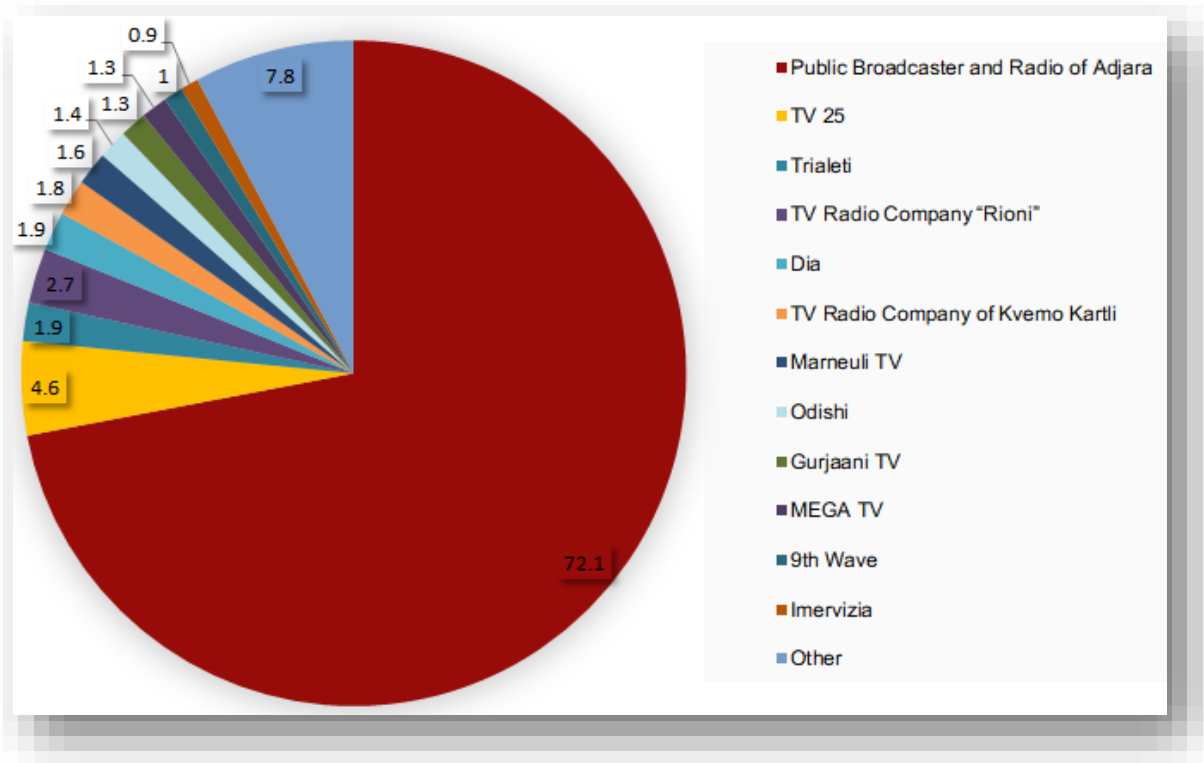
Year	Revenue
2020	2 241 634
2019	2 235 533
2018	1 925 974
2017	1 469 125
2016	1 691 397
2015	1 080 873

**Regional broadcasters.** In 2020, regional broadcasters received GEL 13 912 444 in total revenues, surpassing that of 2019 by GEL 3.6 million. Public Broadcaster of Adjara still accounts for the largest share of 72% (GEL 10 026 792), while the remaining 28% is allocated as follows:

- Batumi: TV 25 (GEL 634 191) - 4.6%;
- Gori: TV-Radio Compani Trialeti (GEL 261 088) - 1.9%;  
Dia (GEL 262 663) - 1.9%;
- Imereti: TV Rioni (GEL 370 757) - 2.7%,  
MEGA TV (GEL 176 672) - 1.3%;
- TV Radio Company of Kvemo Kartli (GEL 245 622) - 1.8%;
- Marneuli TV (GEL 227 760) - 1,6%;
- Zugdidi: Odishi (GEL 199 666)- 1.4%;
- Gurjaani: (GEL 182 710) -1.3%;
- Poti: 9th Wave (GEL 133 274) - 1%;
- Chiatura: Imervizia (GEL 120 638) -0.9%;

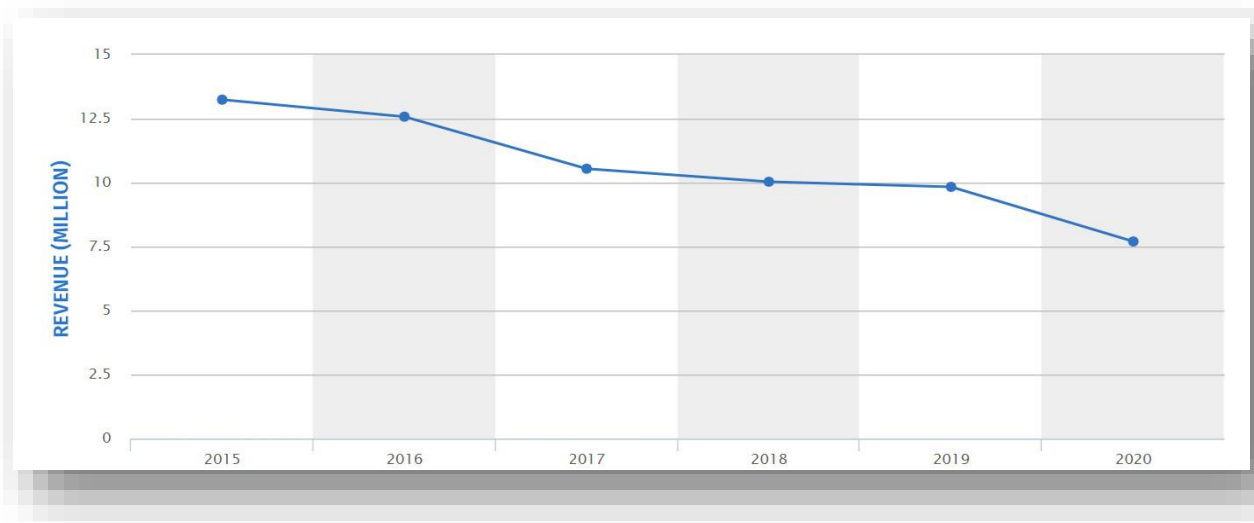
Revenues of other TV channels, which do not exceed GEL 115 500, totaled GEL 1 070 609.

**Chart 1.3 Revenues of Regional Broadcasters in 2020, by Media Outlets**



**Radio Broadcasters.** In 2020, revenues of radio broadcasters decreased by GEL 2.1 million compared to 2019 and made up GEL 7 698 906. In 2019, this number amounted to GEL 9 814 772. Noteworthy, radio revenues have been declining since 2015.

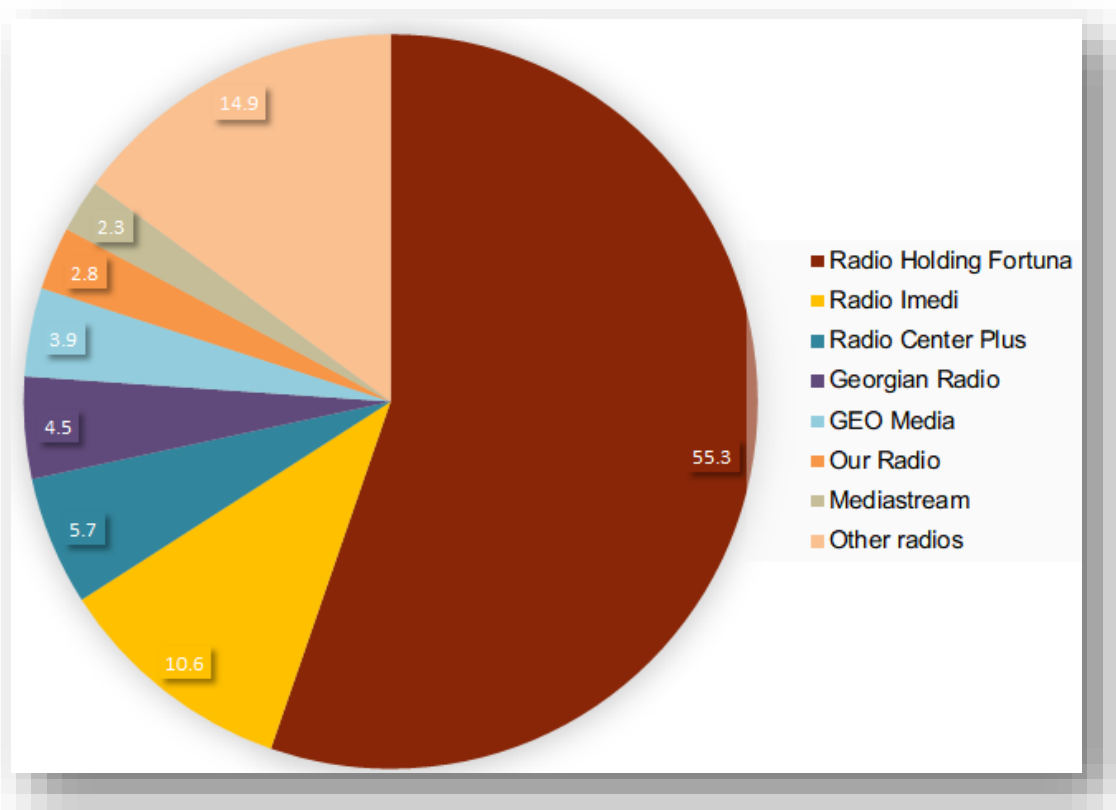
**Chart 1.4 Radio Revenues in 2015-2020**



*Source: Communications Commission Analytical Portal*

As in previous years, the market was still dominated by Radio Holding Fortuna (51%), with its revenues reaching GEL 3,796,575. Compared to 2019, the company's revenues decreased by 1,220,543 GEL. Its significant sources of revenue are advertising (83.6%), sponsorship (15.7%), and content sales (0.7%). Next is Radio "Imedi" with GEL 730 437, where, compared to the previous year, revenue decreased by GEL 129 116. Radio Palitra<sup>10</sup> (GEL 390 104) holds third place, whose income decreased by GEL 167 352. It is followed by Radio Maestro<sup>11</sup> (GEL 308,284), Radio Voice of Abkhazia (GEL 267,543)<sup>12</sup>, Radio Commersant<sup>13</sup> (GEL 191,610), and Radio Energy<sup>14</sup> (GEL 159,597); The income of other radios amounted to GEL 1 018 447.

**Chart 1.5 Revenues of Nationwide and Mixed Coverage Broadcasters in 2020, by Radio Outlets**



**Regional Radios.** In 2020, the revenue of regional radios amounted to GEL 836 310. The largest share - 65% - was collected by Adjara Public Radio (GEL 545 131); followed by: Gori Community Radio Mosaic (GEL 60,972), whose revenue increased by GEL 54 363 (2019: GEL 6 608). The following positions are held by: Radio Atinati (GEL 57 418), Radio Trialeti (GEL 39,389), Old Town (GEL 37,616)

<sup>10</sup> Radiocenter Plus Ltd (FM 103.9); [http://www.radiopalitra.ge/doc/7\\_15\\_2020\\_shesab\\_dec\\_radio\\_n.pdf](http://www.radiopalitra.ge/doc/7_15_2020_shesab_dec_radio_n.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> "Georgian Radio" Ltd <http://www.radiomaestro.ge>

<sup>12</sup> "Geo Media" Ltd <https://registry.comcom.ge/>

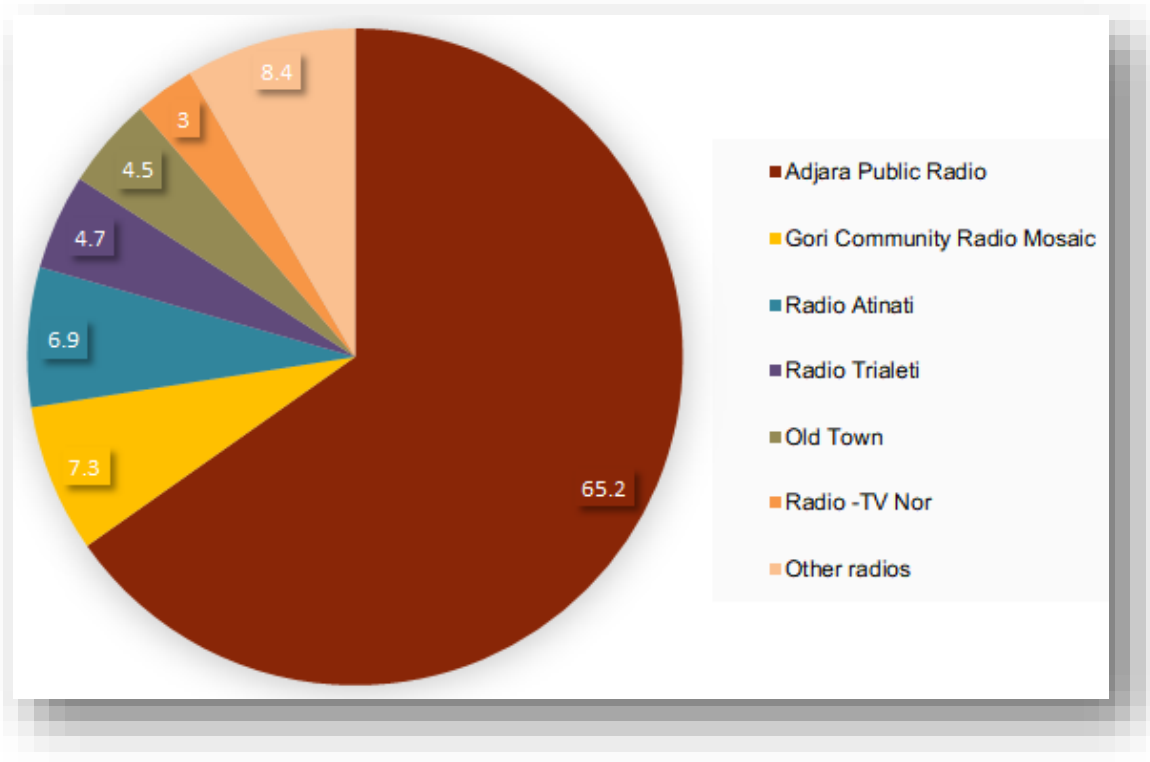
<sup>13</sup> "Our Radio" Ltd <http://www.comcom.ge/>

<sup>14</sup> "Mediastream" Ltd <http://www.comcom.ge/>

and Radio-TV Nor (GEL 24 821), whose revenue has doubled (2019: GEL 11 430); The revenue of other regional radios in 2020 amounted to GEL 70 964.

It should also be noted that the income of Radio Marneuli has been reduced by GEL 173 966 (2019: GEL 194 536, 2020: GEL 20 570);

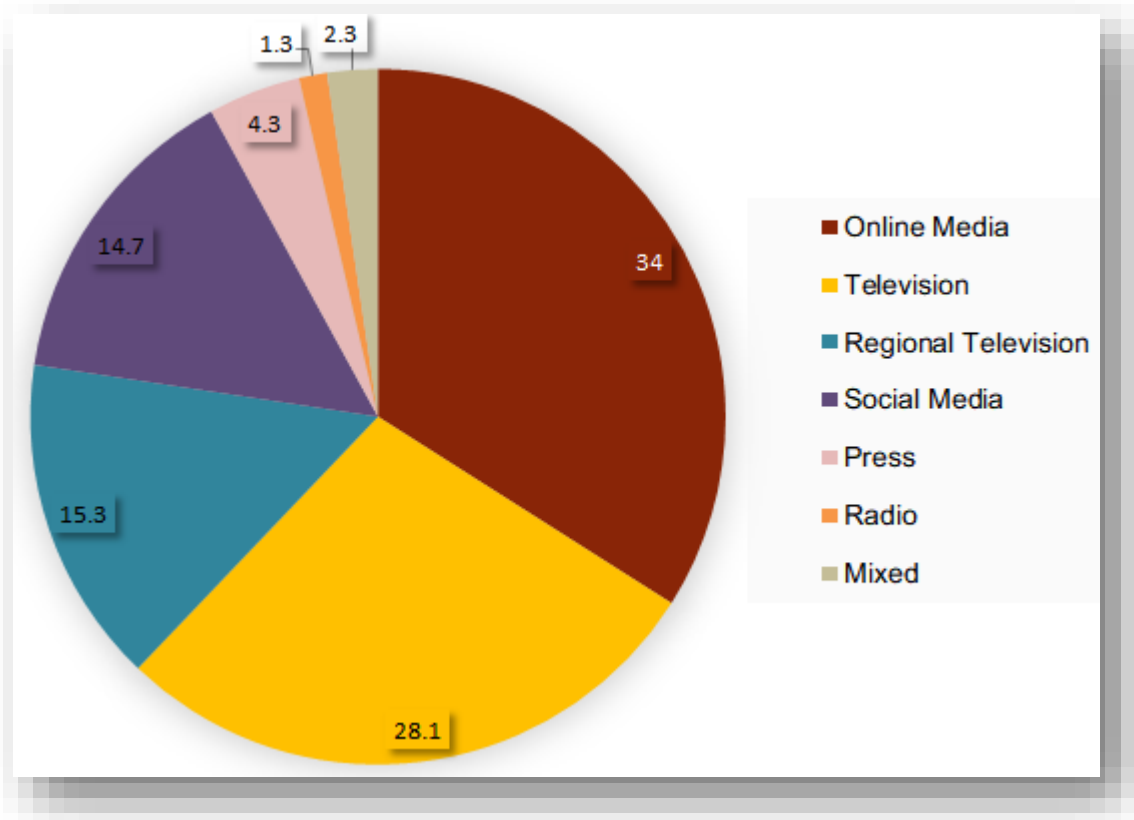
**Chart 1.6 Revenues of Regional Radio Broadcasters by Media, 2020**



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

**Overall Data.** According to the data available in the electronic database of the State Procurement Agency, in 2020, budgetary organizations signed service contracts with TV broadcasters totaling GEL 5 259 287.7. The largest share of this amount - 34% (GEL 1 788 332) went to online media, followed by national and mixed coverage televisions - 28.1 % (GEL 1 479 230), and regional televisions with 15.3 % (GEL 802 546). 14.7% (GEL 770 560.6) - on social media; 4.3% ( GEL 226,974) - on print media (428,051 GEL); 2.3% (122 934.6 GEL) - on mixed contracts; 1.3% (68 710.6 GEL) was distributed on radios. Mixed contracts combine different types of media simultaneously. Since it is impossible to identify specifically which type of media the money was transferred to on the basis of specific contracts, we have separated this data into a different category of "mixed contracts."

**Chart 2.1 Allocation of Budgetary Contracts Based on the Typology of Media Outlets, 2020**



Compared to 2019 (GEL 6,581,303), service contracts worth GEL 1,322,015.3 less were signed in 2020. In addition, as shown in the table below, only the value of online media contracts has increased, while the value of service contracts for other media has decreased.

**Table 2.1 Dynamics of Budget Redistribution for Service Contracts in 2019-2020**

Media	2020	2019	Comparison
Online	1 788 332 GEL	1 036 416 GEL	Increased by 73%
National and mixed coverage television	1 479 230 GEL	2 038 526 GEL	Decreased by 27%
Regional TV	802545.89 GEL	805 223 GEL	Decreased by 0.3%
Social Media	770 560.6 GEL	805 223 GEL	Decreased by 4%
Print Media	226 974 GEL	428 051 GEL	Decreased by 47%
Mixed Contracts	122 934.6 GEL	273 884 GEL	Decreased by 55%
Radio	68 710.6 GEL	154 580 GEL	Decreased by 56%

## 2.1. Online Media

According to the data available in the State Procurement Agency database, in 2020 - the largest amount - a total of GEL 1 788 332 was allocated to online media outlets for the purpose of advertising and dissemination of information. The most significant share of this amount (GEL 273,251) went to online publications included in Palitra Media Holding (IPN, PalitraTV.ge, Kvirispalitra.ge, Bpn.ge, Ambebi.ge, Allnews.ge); Followed by Kvira.ge and its affiliates kids.kvira.ge, region.kvira.ge - GEL 127 284; Ipress.ge and those media outlets, which are named as partners on Ipress.ge's website and are contracted with it. (ibusiness.ge; iregions.ge; imtavroba.ge<sup>15</sup>; mpress.ge<sup>16</sup>) - GEL 94,527; Primetime.ge - GEL 55 719; PIA and its affiliate publication (Daijesti.ge) - GEL 50 410; Newspress.ge and NSP.ge - GEL 50,272 (including 6,300 region.ge); lmedinews.ge - GEL 46 330; Reportiori.ge (qartuliazri.ge, cnobisfurceli.ge) - GEL 38 501; EPN and related media outlets (Economic.ge; 1news.ge, www.faxinter.news) - GEL 30 326; Bm.ge- GEL 28 702; GHN- GEL 27,680; Accentnews.ge - GEL 24 299; Marshapress.ge - GEL 21 808; NETGAZETI and BATUMELEBI-20 350 GEL; On.ge - GEL 19 305; Guardian.ge - GEL 16 383; Mcm.ge - GEL 16 200; Timer.ge - GEL 15 122; Spnews.io; spn.ge - GEL 14 550; For.ge - GEL 12 160. Other media outlets, whose contracts cost less than 10,000 GEL, amounting a total is 17 GEL, were included in the category "Miscellaneous". 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 - 120 046 GEL); In 2020, 35.5% of such contracts were signed by IPM Market Intelligence Caucasus LLC (GEL 42,568), 32.5% by Clip-Art LLC (GEL 39,066), 15.8% by Spaces LLC (GEL 19,000) and by 16.2% by other companies (GEL 19 412).

Contracts on media monitoring and information services were also signed through the intermediaries (Media Tvali LLC and IPM Research LLC). Not to mention, the amounts of monitoring and information services are not separated in contracts. Neither do they indicate which media outlets were asked to

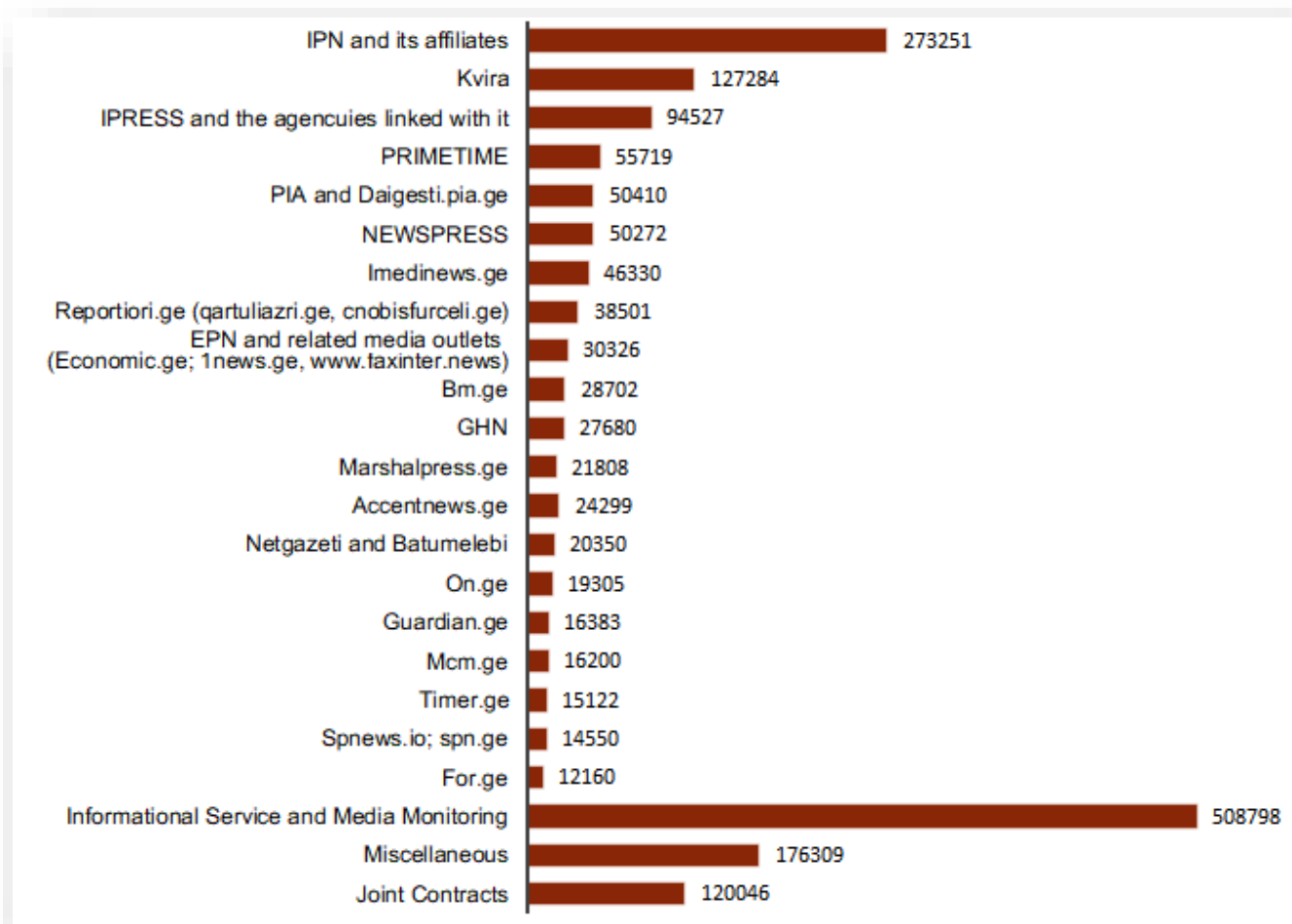
<sup>15</sup> Ipress.ge-linked agencies

<sup>16</sup> Ipress.ge partner agencies



provide information services. IPM Market Intelligence Caucasus Ltd signed contracts of various values with the Ministry of Justice of Georgia (GEL 84,000), the Parliament of Georgia (GEL 67,200), the Tbilisi City Council (GEL 56,300), the Ministry of Finance of Georgia (GEL 54,579), the State Service for Veterans Affairs (GEL 62,760), Office of the Public Defender of Georgia (GEL 40,356), the State Inspector's Office ( GEL 35,989), Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University (GEL 49,800), the Georgian Technical University (GEL 48,559) and Tskaltubo Municipality (GEL 9,255).

**Chart 2.2 Budget Allocation for Advertising and Information Distribution Services in Online Media, 2020**



As previous research<sup>17</sup> of the “Media Development Foundation” demonstrates, part of the online media publishes the funded materials on the website in accordance with professional standards and informs the audience that the posted content is not a media product and is funded by the customer. The following chapters of the study analyze only the cases where budgetary service contracts are reflected in the editorial policies of the media outlets. Also, if they are either involved in a campaign to support

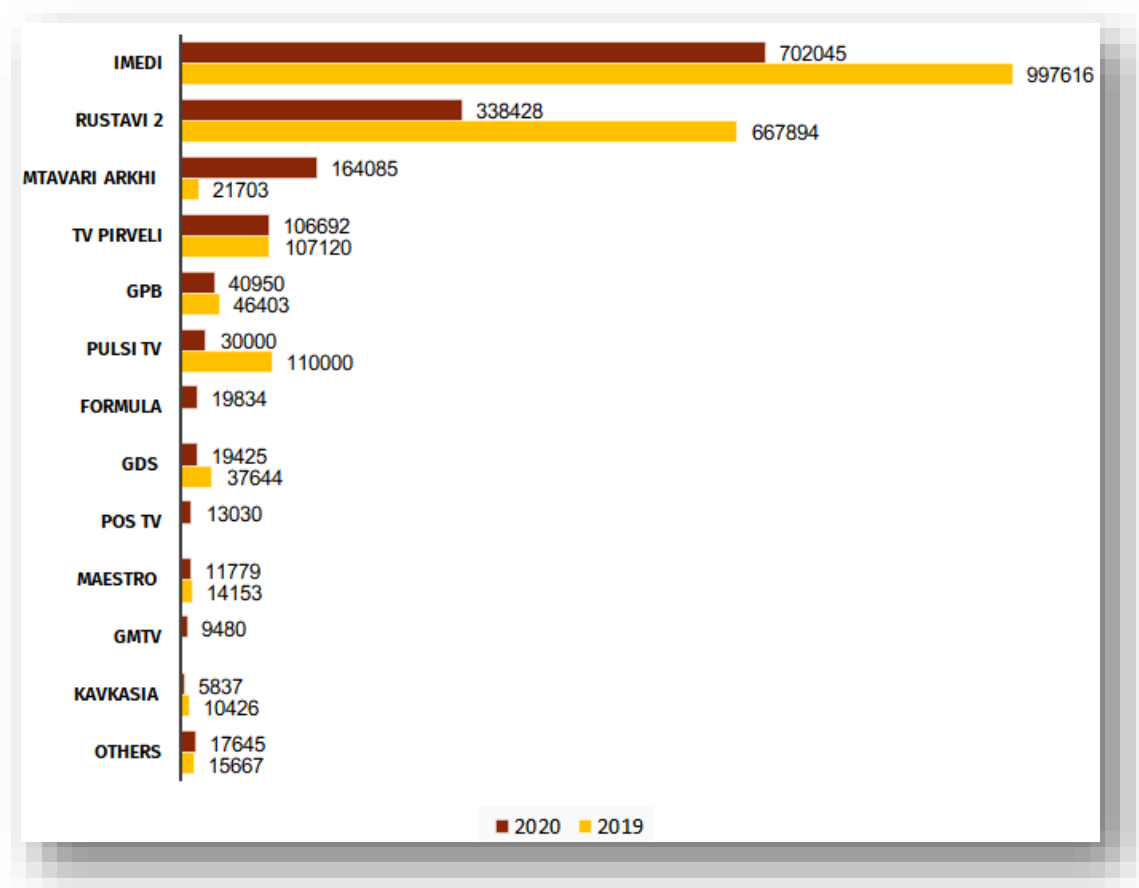
<sup>17</sup> Financial Transparency of Media 2014-2019  
[http://mediameter.ge/ge/research?field\\_research\\_category\\_tid=2](http://mediameter.ge/ge/research?field_research_category_tid=2)

the ruling party and discredit its opponents or have anti-Western editorial policies and, in addition to participating in discreditation campaigns, represent disinformation sources.

## 2.2 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 2 281 776. The largest part of this amount - GEL 1 479 230 went to nationwide and mixed coverage televisions, followed by regional televisions with GEL 802 546. The distribution of budgetary advertisements on TV channels correlates with their ratings, which reflect the coverage of the TV market by any given channel.<sup>18</sup> Among televisions, the largest share of television contracts worth GEL 702 045 went to Imedi TV, followed by Rustavi 2 (GEL 338 428), Pulse TV (GEL 15 110,000), Mtavari Arkhi (GEL 164 085), and TV Pirveli (GEL 107,120). Other televisions,<sup>19</sup> whose revenues were less than GEL 10,000 in total, received funds worth GEL 17.645 for advertising services.

**Chart 2.3 Budget Allocation for Advertising to Nationwide and Mixed Coverage Broadcasters, 2019-2020**



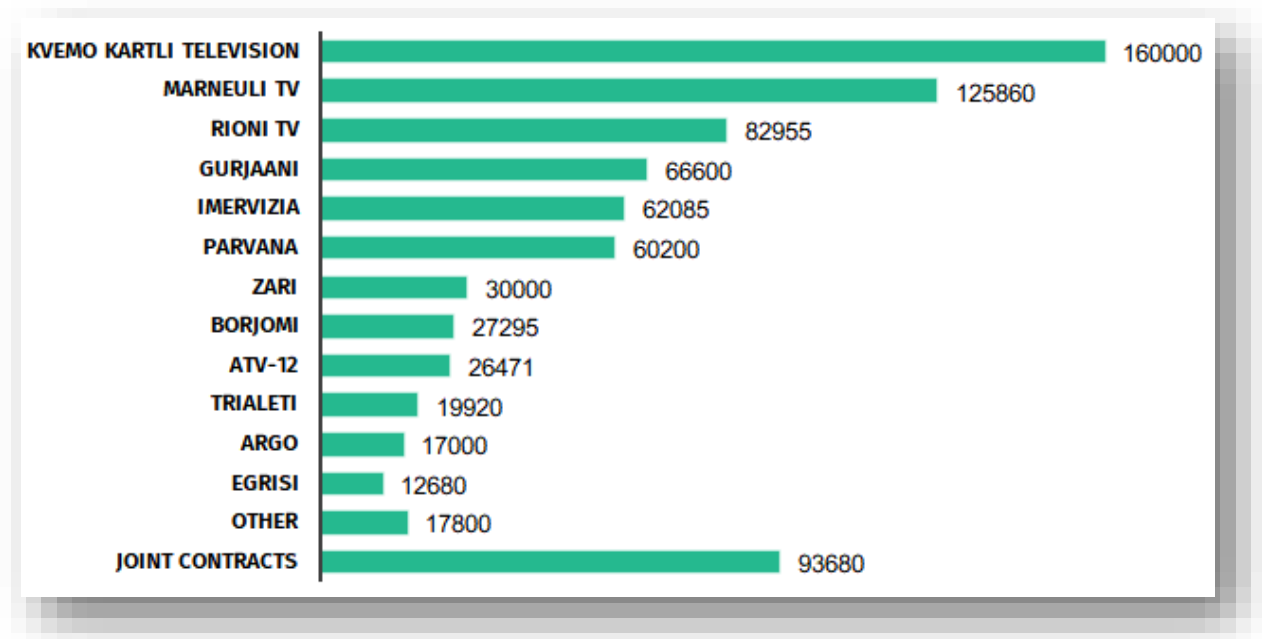
<sup>18</sup> TVMR Georgia <http://www.tvmr.ge/> Tri Media Intelligence <http://infosyssharp.tmi.ge/>

<sup>19</sup> Palitra TV, Quality Channel, Music Box, TV 24.

In 2020, the decrease in funds, compared to 2019, is related to the general downward trend, in addition, the contract value of Mtavari Arkhi has increased compared to 2019, as the channel started broadcasting at the end of 2019 (2020: 164 085 GEL; 2019: 21 703 GEL).

**Regional TV Broadcasters.** Local municipalities and their subordinate agencies account for the largest share of contracts signed with regional TV broadcasters (total amount – GEL 802 546). Like in 2016-2019, Kvemo Kartli television again received the largest budgetary financing among regional TV broadcasters (GEL 160,000), constituting 65% (GEL 243,389) of total revenues. Kvemo Kartli television is followed “Marneuli TV” – GEL 76,469; Rioni TV – GEL 82 955; “Gurjaani” – GEL 66 600; Imervizia – GEL 62 085; Parvana – GEL 60 200; Zari – GEL 30 000 Borjomi – GEL 27 295; ATV-12 – GEL 26 471; Other televisions,<sup>20</sup> whose revenues were less than GEL 20,000, received less than GEL 67 400 in total, for advertising services. In 2020, joint contracts (several companies) were signed with regional TV channels by the following intermediary companies: Alliance of Broadcasters NNLE<sup>21</sup> (GEL 64 680), Georgian Alliance of Regional Broadcasters<sup>22</sup> (GEL 29 000). Based on the signed contracts, the companies placed information services worth GEL 93 679.89 in total on various regional channels.

**Chart 2.4 Budgetary Allocations for Advertising Among Regional Televisions, 2020**



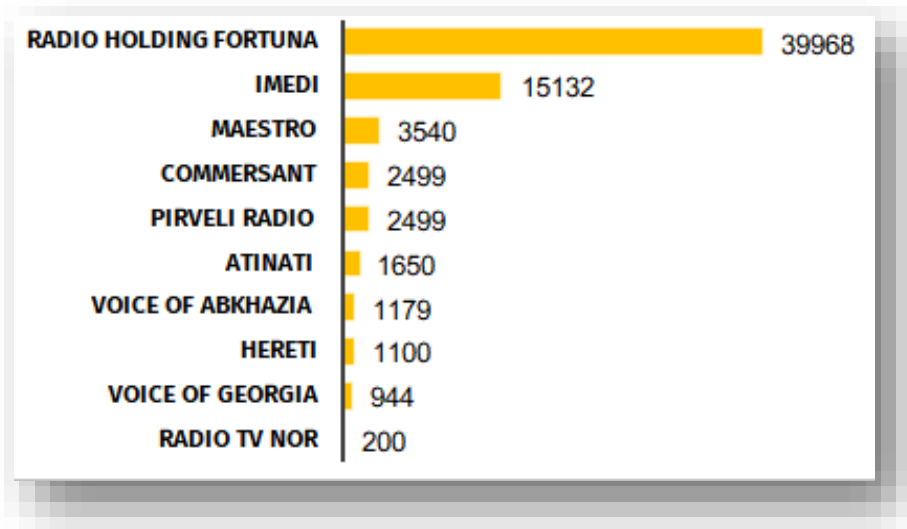
**Radio Stations:** Contracts signed with radio stations totaled GEL 68 710.58. The biggest budgetary contract was signed with Radio Holding Fortuna (Fortuna, Fortuna +, Ar Daidardo, AvtoRadio – GEL 39 967.58), followed by Radio Imedi - GEL 15 132, Radio Maestro – GEL 3 540, Radio Commersant – GEL 2 499, Radio Pirveli– GEL 2 499 and Radio Atinati – GEL 1,650; Radio Voice of Abkhazia – GEL 1 179; Radio Hereti – GEL 1 110; Revenues received by other radio stations through budget contracts (not exceeding GEL 500) totaled GEL 1 144.

<sup>20</sup> “Trialeti”, “Argo”, “Egrisi”, “Kolkheti 89”, “TV 25”, “Guria-TV”, “Ialoni TV”

<sup>21</sup> Contracts with [NNLE Produce in Georgia](#) (18 480 GEL) and [Election Administration of Georgia](#)(46 200 GEL)

<sup>22</sup>Contract with the [Election Administration of Georgia](#) (28 999.89 GEL)

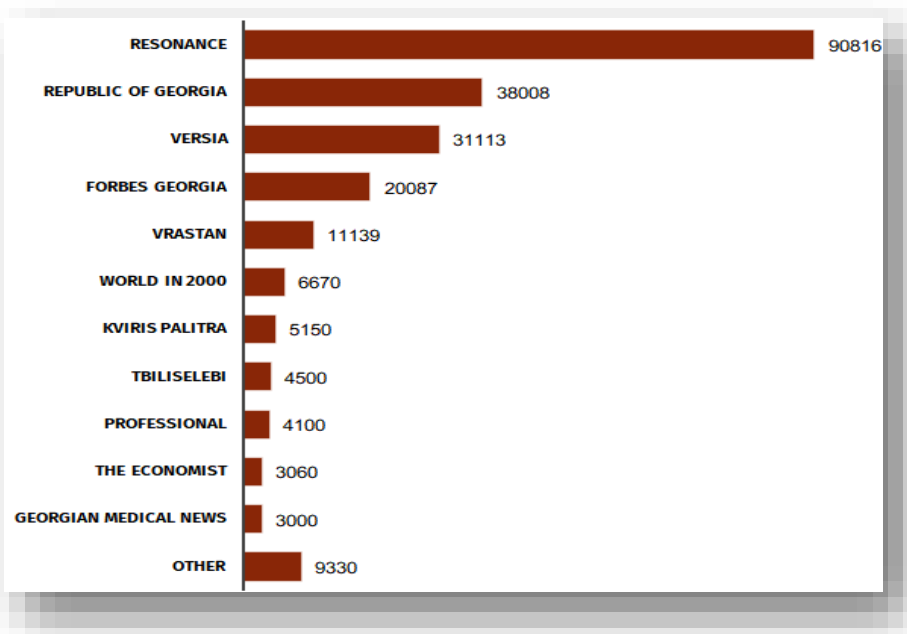
**Chart 2.5 Allocation of Budgetary Funds Among Radio Stations, 2020**



### 2.3 Print Media

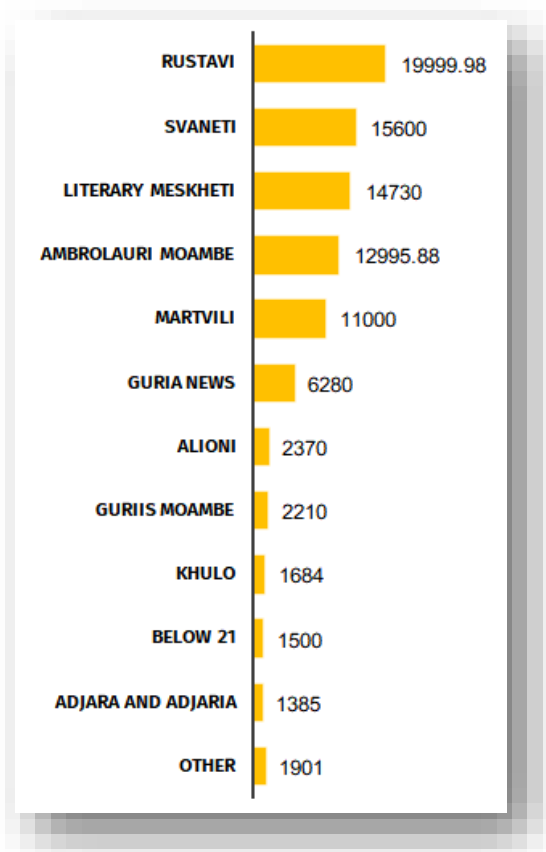
For print media, contracts of the most value (GEL 90 816.43) were signed with “Resonance,” followed by the newspaper “Sakartvelos Respublika” [Republic of Georgia] (GEL 38 008.37), “Versia” (GEL 31 113), “FORBES Georgia” (GEL 20087.2), “Vrastan” (GEL 11 139), “World in 2000” (GEL 6 670), “Kviris Palitra” (GEL 5 150), “Tbiliselebi” (GEL 4 500), “The Economist” (GEL 3 060), Georgian Medical News (GEL 3 000). Newspapers whose contracts totaled less than GEL 3000 were included in the category of “Miscellaneous,” including: “Experimental and Clinical Medicine, Akhali Taoba, Alia, Gurjistan, New Education, and Where.” - totaling GEL 9 330.

**Chart 2.6 Allocation of Budgetary Funds Among Print Media, 2020**



Among regional print media, contract of the most value was signed with the newspaper "Rustavi" (GEL 20 000), followed by "Svaneti" (GEL 15 600), "Literary Meskheta" (GEL 14 730), "Ambrolauri Moambe" (GEL 12 995.88), "Martvili" (GEL 11 000), "Guria News" (GEL 6 280), "Alioni" - (GEL 2 370), "Guria Moambe" - (GEL 2 210), "Khulo" (GEL 1 684), Below 21 (GEL 1 500), "Adjara and Adjaria" (GEL 1 385). Other newspapers ("Lanchkhuti Moambe", "Lanchkhuti Plus", "Chokhatauri Matsne", "Guria Today", "Akhali Sakartvelo"), whose revenue was less than GEL 1 000, signed contracts totalling GEL 1 901.

**Chart 2.7 Allocation of Budgetary Funds Among Regional Print Media, 2020**



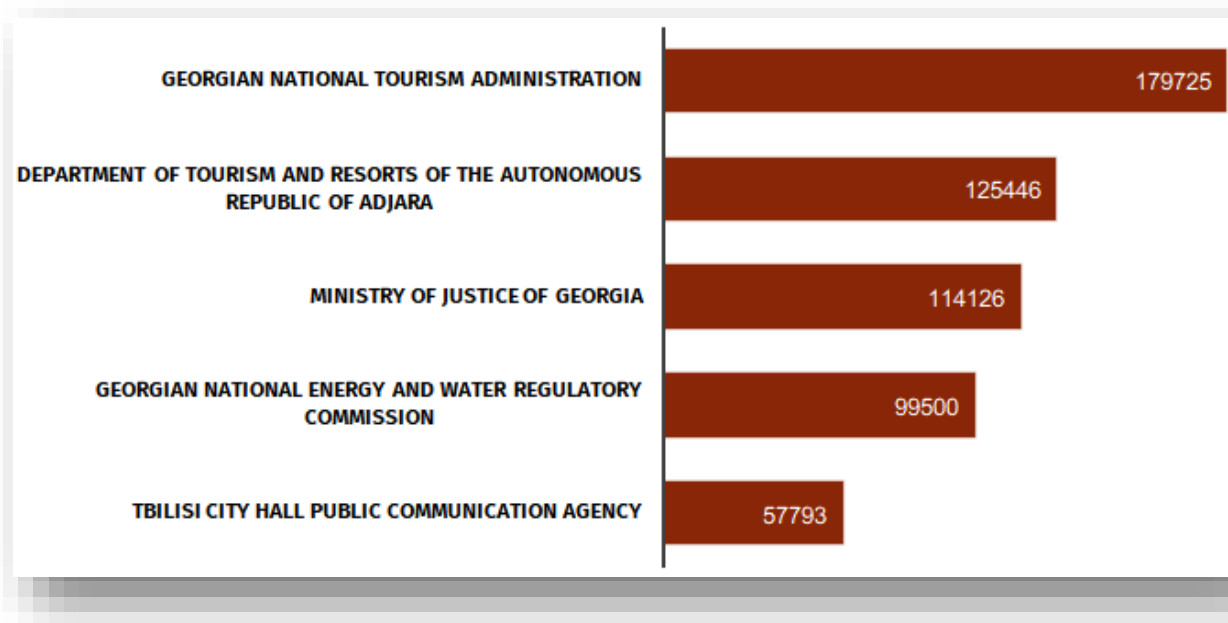
## 2.4 Social Media

According to the electronic data of the State Procurement Agency, a total of GEL 738 667 was allocated to online media outlets for the purpose of advertising and dissemination of information.<sup>23</sup> The contracts of the Georgian National Tourism Administration had the most valuable advertisements on social media (GEL 179 725); Followed by the Department of Tourism and Resorts of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara (GEL 125 446); Ministry of Justice of Georgia (GEL 114 126), Georgian National Energy and

<sup>23</sup> Out of this amount, only the contract signed between Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and "4 Media Ltd" entailed posting of information on LinkedIn along with Facebook and Instagram (the total cost of the contract is GEL 20,425);

Water Regulatory Commission (GEL 99,500), Tbilisi City Hall Public Communication Agency (GEL 57 793).

**Chart 2.8 Allocation of Advertisement Funds Among Administrative Bodies on Social Media, 2020**



### 2.5 Budgetary Funds for Agencies to Disseminate Information on Facebook Pages and Groups

After analyzing the budgetary contract data, similar to 2019, one could observe the following tendency in 2020: The contracts signed by the administrative bodies on the dissemination of information services also entailed the obligation to share the information on other Facebook groups and pages, in addition to posting the materials on the agency's website. One PIA-affiliated advertising agency and 3 such online media outlets have been identified that had an obligation to share the media content of budgetary organizations in various Facebook groups.

In 2020, the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Commission signed the contract of the highest value of this type (the cost of the contract is 99,500 GEL) through the intermediary organization "Clip-Art Ltd." The Contract (SPA190005740) posted on the website of the Georgian Procurement Agency, in accordance with the technical assignment, entailed sharing of materials in at least 5 segmentally selected Facebook groups.

Apart from the Media and Digital Agency "Clip-Art", 3 media organizations were identified (For.ge, Guardian.ge and Stv.ge), with which the budgetary contracts signed with organizations (Akhalkalaki and Khobi municipalities, Georgian Energy and Water Regulatory Commission, IP - National - Contracts signed by the Screening Center, LEPL - State Military Scientific-Technical Center "Delta") entailed sharing materials commissioned by state authorities on Facebook groups and pages. The Akhalkalaki and Khobi municipalities' contracts stipulate that in addition to the official Facebook pages

of the media, the materials should have been posted on popular political or other Facebook groups with a total of more than 500,000 members.

**Table 2.3 Contracts Signed by Budgetary Agencies in 2020 on the Service of Sharing Information on Facebook Groups and Pages**

Contractor	Budgetary Agency	Contract Value in GEL
Clip-Art	Georgian Energy and Water Regulatory Commission	99 500
Stv.ge Saemgrelo Media Organization	Khobi Municipality Cultural-Educational Community Center	3 000
For.ge	National Screening Center	2 200
Guardian.ge "Guardian Ltd"	Akhalkalaki Municipality City Hall	4 900
Guardian.ge "Guardian Ltd"	LEPL SSTC "Delta"	2 277

Specific Facebook pages and groups - where the media should have placed the materials - were indicated only in the contracts signed between the NNLE "National Screening Center" and the NNLE "Union Press-Georgia" (For.ge). In particular, the contract signed with For.ge envisages the publication of materials on 4 Facebook pages ([Yellow Facts](#), [Tbilisi news](#), [Freedom](#), [Poetry Front news](#)) and in 2 groups ([Positive](#), [For.Ge - Informational Analytical Portal](#))

In order to find out which Facebook accounts were being used to post the predetermined information, the Media Development Foundation requested public information from the contracting authorities. Noteworthy, public information was not provided only by LEPL - State Military Scientific-Technical Center "Delta" and Akhalkalaki Municipality City Hall. According to the information provided by the Georgian National Energy and Water Regulatory Commission and the Khobi Municipality Cultural and Public Education Center, one could observe the following:

- According to the contract signed between Khobi Municipality Cultural and Public Education Center and Samegrelo Media Organization, amounting GEL 3000, Samegrelo Media Organization STV.GE should have posted the information on its [Facebook page](#) and 4 following Facebook groups: [კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი](#), [Kakha Kaladze, Mayor of Tbilisi] [ეს საქართველო](#), [This is Georgia], [СУХУМИ](#), <https://www.facebook.com/zugdidi/>. One of the four ([კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი](#)) is **supportive** of the Mayor of Tbilisi and the **Georgian Dream**. Two ([ეს საქართველო](#) and [СУХУМИ](#)) are private, while one of them ([ეს საქართველო](#)) is **supportive of the Alliance of Patriots** of Georgia party and is directed **against the United National Movement**. The group often displays posts from pro-governmental experts. The remaining group (<https://www.facebook.com/zugdidi/>) indicated in the letter of Khobi Municipality is no longer available. Nonetheless, considering the last year's report of Media Development Foundation, the group predominantly shared posts supportive of the ruling Georgian Dream party during the 2020 Parliamentary elections.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Media Development Foundation, 2020. Financial Transparency of Media 2019. p. 31 <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/geo/view-library/187>

- Within the framework of the contract signed between the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission and Clip Art Ltd, Clip Art had to post predetermined information into 5 Facebook groups ("ეს საინტერესოა" [This is interesting] - 36,200 members; "გაიგე პირველმა" [Be the First to Know] - 9,200 members, "სასარგებლო რჩევები" [Useful Tips]- 18,500 members, "ყოველდღიური სიახლეები" [Daily News]- 19,300 members;" "ცნობისმოყვარე" [Curious] - 45,300 members) and 9 news agencies (www. Interpressnews.ge; www.pia.ge; www.info9.ge; www.kvira.ge: www.ipress.ge; www.for.ge: www.bm.ge; www.ambebi.ge; www.2020news.ge). It should be noted that 5 Facebook groups are linked with "Clip-Art" and its media outlet digestpia.ge and share the materials of this outlet.

**Table 2.4 Facebook Groups, Pages and News Agencies where Budgetary Organizations Shared/Disseminated Information**

Administrative Body	Media/Intermediary Company	Informational Agencies	Various Thematic Facebook Pages	Facebook Groups
Khobi Municipality Cultural and Public Education Center	Samegrelo Media Organization STV		1. <a href="http://STV.ge">STV.ge</a>	1. <a href="#">ეს საინტერესოა</a> (private) 1. <a href="#">კახა კალაძე თბილისის მერი</a> 2. <a href="#">CYXYMI</a> (private) 3. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/zugdidi/">https://www.facebook.com/zugdidi/</a> (Deleted)
Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission	Clip-Art	1. interpressnews.ge 2. pia.ge 3. info9.ge 4. kvira.ge 5. ipress.ge 6. for.ge 7. bm.ge 8. ambebi.ge 9. 2020news.ge		1. <a href="#">This is interesting</a> 2. <a href="#">Daily News</a> 3. <a href="#">Useful Tips</a> 4. <a href="#">Be the First to Know</a> 5. <a href="#">Curious</a>
National Screening Center	For.ge		1. <a href="#">Yellow Faqts</a> , 2. <a href="#">Tbilisi news</a> , 3. <a href="#">Freedom</a> , 4. <a href="#">Poetry Front news</a>	1. <a href="#">Positive</a> , 2. <a href="#">For.Ge - Informational Analytical Portal</a>

**Stv.ge** - Samegrelo Media Organization (Stv.ge)<sup>25</sup> signed contracts worth GEL 9 990 with budgetary organizations in 2020, compared to GEL 17 150 in 2019 and GEL 10 650 in 2018. The outlet's website features election banners of the ruling party's Zugdidi mayoral candidate Mamuka Tsotsoria and Poti mayoral candidate Beka Vacharadze, indicating that the ruling party also places political advertisements in the agency.

<sup>25</sup> Transcript from the Registry <https://bit.ly/3gtZ0PP>



Similar to the 2020 parliamentary elections, which were covered in the previous report,<sup>26</sup> STV.ge covered only the [candidates](#) of the ruling “Georgian Dream” party in a positive light, while in Samegrelo, it covered the election campaign of the opposition candidates negatively or did not cover at all.

**Table 2.5. Examples of Negative Coverage of Opposition Candidates in Local Self-government Elections**

Party/Candidate	Publication
<p>“For Georgia”</p> <p>Zugdidi- Giorgi Shengelia</p>	<p><a href="#">Citizens Calling Giorgi Shengelia a Traitor, Unprincipled and a Plagiarist</a></p> <div> </div> <p><a href="#">Is the Mayoral Candidate Known in Chkhorotsku and is he a Resident of Chkhorotsku?</a></p> <p><a href="#">Former Gakharia Party Candidate to Opposition: Using the Dirty Hands of Politics is, at Least, Immoral</a></p> <div> <div> <p>იცნობენ თუ არა ჩხოროწყუში მერობის კანდიდატს და არის თუ არა ის ჩხოროწყუს მკვიდრი?</p> </div> <div> <p>გახარიას კარტიიდან წასული ყოფილი კანდიდატი ოპოზიციას: კოლიტიკის ბინძური ხელეებით ფატური, მინიმუმ, უხელობაა</p> </div> </div>

<sup>26</sup> Media Development Foundation, 2020. Financial Transparency of Media 2019. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/geo/view-library/187>

**United National Movement**

Zugdidi- Anzor Melia

Poti - Gigi Ugulava

[Another Scandal Surrounding the Zugdidi National Movement Mayoral Candidate Election Blog - The Role of the Family in the Zugdidi Politics of the UNM](#)  
[Pre-election Blog–Political Tourism](#)



**წინასაარჩევნო ბლოგი – კოლიტიკური ტურიზმი**  
by რედაქტორი 21 აგვისტო 0 113  
დღეს ჩამს ბლოგში მოგიყვებით



**საარჩევნო სპიტიხავი ბლოგი – ოჯახის როლი "ნაცების" გუგულიძურ კოლიტიკაში**

Along with other pro-governmental media outlets, STV.ge was also actively involved in the [campaign](#) against former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia's party "for Georgia," when information about the party's dissolution was disseminated in a coordinated and identical manner.

Samegrelo news agency STV.ge is also linked with several Facebook accounts, which share the materials of the same publication through different platforms. these are:

Facebook page  
[Region News](#)  
2772 Subscribers



Individual account  
[რეგიონი დღეს](#)  
[Region Today]



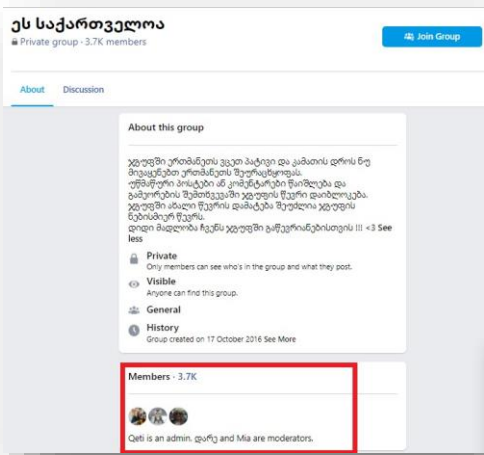
Facebook group  
[მთავარი სამეგრელოში](#)  
[Main events in Samegrelo]  
The administrator of the group is Malkhaz Basilaia, editor and founder of STV.ge



According to the information provided by the Khobi Municipality Cultural and Educational Public Center, in addition to supporting Tbilisi Mayor Kakhi Kaladze, Samegrelo Information Portal is responsible for posting information in two closed groups. According to information obtained from these private groups, one ([სუხუმი](#)) shares posts with different political content, while the other ([this is Georgia](#)) is linked with the supporters of the Alliance of Patriots and includes content supportive of the ruling party and against its opponents.

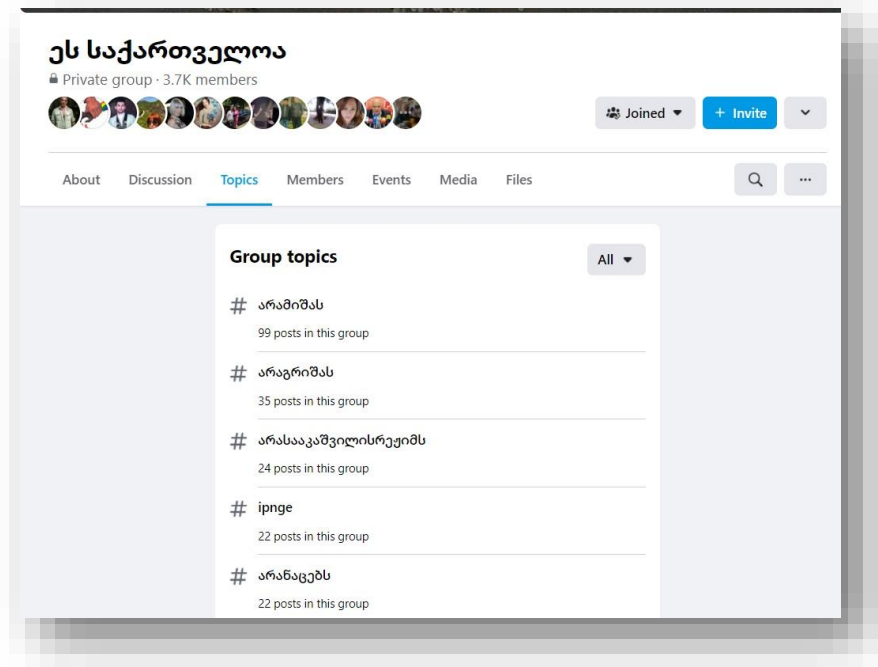
**This is Georgia.** "[This is Georgia](#)," the group in which stv.ge is responsible for posting information, is a private Facebook group with 3700 members. The group is allegedly affiliated with the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia and also showcases posts by pro-governmental experts supportive of the ruling party and against the United National Movement.

The following circumstances indicate the group's affiliation with the Alliance of Patriots: As mentioned in the previous report,<sup>27</sup> A photo of the Patriots Alliance protest was used on the group's cover in 2019, and the group's administrators are [Qeti Vadachkoria](#), [Dare Shengelia](#), and [Mia Darchiaa](#). On her Facebook page, Shengelia often shares the posts of the Patriots Alliance and its affiliate TV "Obieqtivi," while Katie Vadachkoria has posted a [photo](#), which shows that she was present at the "Alliance of Patriots"



<sup>27</sup> Media Development Foundaiton, 2020. Financial Transparency of Media 2019. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/geo/view-library/187>


In the private group "This is Georgia," the posts against the "National Movement" are shared in an active manner, including the following hashtags: #NotoMisha, #NotoGrisha, #NotoSaakashviliRegime, #NotoUNM



ეს საქართველოა

Qeti Vadachkoria shared a post.  
Admin · 23 September at 04:40 · 🌐

რაც მიზას უნდა  
მიხეილ მრავალშვილიანი 🤔🤔🤔



მიხეილ უკრაინოლოგი  
22 September at 11:23 · 🌐

მიხეილ მრავალშვილიანი

ეს საქართველოა

Png Primenewsgeorgia shared a link.  
21 September at 06:02 · 🌐

ამ ბილბორდებს შევხვდავთ, შეგვზარავს და ვიტყვით, რომ ეს ალარასდროს უნდა დავაბრუნოთ - წულუკიანი




PRIMENEWSGEORGIA.GE

ამ ბილბორდებს შევხვდავთ, შეგვზარავს და ვიტყვით, რომ ეს ალარასდროს უნდა დავაბრუნო...

👍 2

ეს საქართველოა

Ghia Abashidze shared a post.  
14h · 🌐



POSTV - ანალიტიკა  
14h · 🌐

კვირის ბოლო - ნაცსექტის სიყალბე საქართველოს პარტნიორებზე  
ავტორი: Ghia Abashidze

Qeti Vadachkoria shared a link.  
Admin · 4h · 🌐

“ანზორა მელია, სვავო იცი რა გააკეთა ბიძინამ?”  
2019 წლის სტატიაა მაგრამ დღესაც ზედ გაკვდებთ ნაცებო!!!

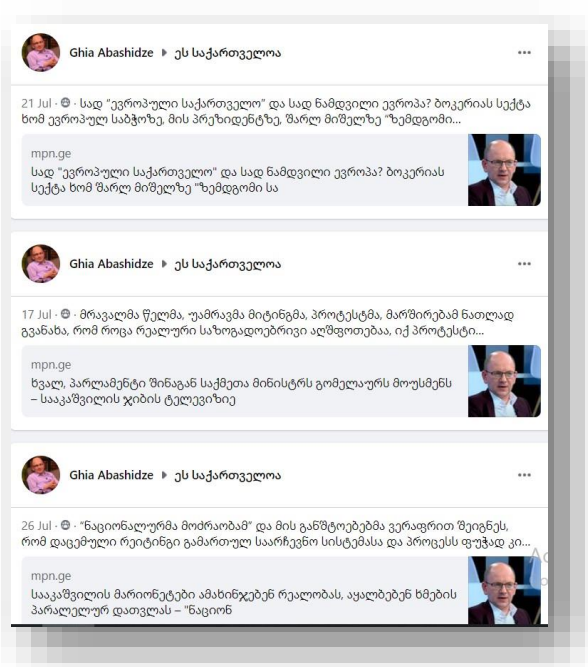
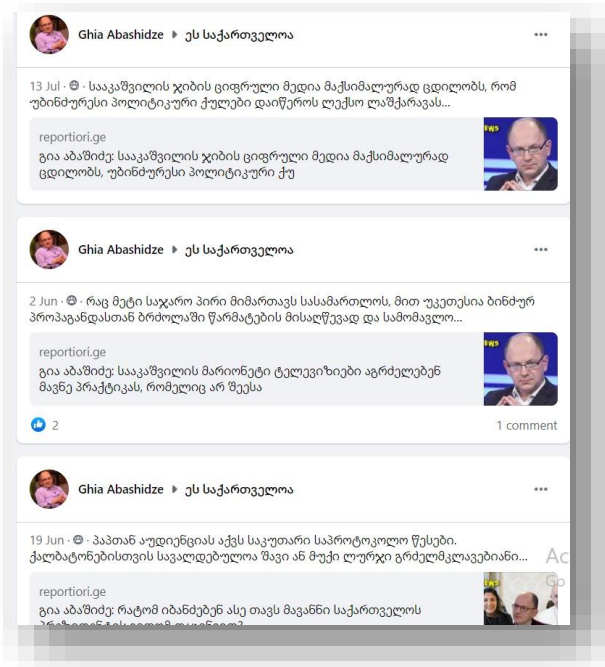


EXCLUSIVENEWS.GE

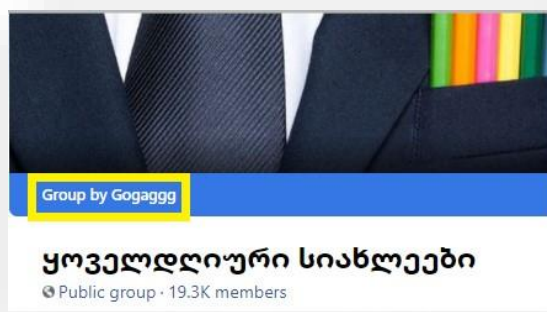
“ანზორა მელია, სვავო იცი რა გააკეთა ბიძინამ?” – EXCLUSIVENEWS.GE

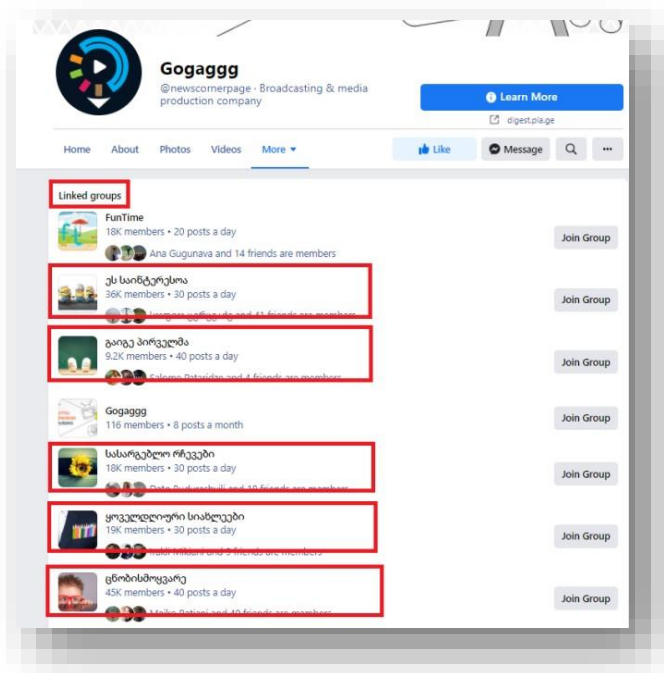
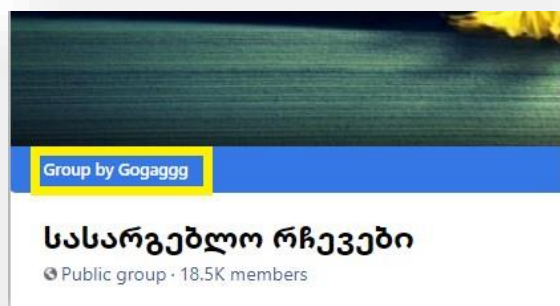
👍 Like      💬 Comment

Noteworthy, the governmental expert Gia Abashidze actively shares the materials of marshalpress.ge and reportiori.ge - online editions of government editorial policy - in this group.



**Clip-Art and PIA News Agency.** According to the information provided by the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission, a service contract worth GEL 99 500 signed between Clip-Art LLC and the commission envisaged placement of information on the websites of nine news agencies as well as in five Facebook groups. Facebook groups, where the commission's information is placed, are interlinked and have been spreading materials identical to Digestpia within the same audience segment. Four ([გაბიგი პირველმა](#) [Be the First to Know], [სასარგებლო რჩევები](#) [Useful Tips], [ყოველდღიური სიახლეები](#) [Daily News], [ეს საინტერესოა](#) [This is Interesting]) out of five Facebook groups are owned by Facebook page [Gogaggg](#). In its 'About us' section, the latter indicates the website of [www.digest.pia.ge](#) and an electronic address of PIA news agency. The fifth group [ცნობისმოყვარე](#) [Curious] appears in the list of the groups affiliated with [Gogaggg](#), while [Digestpia](#) and [funtime.ge](#), a page created by Clip-Art, are featured among its admins and moderators.





It is noteworthy that all five Facebook groups mainly share Digestpia's content. The latter is a media outlet affiliated with Clip-Art<sup>28</sup> and, along with the PIA news agency, [pursues](#) a pro-governmental editorial policy.<sup>29</sup> Diverse content and diversified materials frequently contain articles directed against the political opponents of the incumbent party. A vivid illustration of the tendency is the following

<sup>28</sup> Natia Orvelashvili, a wife of Dimitri Tikaradze, founder of PIA news agency, is a 100% shareholder of Clip Art <https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVlyOwlsX3qmYsntmLmFO0pt9TL3NjIRTTIKqcsCIW6cbMTXhFmq06J5TfYj1oU>

<http://mediameter.ge/ge/media-profiles/pia>

<sup>29</sup> Myth Detector, 15 September 2021, Pro-Governmental Media Against Former PM Gakharia and His Political Party <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/pro-governmental-media-against-former-pm-gakharia-and-his-political-party>



headlines that target Giorgi Gakharia, former Prime Minister and leader of the newly-established “For Georgia” party:<sup>30</sup>

- *“Gakharia Party MP Candidate Arrested for Stealing Copper Boiler”*
- *“The Doctor, Who, as Gakharia Claims, Performed His Drug Screening, Specializes in Depression, Fatigue, Dementia, and Distraction in Vienna - POSTV”*
- *“Zaal Anjaparidze on Giorgi Gakharia: After Bidzina Ivanishvili Elevated Giorgi Gakharia to the Level He Could Hardly Imagine even in his Dreams, Yesterday We Learnt that Ivanishvili Failed to Justify His Trust.”*
- *“Tamta Megrelishvili on Giorgi Gakharia: Shame on you! Ivanishvili Turned You into a Man Out of Nothing, and Now You Say with Your Head Held High that ‘Bidzina Ivanishvili did not Justify Your Trust’”*
- *“Mr. Gakharia, You Will not Go Far with a Pub Contingent in Your Party...” - Yuna Shapatava*



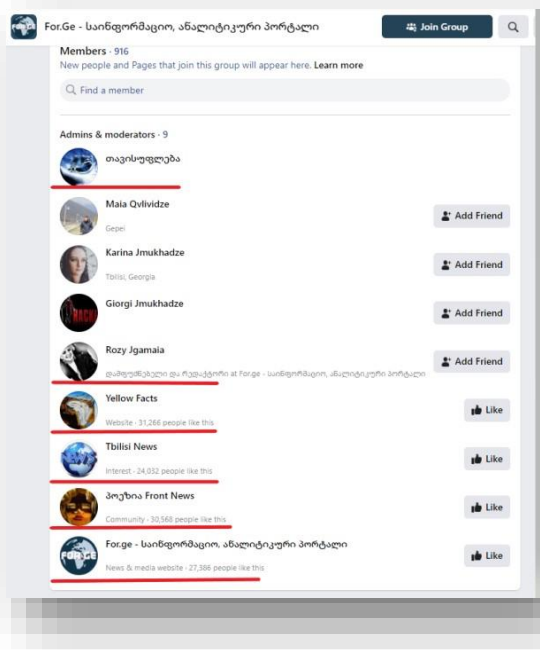
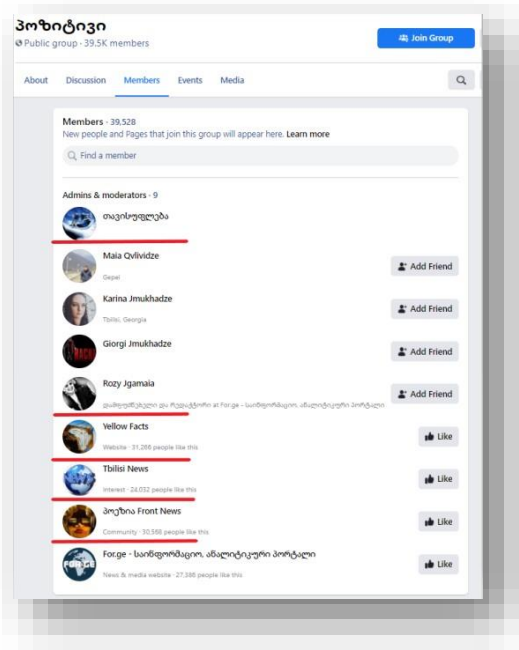
<sup>30</sup> Digestpia’s materials against Giorgi Gakharia, leader of “For Georgia” party <https://bit.ly/3i7oQgZ>



Noteworthy, the information about the theft of the copper boiler by a member of the Gakharia party before the elections was disseminated not only by the Facebook-related pages linked to “Clip-Art” and “daigestpia,” but also by other platforms with pro-governmental editorial policies.

Marshalpress (mpn.ge)	Reportiori.ge	Exclusivenews.ge	Pia.ge	For.ge
<a href="#">Gakharia Party MP Candidate Arrested for Stealing Copper Boiler</a>	<a href="#">Gakharia Party MP Candidate Arrested for Stealing Copper Boiler</a>	<a href="#">Gakharia Party MP Candidate Arrested for Stealing Copper Boiler</a>	<a href="#">Gakharia Party MP Candidate Arrested for Stealing Copper Boiler</a>	<a href="#">Gakharia Party MP Candidate Arrested for Stealing Copper Boiler</a>

**For.ge.** In 2020, budgetary organizations signed contracts worth GEL 12 160 with the news agency “For.ge.” Among them, the contract signed with the National Screening Center was linking the service of dissemination of information, like in the case of digestpia, with For.ge’s Facebook pages. All four pages ([Yellow Facts](#), [Tbilisi news](#), [თავისუფლება](#), [პოზიზი Front news](#)) and two groups ([პოზიტივი \[Positive\]](#), [For.Ge-საინფორმაციო, ანალიტიკური პორტალი \[For.Ge - Informational-analytical Portal\]](#)), where the information should be placed under the contract, are affiliated with For.ge, since all of them indicate [www.for.ge](http://www.for.ge) as their addresses in their respective ‘About Us’ sections. In addition, Facebook groups “For.ge – Informational-analytical Portal” and “Positive” are administered by Rozeta Jgamaia, founder and editor of For.ge, in addition to the above-mentioned four Facebook pages run by For.ge.



On August 7, 2020, Rozeta Jgamaia the founder of For.ge and its board member, Giorgi Iakobashvili,<sup>31</sup> in partnership with Ia Metreveli and Ioseb Manjavidze, established a non-governmental organization “Let’s End It” aimed to put an end to the United National Movement.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Extract from the public registry <https://bit.ly/2YEmCLG>

<sup>32</sup> <https://formulanews.ge/News/35102>

## 2.6. Budgetary Contracts with Media Outlets Using Hate speech, Fanning Anti-Western Sentiments and Spreading Disinformation

The 2020 data analysis has revealed that similar to previous years, administrative bodies did not have clear-cut criteria for selecting media outlets to disseminate information and place advertisements.<sup>33</sup> The selection was not always based on audience research or the needs of the target audience. Furthermore, the non-discrimination policy, which is envisaged by Recommendation No.7 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)<sup>34</sup> and which recommends the CoE member states to respect anti-discrimination approaches, was not taken into consideration either.

Like in 2014-2019, in 2020, budget organizations continued to sign contracts with some media outlets for the purpose of advertising and dissemination of information. Part of these media outlets was known for their anti-Western editorial policy, spreading disinformation, and using hate speech. Among these media outlets are: Reportiori news agency and Kartuli Gazeti, newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika, as well as news agencies “Marshalpress” and “Spacesnews • სივრცეები.” In addition to anti-Western messages, in 2020, the newspaper "Sakartvelos Respublika" [Republic of Georgia] additionally published conspiracies and disinformation regarding the coronavirus pandemic and vaccination.

**Table 2.10. Budgetary Contracts with Media Outlets Using Hate Speech, Fanning Anti-Western Sentiments and Spreading Disinformation**

Media Outlet	Price of Service Contract	Budgetary Organization
Reportiori (qartuliazri.ge, cnobisfurceli.ge) <sup>35</sup>	38 501	Special Penitentiary Service; Academy of Ministry of Finance; Didube Municipal Government (Gamageoba); Gldani-Nadzaladevi Complex Sport Center; Sachkhere Municipality, self-governing unit; Martvili Municipality City Hall; Likani Residence LLC; and other subordinate or local government services

<sup>33</sup> MDF (2016) Practice of allocating budgetary resources among media for the release of information and advertisement [http://mediameter.ge/sites/default/files/mdf\\_ti\\_1.pdf](http://mediameter.ge/sites/default/files/mdf_ti_1.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Paragraph 9, p.6, paragraph 16, p.7, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-7-revised-on-national-legislatio/16808b5aae>

<sup>35</sup> Cnobisfurceli.ge is indicated in the contract of the Ministry of Corrections of Georgia with Reportiori and Kartuli Azri. The page, however, is not currently available.

Newspaper “Sakartvelos Respublika”	38 008	National Environmental Agency; Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission; JSC Georgian State Electrosystem; Ministry of Finance and Economy of Adjara Autonomous Republic; Ministry of Education and Culture of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia; Georgian Academy of Agricultural Sciences; Sakpatenti; Georgian Technical University; Ivane Beritashvili Center of Experimental Biomedicine; Ferdinand Tavadze Metallurgy and Materials Science Institute; I. Vekua Sokhumi Institute of Physics and Technology; R. Dvali Institute of Machine Mechanics
Marshalpress News Agency	21 808	Khelvachauri, Ambrolauri, Dedoplistskaro, Adigeni, Akhmeta, Mtskheta Municipality City Halls; Administration of State Representative-Governor in Lanchkhuti, Ozurgeti and Chokhatauri Municipalities; Association of Culture and Child and Adolescent Creative Development Centers; Zestaponi Cleaning and Improvement Service Center; My Lawyer
Spacesnews <a href="http://www.spnews.io">www.spnews.io</a>	14 450	Central Election Commission of Georgia; Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Autonomous Republic of Adjara; Chiatura and Lentekhi Municipalities; Bolnisi Sport Complex; Adigeni Culture Center

**Sakartvelos Respublika.** During the pandemic, the newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika<sup>36</sup> was actively promoting various conspiracy theories about the coronavirus origin and vaccination, including Bill Gates and microchips, depopulation, and subduing population through vaccines. These stories were delivered with the following headlines:

- “Bacteriological Warfare Unleashed by the United States?!”<sup>37</sup>
- “New Death as a Gift to the World Population”<sup>38</sup> in a Section “Amidst Biological Warfare”

<sup>36</sup> The weekly newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika was founded in 1918. During the Soviet period, it was named Communist.

<sup>37</sup> Sakartvelos Respublika, #48, March 17-18, 2020  
[http://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/318644/1/Saqartvelos\\_Respublika\\_2020\\_N48.pdf](http://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/318644/1/Saqartvelos_Respublika_2020_N48.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Sakartvelos Respublika, #59, 30 April, 2020  
[http://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/318822/1/Saqartvelos\\_Respublika\\_2020\\_N59.pdf](http://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/318822/1/Saqartvelos_Respublika_2020_N59.pdf)

„ეს ხეაური არ არის შავთხვევითი. თორავ თვითონ ვირუსი შეიქალაპა. შავთხვევითია...“



# ბაქტერიოლოგიური ომი აშერიკაჲ ღაიწყო?!



რამდენი აღმზინა დაინფიცირებულ? რა არის საავადმყოფოს სახელსა? ჩინეთის საგარეო უწყვის წარმომადგენელ ამბობს, რომ შესაძლებელია აშშ-ის არმიამ მიგანა ეხლეთა უბნში. ჩინურ ევროპის არ ემი-არეს უმთელიღა და პოლიციელი რამბა საგარედოდა, თუნცა არ გამოირჩეხვს, ე-რუსის ხელოვნურ წარმოშობას. რამბა საზღვრებში აღეს ჩვენი გემთის სკვარია.

რამდენი აღმზინა დაინფიცირებულ? რა არის საავადმყოფოს სახელსა? ჩინეთის საგარეო უწყვის წარმომადგენელ ამბობს, რომ შესაძლებელია აშშ-ის არმიამ მიგანა ეხლეთა უბნში. ჩინურ ევროპის არ ემი-არეს უმთელიღა და პოლიციელი რამბა საგარედოდა, თუნცა არ გამოირჩეხვს, ე-რუსის ხელოვნურ წარმოშობას. რამბა საზღვრებში აღეს ჩვენი გემთის სკვარია.

გიოლოგიური ომის პირისპირ



## ახალი სიკვდილი საჩუქრად მსოფლიოს ხალხებს!

საქართველოში არის მანამდეცაა ვინაა აშშ-ის საგარეო უწყვის წარმომადგენელი ამბობს, რომ შესაძლებელია აშშ-ის არმიამ მიგანა ეხლეთა უბნში. ჩინურ ევროპის არ ემი-არეს უმთელიღა და პოლიციელი რამბა საგარედოდა, თუნცა არ გამოირჩეხვს, ე-რუსის ხელოვნურ წარმოშობას. რამბა საზღვრებში აღეს ჩვენი გემთის სკვარია.

The newspaper also offers an article by a Georgian cleric trying to incite distrust towards the United States in the context of Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research, a Tbilisi-based biological research facility aimed to promote disease detection and epidemiological surveillance. In contrast, the cleric talks about the moral inconsistency between Georgia and the U.S:

**Hierodeacon Giorgi Rukhadze:** “And finally, if the **Lugar Laboratory** opened by the Americans in Georgia is the only institution to carry out COVID-19 analysis, what does it mean: was it impossible to diagnose infections, especially flu strains here previously? – There is no surprise in the emergence of doubts about this so-called friend, because, from an ideological point of view, a lot of materials have been accumulated **showing moral inconsistency between our states**. Therefore, medical doctors should keep in mind that it is **not expedient to refer to the U.S. influence for supporting any point of view.**”<sup>39</sup>

The newspaper also published homophobic editorials and op-eds:

- “Keep yourself to yourself; let God help you in using your arse in peace, but do not display your arsens in public.”<sup>40</sup>
- “We cannot blame the Georgian Law for the Sin of Sodomy.”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Sakartvelos Respublika, #70, 8 June 2020 “Vaccine against an infection intruded into religion,” p.6 [https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/318933/1/Saqartvelos\\_Respublika\\_2020\\_N70.pdf](https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/318933/1/Saqartvelos_Respublika_2020_N70.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Sakartvelos Respublika, #149-150, 7-8 July 2021 “Profanes of Georgian morality and traditions,” p.2 [https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/336745/1/Saqartvelos\\_Respublika\\_2021\\_N149-150.pdf](https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/336745/1/Saqartvelos_Respublika_2021_N149-150.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.4

- “The war between liberasts [combination of liberal and pederast] and Georgian people”<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, the statement released by the Georgian Orthodox Church regarding the unacceptability of the involvement of some embassies and MEPs in the developments related to the July 5, 2021 Tbilisi Pride, was accompanied by a photo of a banner dubbing the U.S. Ambassador to Georgia as an LGBT aggressor and demanding her expulsion from the country.<sup>43</sup>



The editorial policies of other media outlets are problematic largely due to the following circumstances:

1. Online media outlets such as “Georgian Idea” and “Reportiori” are known for spreading disinformation and conspiracy theories related to COVID-19 and 5G, as well as discrediting the opponents of the incumbent party.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Sakartvelos Respublika, #71, 10 June 2020, p.1  
[https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/319058/1/Saqartvelos\\_Respublika\\_2020\\_N71.pdf](https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/319058/1/Saqartvelos_Respublika_2020_N71.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Sakartvelos Respublika, #147-148, 5-6 July 2021, p.3  
[https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/336742/1/Saqartvelos\\_Respublika\\_2021\\_N147-148.pdf](https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/336742/1/Saqartvelos_Respublika_2021_N147-148.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Myth Detector, 14 April 2020, Does 5G Pose a Threat and Is This Technology Linked to COVID-19?  
<https://bit.ly/3kIpQJt>; 5 May 2020, Campaign Organized by Pro-Government and Antiliberal Groups against Republicans <https://bit.ly/3kGN7eM>

2. “Marshalpress” is involved in the discreditation campaign of the deceased TV Pirveli cameraman Aleksandre Lashkarava<sup>45</sup> and the opponents of the government.<sup>46</sup> The media outlet is a frequent source of disinformation regarding the coronavirus and other issues<sup>47</sup>.
3. The editorial policy of Spacesnews ([www.spnews.io](http://www.spnews.io)) is hybrid. Apart from pursuing a pro-governmental information policy,<sup>48</sup> the news agency invites the author of a media project “[Politicano](#)” to host its video program, while its certain publications are openly anti-Western, simultaneously inciting sentiments towards the Soviet Union and Russia.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Myth Detector, 13 July 2021, In the Name of “Informational Agency” and by the Fist of Violent Groups against the Deceased Cameraman of “TV Pirveli” <https://bit.ly/3kIpQJt>; 22 July 2021, Information Blog Spreads Fake News about Lekso Lashkarava’s Photo <https://bit.ly/3o9VhyD>

<sup>46</sup> Myth Detector, 14 October 2020, Pro-government Pages Share Fake Account Using Rurua’s Name in a Coordinated Manner <https://bit.ly/3IZTB86>

<sup>47</sup> <http://mythdetector.ge/en/profile/marshalpress>

<sup>48</sup> Myth Detector, 13 July 2021, In the Name of “Informational Agency” and by the Fist of Violent Groups against the Deceased Cameraman of “TV Pirveli” <https://bit.ly/2XUqsTV>

<sup>49</sup> Myth Detector, 2 July 2021, “Spaces” for Pro-Russian and Governmental Experts are funded from the State Budget <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/spaces-pro-russian-and-governmental-experts-are-funded-state-budget>