REPORT

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT BY POLITICAL PARTIES IN GEORGIA

PREPARED BY

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MAY 2021

ABOUT

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This Document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the GIP and can under no circumstance be regarded as reflecting the position of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2020 Parliamentary elections were crucial not only as they triggered the political crisis of the immediate post-election period, but because they determined the political dynamics for the long-term development of the country. The elections and the pre-election period were marked by a number of challenges, such as a substantial part of the electorate being nihilistic towards politics, political polarization, an uneven playing field between the ruling party and the opposition and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Amid these challenges and the polarized pre-election environment, the political parties agreed on the basic principles and norms of pre-election competition. In total, 40 Georgian political parties signed the political party Code of Conduct (CoC) prior to the 2020 elections. By signing the document, the parties voluntarily undertook a commitment to fulfilling pre-election competition principles, to abide by ethical norms, respect each other and the voters, and to refrain from taking action that violated ethical norms.

This report aims to monitor the extent to which the major political Georgian parties fulfilled these principles and implemented the norms as they had voluntarily undertaken before the election period. The report makes use of a number of quantitative and qualitative research methods, including desk research, interviews with party representatives and experts and media monitoring of major TV channels, and analyses the extent to which different signatory parties implemented selected CoC norms. Monitoring included the effectiveness of the self-regulating mechanisms outlined in the document and elaborated by the parties, and the extent to which campaigning was issue-based.

Media monitoring identified more than 300 individual cases of CoC violations by the top ten leading political parties during the ten-day period before the first round of elections. The political parties had not established any new internal mechanism/units to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the CoC or issued instructions about the commitments taken under it. Furthermore, the large parties were the least characterized by issue-based, program- and subject-oriented discussions during their TV appearances.

Notwithstanding all this, political parties, experts and other representatives of observer organizations welcomed the introduction of the CoC for the parties. In the long-term, the CoC could become an important part of Georgia's political tradition, violation of which would be damaging to a party's image, which, therefore, will facilitate the implementation of CoC commitments by parties.

By establishing clear rules of the game and raising awareness among politicians, activists and citizens, the CoC is a step forwards in Georgia's democratization process and might contribute to making the pre-election environment fairer.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Lack of information.** The parties did not have the full information regarding the CoC. Party leaders were familiar with CoC commitments, since the decisions to become signatories of the Code were taken after joint discussions with them and before the document was signed. However, information-sharing was not systemic in relation to activists, other party members, and, most importantly, their supporters. As for the latter, information was shared with them to the least extent. Some party representatives did not have enough information about other CoC signatories. Social media, which is a widespread platform in Georgia, was used by only two out of ten of the parties monitored as a tool for communicating about the CoC.

- **Limited communications.** Communicating about the CoC and information-sharing by parties was usually limited to discussions during political council meetings, with the document being sent to regional party structures, and in some cases through verbal introductions during regional meetings. However, the parties did not go into detail during such communications and discussion was confined to general information about signing the document. It is noteworthy that, as demonstrated by the interviews, the parties considered the CoC to be in line with moral and ethical norms, and therefore did not see the need for formal and systemic communication about the document.

- **Absence of implementation mechanism.** None of the ten parties selected had established any new mechanism for implementation and monitoring. In general, any implementation and monitoring function was fulfilled by internal structural units that were already in place. However, it was notable that parties had not given specific instructions to these units on how the commitments taken under the CoC should be implemented and monitored.

- **Lack of issue-based discussion.** In total 1160 speeches by representatives of the selected 10 party were identified for monitoring from October 20, 2020 to October 30, 2020, during the prime-time period (20:00-23:59). Most of the speeches monitored did not include subject-oriented, program- and issue-based discussion related to either policy changes or policy implications. Out of 1160 speeches, 54% were assessed as not issue-based at all. Approximately a third of the speeches (32%) were assessed as partially issue-based, while 14% were assessed as fully subject-oriented, program- and issue-based.

- **Negative campaigns still prevailed.** Media monitoring revealed that political party representatives frequently violated the CoC in the media. Over the ten days of monitoring, more than 300 violations were detected. Most of these were personal insults, or unsubstantiated statements by politicians that accused opponents of crimes or misconduct, or otherwise aimed to harm the reputation of the opponent in the eyes of the voters. Routine use of insults, accusations and slander in the media could only serve to divide and confuse the voters, rather than help them make informed decisions. However, politicians refrained from using hate speech or calling for mass violence through the media.

- **Effects of political polarization are strong when it comes to adhering to ethical principles.** Media monitoring showed that even though 50 political parties were registered for the 2020 Parliamentary elections, the elections were mostly two-sided, and represented a battlefield for the ruling party on one hand, and the opposition on the other hand. Almost all the detected violations were made either by the ruling party referring to the opposition, or vice versa.

- **Facing the Challenge of Restraint among leadership.** Most violations were made by speakers who held high positions in their parties (either the Top -10 party list, or the majoritarian candidate), which was to be expected since most of the time they would be able to secure airtime. Men outnumbered women in making violations by nearly five times.

- **Divergent interpretation.** Discussing specific instances of violations with stakeholders (political parties and experts) revealed that whether or not an act by political organizations constituted a violation of the CoC might be subject to diverse interpretations of (1) the CoC principles themselves or (2) the context of a particular violation.

- **Blurred line between competition and violation.** It is important to measure the circumstances of personalization - who makes the violation and against whom, since the violation might at first sight be part of "political competition" or "innocent criticism".

- **Demonizing opponents as an art.** According to the reports, and other official sources provided by local and international observers, the pre-election period of the 2020 Parliamentary election was marred by negative campaigning, attacking and demonizing particular political subjects, the abuse of administrative resources, cases of physical violence, campaigns to discredit candidates and parties and fake support pages.

- **Political party representatives highly misunderstand or miscommunicate inclusivity in their pre-electoral campaigns:** international and local observers indicated failures to represent traditionally vulnerable minority groups in the political process while political party representatives perceived female participation, youth involvement and ethnic minorities' inclusion as among their assets in pre-election campaigning.

INTRODUCTION

Good and accountable political institutions are indispensable to a sustainable democracy. Political parties are one of the central institutions in modern representative democracies and are the major actors in the system that connects the citizenry and governmental process. [1] Parties turn citizens' demands into political issues. They recruit candidates for public office, formulate programs for governmental action, compete for votes, and if lucky, exercise executive power until ejected from office. A well-functioning political party system is an important condition for a well-functioning representative democracy.

For nearly two decades Georgia, where democratic political culture is still embryonic, has been striving to develop a democratic political party system. Yet almost thirty years after independence, it has never managed to consolidate democratic structures and at best remains a hybrid regime. [2] Apart from the politicized judiciary, the ruling party's extensive access to state resources, and the executive-dominated vertical of power, the mixed electoral system was considered to be the main reason behind Georgia's single-party tradition. The adoption of constitutional changes reinforced the formal framework for democratic statehood, but it has become obvious that at present Georgian political parties have neither a strong political will nor experience in democratic governance.

Against this background, the parliamentary elections of October 2020 were held under unusual circumstances: on the one hand, the modifications in the electoral system created expectations that more parties would participate, increasing and diversifying competition. On the other hand, Georgian citizens had to elect new members of the legislative body in conditions determined by the pandemic. These circumstances created a unique atmosphere prior to the election of MPs to seats to seats in the 10th term of the Georgian Parliament. A particularly interesting aspect was the fact that, for the first time in Georgian political history, the ruling party had the opportunity to maintain power for a third term. In this complex situation, ahead of the elections the differences in strategy and form between the party campaigns widened. In the end, this should facilitate the creation of a healthy and rational political environment. However, in the democratization process the ethics of party-political behavior in pre-election campaigns become increasingly important as they are an instrument to control the security, quality and legitimacy of the election. Rejecting hate speech and refusing to use provocative, slanderous, degrading, xenophobic, threatening or any other harmful forms language in inter-party dialogue that might provoke violence are part of the ethical norms along the path towards the building of a democracy. [3]

[1] (Klingemann et al. 1994, p. 5)
[2] (Kakachia & Lebanidze 2019)
[3] (Monney & Valladares 2017)

Therefore, in addition to the statute of elections, agreeing ethical norms that should ensure a stable electoral environment gains particular importance. In this regards, the CoC for political parties for the October 2020 Parliamentary elections, elaborated by the Central Election Commission (CEC) in cooperation with the Swiss FDFA, USAID and the International Republican Institute (IRI) was an important agreement. [4] The document was based on the norms formulated for the 2018 presidential elections, however, this new initiative resulted in a CoC in which the ethical principals were much more comprehensive than in the 2018 Code. It was signed by 40 - ruling and opposition - election parties. [5] By signing the document, the parties voluntarily undertook a commitment to fulfilling the pre-election competition principles - abide by ethical norms, respect each other and the voters, refrain from taking action that was in violation of ethical norms such as violence, slander, use of administrative resources to gain advantage in the election process, mobilization of Bot Networks, etc. [6]

Observation of the conduct of the parties became especially prominent because of the importance of the agreement in the country's democratization process and the intense pre-election atmosphere. Therefore, this report presents results of monitoring implementation of the CoC by the political parties and analyses the extent to which different signatory parties implemented selected principles under it. The monitoring includes the effectiveness of the self-regulating mechanisms outlined in the document and elaborated by the parties, as well as the extent of issue-based campaigning during the pre-election period. Based on the findings, the report aims at providing recommendations to the various stakeholders – political parties, CEC, Georgian media and civil society, as well as international observers, partners and donors – contributing to enhancing its effectiveness in practice. We also hope that this report will facilitate the establishment of a fair and competitive pre-election environment in the future and will strengthen multiparty, democratic institutions.

METHODOLOGY

The goal of the report

The report aims to examine the extent to which major political parties in Georgia adhered to and fulfilled the principles and clauses of the CoC, which they had signed during the pre-election period of the 2020 elections. The report also aims to identify the main challenges parties faced in implementing the CoC or adopting the mechanisms necessary for monitoring compliance to it.

[4] (CEC 2020a)
[5] (CEC 2020b)
[6] (CEC 2020b)

Research components

Report methodology comprised both quantitative and qualitative research. The qualitative method relies on desk research and interviews with political parties, as well as with international and local observer organizations. The quantitative research was conducted via media monitoring. The report methodology included the following parts:

  <u>Media monitoring of violations</u>

Media monitoring included both national and local media organizations. Monitoring focused on Tbilisi and regions traditionally prone to violations, particularly Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti which have been settled by ethnic and religious minorities, as well as Samegrelo and Shida Kartli, which border conflict zones. Online monitoring also covered CoC violations conducted at the national level, and regional focus was reflected in selecting target media outlets (full list of media organizations covered by monitoring is attached as Annex 1).

Monitoring of CoC implementation by the political parties included the following elements: Media monitoring of **violations of the following clauses of the Code of Conduct:**

- use of hate speech, discriminatory statements and xenophobic and / or intimidating expressions;
- use of violence, and call for it;
- respect for the dignity of competitors, and refrain from personal insults;
- respect of the right of rival political parties / candidates to campaign;
- not to spread false or fake information against political opponents;
- refrain from public statements, campaign materials (media, video, audio, social media, print) that contain allegations of slander, treason, terrorism, other criminal offenses, as well as incitement to hatred or conflict on the national, ethnic, religious, gender or other grounds;
- refrain from defamatory media statements, unsubstantiated information, intentionally misleading information about other political entities or statements containing threats, slander, or insults to a voter or election contestant.

  <u>Media monitoring of issue-based campaigning</u>

In addition to monitoring violations of the clauses of the CoC, media monitoring of six national TV channels was conducted with the aim of examining the extent to which the major political parties' campaigning was subject-based, program-oriented and issue-oriented. For that purpose, media monitoring included an additional set of data. For the purpose of this report, issue-based competition has been defined as a decision to address an issue and the adoption of a diverging or similar position on it. A speech should include policy implications in order to be considered issue-based. A speech was defined as consecutive speech until interruption by a moderator or a break.

<u>Interviews with parties</u>

Monitoring of **performance and internal monitoring mechanisms** was conducted via interviews and desk research, based on the following clauses of the CoC:

- ensure the implementation of the CoC by intra-party measures, such as: providing information and instructions on CoC commitments to the party officials, activists, and supporters; introducing an intra-party mechanism for the enforcement and monitoring of this CoC, sharing information and experience with other parties; condemning the violations of these ethical principles by own party candidates, party workers, representatives and activists.

To better understand the internal implementation and monitoring mechanisms within the parties, GIP conducted two sets of interviews with representatives of the ten parties under scrutiny a week before the first round of the elections, and again in December 2020-early January 2021. Semi-structured interviews included questions about implementation of the CoC and its enforcement within the parties.

<u>Interviews with stakeholders</u>

In addition to interviews with party representatives, GIP conducted 15 interviews with experts and international as well as local observers. The questionnaire comprised two parts: evaluation of the pre-election environment and implementation of the CoC, and assessment of sample cases of CoC violations. GIP used the identified violations of the CoC and prepared sample cases, asking political parties, experts and election observers to share their interpretation. The cases were presented anonymously, allowing for cross-checking of the assessment of violations among the monitors, political parties and other stakeholders.

The scope of the report

Monitoring of the CoC implementation by political parties was limited to ten days before the first round of the 2020 parliamentary elections. Considering the changes in the nature of party campaigning after the first round, and the refusal of the opposition to continue competing for seats in the Parliament, media monitoring of the second round of elections was substituted by stakeholder interviews with political parties, experts and local and international observer organizations.

Monitoring was limited to ten political parties that had received at least 1% of support in recent public opinion polls (by NDI, IRI, Edison research). The following ten parties were the subject of monitoring:

1. Georgian Dream–Democratic Georgia
2. United National Movement
3. European Georgia-Free Democrats
4. For New Georgia-Strategy Aghmashenebeli
5. Alliance of Patriots
6. Labor Party
7. Civic Movement
8. Lelo for Georgia
9. Girchi
10. Democratic Movement United Georgia

Limitations

Media monitoring of violations as well as of issue-based campaigning was conducted during the prime viewing time for the TV channels (i.e., 20:00 – 00:00). Even though it is highly likely that this prime time adequately reflects parties' campaigning strategies and properly captured most of the violations, there is a chance that the monitoring process missed some instances of violations.

Moreover, media monitoring of issue-based campaigning relied on just six TV channels. Thus, the report does not fully reflect the pre-election strategy of the political parties and the nature of their campaigns, since besides TV broadcasting, political parties used other means to communicate with voters. It is also important to note that coding speeches of politicians on the extent to which they were issue-based included a significant level of subjectivity. Therefore, the findings of the media monitoring should be interpreted carefully as the report portrays a general picture and dynamics. Furthermore, media is not a passive actor that simply reflects the nature of the pre-election campaign of political parties. Media outlets have differing formats of programs and editorial policies.

POLITICAL CONTEXT OF 2020 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

On August 31, 2020 the President of Georgia - Salome Zourabichvili - set October 31 as the date of Georgia's10th term parliamentary elections. [7] According to CEC data, 50 election groups - 48 parties and 2 blocs (7 parties) - registered to participate in the elections. On August 31, 60 days prior to election day, the pre-election campaign officially started.

[7] (Civil.ge 2020a)

The October 31 parliamentary elections were of fundamental importance for Georgia: on the one hand, voting should have been a test to determine if society could establish a true multi-party parliament in the country. Additionally, there was the question of whether the ruling "Georgian Dream" party could retain power for a third term, which had not happened in Georgia's political history before. Therefore, conducting pre-election campaigns based on competitive and fair political principles was of particular importance. On the other hand, there were new, unique circumstances created by the pandemic, with the political parties facing additional obstacles due to the Covid-19 restrictions; for instance, there were fewer opportunities to interact directly with voters. There were also considerable administrative challenges in holding safe, organized elections.

In 2020, as a result of several long months of political crisis and negotiations, October elections were held with constitutional amendments in place, which ensured the election of 120 out of 150 members of the parliament through proportional representation and 30 members through the majoritarian list. In theory, a more proportional electoral system should have enabled the public to elect a more multi-party and competitive parliament. At the same time, these changes created opportunities for more parties to get their members into the legislative body and to receive some of the mandates. In this context, numerous new parties and blocs appeared in the Georgian political arena and despite being new players, they were considered as political actors to be taken into account. These parties included Mamuka Khazaradze's party "Lelo", Aleko Elisashvili's "Citizens" and "Giorgi Vashadze's Strategy Aghmashenebeli". The latter formed a bloc with the newly created party "Law and Justice". Therefore, since the legislative changes created the possibility of a multiparty parliament, there was an expectation that the pre-election campaign would be more competitive, intense and diverse.

The unusual environment created by COVID-19 also determined the importance of the 2020 elections. Holding elections during a pandemic posed challenges and created the need for procedural changes to the organization of the elections. [8] In this process, certain approaches adopted by the CEC were criticized by civil society – for example, in its view the decision to register infected voters was flawed. [9] Due to the pandemic, the number of international election observers in Georgia was limited. For instance, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) [10] restricted its short-term observation missions and the elections were observed by leading experts and a group of long-term observers only, who covered only the first round of parliamentary elections.

[8] (CEC 2020c)
[9] (Transparency International 2020a)
[10] (Civil.ge 2020b)

In the end the 2020 parliamentary elections were observed by partner states as well as various authoritative international organizations. In addition to the OSCE/ODIHR observer missions, NATO and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, as well as an observer group from the UK visited Georgia. With the help of local experts, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) [11] actively observed the elections. Additionally, assessments and remarks were occasionally made by the US and the EU.

In this context, the pre-election environment was quite intense, and in some instances even unhealthy. Various civil society representatives occasionally pointed to significant flaws which were damaging for a healthy competitive political environment. Traditional tendencies, such as the ruling party's use of administrative resources for election purposes led to a lack of competition in the pre-election environment. An example of this came in the statement made by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association about the Ministry of Defense's use of administrative resources as a part of the election agitation strategy. [12]

The pre-election environment was characterized by a high level of polarization, with confrontation occurring mainly between ruling and opposition parties. Cooperation between the opposition parties was noteworthy. Two election blocs were established during the ongoing election period: five election groups were united in "United National Movement – Strength is in Unity" - "United National Movement", "Progress and Freedom", "Movement – State for Citizens", "Republican Party", and "European Democrats", while "Giorgi Vashadze – Strategy Aghmashenebeli" was joined by "Law and Justice". At the same time, opposition parties occasionally cooperated in terms of supporting each other's' candidates – for instance, "European Georgia" supporting Beka Natelashvili (Labour Party) in Dusheti as a majoritarian candidate.

Evidence of the high level of tension during the pre-election campaign was the frequency of attacks on certain party members and activists, which in some instances were subject to policing and investigation. For instance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs was involved in investigating the cases of attacks on members and/or activists of "Lelo", "Strategy Aghmashenebeli" and "Georgian Dream". In addition to the political party representatives, journalists also became the victims of attacks in some cases. There were occasional instances of an intense rising pre-election tensions in the regions with minority settlements – Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Marneuli. It should be noted that legal action was taken against the banner displayed in Adjara by the "Alliance of Patriots". The banner was seen as anti-Turkish by the larger part of the society, which led to the party being fined for violating agitation rules.

[11] (Civil.ge 2020c)
[12] (mod.gov.ge 2020)

In this context, various mechanisms facilitating healthy pre-election competition, including the CoC for political parties, gained particular importance. Yet, implementation of the main principles of the document was of only secondary importance for the political parties in some instances. Even though the commitments outlined in the document are voluntary, the functioning the CoC is of vital importance for the holding of legitimate and transparent elections. Therefore, the report presents the dynamics of violation of certain CoC principles on the one hand, and on the other hand outlines major findings on political party attitudes towards the content of the document and its implementation.

COC IMPLEMENTATION BY POLITICAL PARTIES

This part of the report covers the items outlined in the 4th article of the CoC, according to which the signatory parties committed to ensuring CoC implementation and monitoring.

The following text is based on interviews held with the political parties. In total there were 17 interviews conducted in two phases. The first phase was held in October 2020, just before the first round of the Parliamentary elections and eight parties participated in it: Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, European Georgia, Georgian Dream, Girchi, Lelo, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, Democratic Movement and United National Movement. Two parties – Citizens and Labour Party – refused to participate. The second round of interviews were held after the 2020 parliamentary elections runoff, at the end of December 2020 and in the first half of January 2021. In this, nine parties: Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, Citizens, European Georgia, Georgian Dream, Georgian Labour Party, Lelo, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, Democratic Movement and United National Movement. Only one party - Girchi - refused to participate in the second round, saying that it was preoccupied with the political crisis that had emerged after the first round.

It is notable that in some cases some party representatives did not have enough information on other CoC signatories. For instance, the first round of interviews illustrated that in the case of three of the parties their representatives were not aware that Georgian Dream was among the signatories. This might be explained by the fact that the document was open for signature for some time and parties signed it separately. It is also noteworthy that in some cases party representatives were not familiar with the content of the CoC. More specifically, during the first round of interviews, in two cases not only was the party representative not familiar with the content of the CoC but the interviewer had to provide information on specific articles in the document. One party – Labour Party – refused to participate in the first round of interviews stating that the party had not signed the CoC. However, communication was established with them as a signatory party during the second round of interviews. The second round was held with the representative of the Citizens Party on the condition that the party did not consider itself to be a signatory of the document (even though, according to CEC data, the party was).

How familiar are the party leaders, activists and supporters with CoC?

According to 4.1 section of Article 4 of the CoC, signatories undertake a commitment to make information on the CoC commitments available to their party leaders, activists and supporters. Interviews demonstrated that the practice of information-sharing among leaders, activists and supporters was not a systemic process.

According to the representatives of the parties, party leaders were familiar with CoC commitments, since the decision to become the signatory of the Code was taken after joint discussions with them before the document was signed. Girchi, Citizens and the Labour Party were the exception. Information on specific instructions relating to CoC commitments were not communicated with the rest of the party leadership after the party signed the document. However, the overall impression was that party leadership lacked knowledge on the requirements of the CoC as well as the understanding of the content.

Information-sharing did not have a systemic character in relation to activists and other party members. As the interviews illustrated, parties either sent the CoC document to their regional offices or explained it verbally, which, as they stated, ensured that regional representatives became familiar with the document. For instance, representatives of two political parties stated that the CoC document was distributed via email to regional party branches and activists, although some party representatives noted that emails were not used, however.Information on the CoC was actively communicated during the meetings, yet this happened informally and not systematically. Party representatives did not as a rule possess information on the extent to which the party activists (in broader sense) were familiar with the content of the Code or specific articles or commitments in it. Moreover, every party representative noted that the ethical norms of the CoC were in line with unwritten, commonsense norms that, as they said, guided party leaders and activists.

As for the supporters, information was shared with them to the least extent. While two parties shared the CoC via social media (Facebook), the parties mostly only partially communicated, or did not communicate at all, with their supporters and voters on CoC commitments. During the interviews, we asked the parties to assess the extent to which they communicated with the regions with minority settlements about the CoC and its commitments. According to the party representatives, there was no difference in the form of communication with these regions as opposed to other areas. However, expert interviews suggest that the parties, in general, struggled in terms of communication in the regions populated with ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Most importantly, ethnic minorities had trouble getting all the relevant information in their own language.

Communicating about the CoC and information-sharing was usually limited to discussions during political council meetings, sending document to regional party structures and in some cases, verbal introductions during regional meetings. However, parties did not go into details during such communications and discussion was confined to general information about signing the document.

It is noteworthy that, as demonstrated by the interviews, parties considered the CoC to be in line with the moral ethical norms and therefore did not see the need of formal and systemic communication about the document.

Code of Conduct in Party Structure

According to 4.3. Section of the Article 4 of the CoC, signatories pledged to create intra-party mechanisms ensuring the implementation and monitoring of CoC commitments. None of the parties had established any such mechanisms for implementation and monitoring. In general, any implementation and monitoring function was fulfilled by the internal structural units already in place. However, it is notable that parties had not given specific instructions to these units on how the commitments taken under the CoC should be implemented and monitored.

As the interviews demonstrate, all the selected parties reported that they tasked the units within the party with monitoring CoC commitments. These units differed from party to party and covered local organizations and regional coordinators, legal offices, legal support offices and regional or Tbilisi-based organizations/offices. However, as party representatives noted, specific instructions on how the CoC commitments should be implemented and monitored were not given to the internal structural units. Usually, they monitored the directives received from party leadership, as well as common misdemeanors, therefore, specific mechanisms to implement and monitor the commitments under CoC did not exist.

Even though none of the parties had established new internal structures and/or mechanisms for CoC commitment implementation and monitoring, their representatives did not see the need of additional encouragement or support to better ensure it. .This may derive from the fact that the parties had trouble identifying violations of the commitments by party members and activists. Out of the selected ten parties, only a few noted that a party member violated the CoC. According to them, these violations were not systemic, therefore, the individuals involved received only a verbal warning from the party.

On the other hand, party representatives mentioned numerous cases of CoC violations by other signatories. All of the opposition parties (nine parties were interviewed) focused on the ruling party. In their view, considering the asymmetry in resources and levers, the ruling party was responsible for the majority of the CoC violations.

How do parties see the way out?

Party representatives ascribed the fact of failing to execute CoC commitments to the peculiarities of Georgian political culture and the lack of political will within the ruling party (the latter was named by the opposition parties). More specifically, party representatives reported that inappropriate conduct and/or violations of the CoC by parties sometimes produced political gains and were not effectively discouraged by the electorate.

One example that was mentioned during the interviews was leaking of a footage involving a private affair of one of the politicians that effectively resulted in the withdrawal from politics of that particular politician. Furthermore, some parties mentioned the lack of experience of democratic competition between the parties and the poor condition of the educational system. It must also be noted that parties were generally opposed to making the norms of the CoC legally binding because, as they said, it might become an instrument in the wrong hands.

As for the mechanisms enabling the monitoring of the commitments, parties struggled to suggest anything specific. However, it is worth noting that during the interview, the idea of creating an inter-party council uniting party representatives, the CEC, as well as representatives of the main media outlets and non-governmental organizations, was put forward. The council would not be permanent and would only be called on before the start of the pre-election period. Therefore, implementation and monitoring of commitments under CoC would be feasible.

ISSUE-BASED CAMPAIGNING OF POLITICAL PARTIES AS REFLECTED IN THE TARGET TV CHANNELS

Five private and one public broadcaster were selected for monitoring purposes. These broadcasters were: Formula TV, Georgian Public Broadcaster, TV Imedi, Mtavari Arkhi, Rustavi 2 and TV Pirveli. The selection of these broadcasters was based on their ratings and number of viewers. Monitoring was conducted over ten days during the concluding phase of the pre-election campaigns – from October 20, 2020 to October 30, 2020. For each of the TV channels, monitoring was conducted between 20:00 and 23:59 (however, TV programs that started during this period, but continued beyond 23:59, were still monitored).

During the given period, programs hosting representatives of the ten most highly-rating parties were monitored; entertainment programs and news were excluded. It is highly unlikely that entertainment programs would cover discussions of politically important issues or reflect the extent to which the pre-election campaign was based on party programs or substantiated arguments. The news programs did not present analysis, as they focused on specific issues. Frequently, politicians appeared in the news for a very brief period of time and their responses derived from the questions asked by the journalists. Therefore, news programs also lacked a focus on the pre-election strategy and/or campaign of the political parties. As this report aims to observe the political party campaigns rather than analyzing TV broadcasting, monitoring of TV news programs is outside the scope of this section.

The list of programs presented in this report is: Sakartvelo Irchevs, Politikis Formula Sopo Zurabiantan, Politmetri, Debatebi, Namdvili Ritskhvebi, Ghia Eteri, Pozicia, Arena, Pirispir, Dghis Stumari, Mtavari Aktsentebi, Ghamis Mtavari, Post Factum, Ghamis Kurieri, Reaktsia, Politikuri Paraskevi, Pirveli Khazi, Sajaro Politika and Maia Mamulashvilis Dghis Ambebi.

Speeches by the representatives of 10 leading parties

In total, 1160 speeches made by politicians were identified and coded. Speech was defined as: a continuous talk on air given by a representative or a member of the selected ten parties until interrupted by a journalist, other politician or a commercial (a brief exchange or small remark is not considered as a speech). The aforementioned 1160 speeches were distributed among the parties as follows:

- Alliance of Patriots of Georgia – 90 speeches
- Citizens – 47 speeches
- Democratic Movement – 34 speeches
- European Georgia – 222 speeches
- Georgian Dream – 91 speeches
- Girchi – 88 speeches
- Labour Party – 121 speeches
- Lelo – 118 speeches
- Strategy Aghmashenebeli – 83 speeches
- United National Movement – 266 speeches

As for the duration of the speeches, they totalled 93,064 seconds (25 hours and 50 minutes). The duration of statements was distributed across the parties as follows:

Table 1: *The duration of speeches for each party*

Party	Duration (seconds)
Democratic Movement	2 062
Citizens	3 200
Alliance of Patriots of Georgia	4 864
Girchi	5 150
Labour Party	7 878
Strategy Aghmashenebeli	8 353
Georgian Dream	9 253
Lelo	10 953
European Georgia	18 296
United National Movement	23 055

Remark: *The table shows the sum of the duration of speeches for each of the party.*

The number of speeches and durations according to days. (Table 2):

Table 2: *Total duration and number of speeches for each day*

Date	Number of Speeches	Total Duration (Seconds)
21 October	82	7 560
22 October	155	10 449
23 October	193	15 483
24 October	98	5 115
25 October	42	2 489
26 October	114	7 709
27 October	162	19 406
28 October	98	11 904
29 October	134	12 958
30 October	82	7 829

The least number of speeches, as well as the shortest duration, was recorded on October 25, 2020, a Sunday, although as a rule political talk shows and programs do not appear in the broadcasting agenda on Sundays. The greatest number of statements was recorded on October 23 (Friday), while the duration was the longest on October 27 (Tuesday). All these can be explained by the co-occurrence of programs such as Ghamis Kurieri (which was on air only on October 23 and October 27), Debatebi, Politikuri Paraskevi, Sakartvelo Irchevs, Arena, Ghamis Mtavari, Pirveli Khazi and Reaktsia.

How Issue-Based and Program-Oriented Were Political Parties' TV Appearances?

Every speech was ascribed a score depending on the extent to which it included program-oriented, substantiated, subject- and issue-based discussion pointing at policy change and/or policy implications. The scores were ascribed in the following way:

- Score 0 means the discussion did not include subject-oriented, program- and issue-based discussion;
- Score 1 means the statement was partially subject-oriented, and based on party program and specific issues;
- Score 2 was ascribed to statements that were subject-oriented, program- and issue-based discussion.

The phrase **issue-based** used in this report implies speech that was subject-oriented, program- and issue-based and which pointed at policy change and/or policy implications. It should be noted that coders/analysts assessing the extent to which a statement was thematic did not assess its content. The coding of statements by various analysts naturally implied subjectivity, however, to partially exclude it, we checked how closely different analysts were on coding the same statement.

Most of the speeches did not include subject-oriented, program- and issue-based discussion related to either policy changes or policy implications. Out of 1160 speeches, 54% (629 speeches) were coded with 0 (Figure 1). Approximately a third of the speeches (32%) were assessed as being partially subject-oriented or program- and issue-based, while 14% were assessed as fully subject-oriented, program- and issue-based. The average score of all the speeches was 0.59.

Figure 1: Proportion of the total that were issue-based speeches

Note: The portion of the speeches (1160) that were subject-oriented, program- and issue-based.
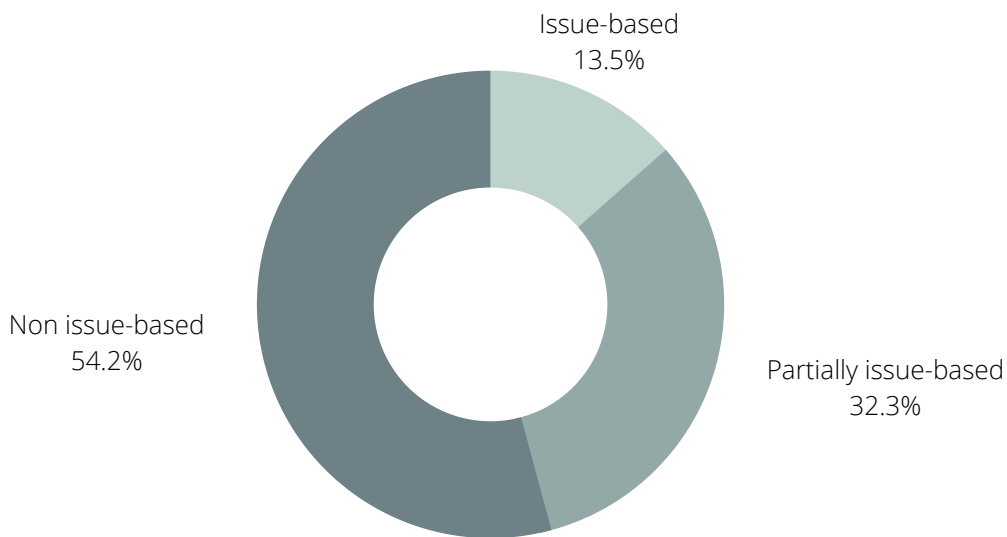
It is noteworthy that the report also covers speeches that are quite short and therefore less likely to be based on subject-oriented, program- and issue-based discussion than lengthier statements. So, figure 2 depicts the speeches that lasted more than 20 seconds. The result was more or less the same – 52% of the speeches did not include subject-oriented, program- and issue-based, only 33% included partial discussion that was subject-oriented, program- and issue-based while 15% of the speeches were assessed as completely subject-oriented, program- and issue-based. The average score of speeches longer than 20 seconds was 0.63.

Figure 2: Proportion of issue-based speeches that lasted more than 20 seconds

Note: *The percentage of the total numbers (944) of speeches longer than 20 seconds that were subject-oriented, program- and issue-based.*
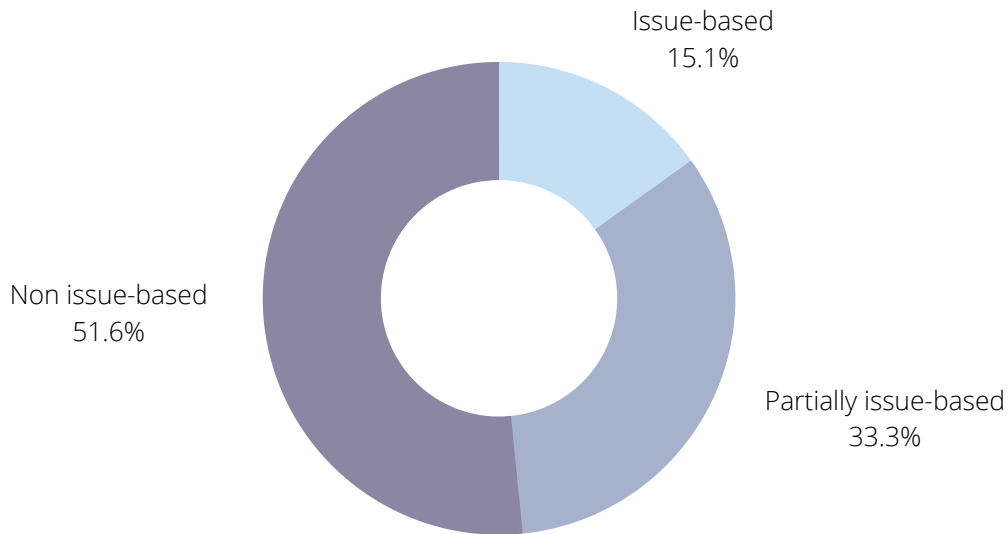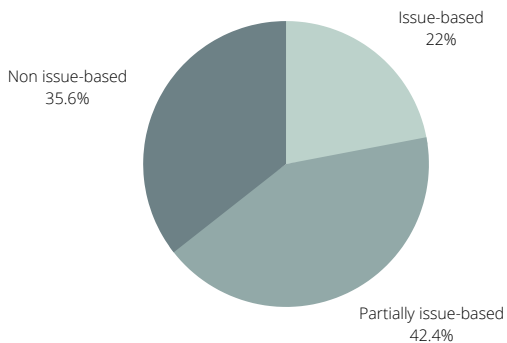

Observation of six TV channels demonstrated that the majority of the speeches of the two most powerful parties in terms of organization and voters, were non-issue-based: 68% of the statements by United National Movement and 66% by Georgian Dream were assessed as non-issue-based (Figure 3).

Compared to other parties, most speeches made by the representatives of Lelo, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, European Georgia and Alliance of Patriots of Georgia was assessed as partially or fully issue-based. For instance, the majority of the speeches made by the Lelo representatives were issue-based (22%) or partially issue-based (42%). Figure 3 lists parties according to the extent to which the majority of statements made by their representatives were issue-based or partially issue-based. The parties are listed below in order from the most issue-based to the least issue-based:

- Lelo
- Strategy Aghmashenebeli
- European Georgia
- Alliance of Patriots of Georgia
- Girchi
- Citizens
- Labour Party
- Democratic Movement
- Georgian Dream
- United National Movement

Figure 3: Proportion of issue-based speeches for each party

Lelo

Issue-based
22%

Non issue-based
35.6%

Partially issue-based
42.4%

Citizens

Issue-based
10.6%

Non issue-based
51.1%

Partially issue-based
38.3%

Strategy Aghmashenebeli

Issue-based
22.9%

Non issue-based
44.6%

Partially issue-based
32.5%

Labour Party

Issue-based
4.1%

Non issue-based
56.2%

Partially issue-based
39.7%

European Georgia

Issue-based
10.4%

Non issue-based
47.7%

Partially issue-based
41.9%

Democratic Movement

Issue-based
8.8%

Non issue-based
61.8%

Partially issue-based
29.4%
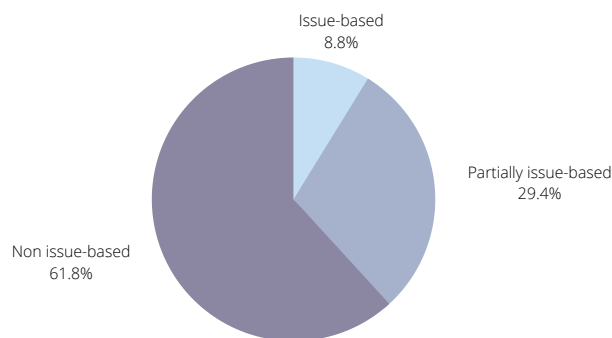
Figure 3: Proportion of issue-based speeches for each party

Alliance of Patriots

Issue-based
26.7%

Non issue-based
48.9%

Partially issue-based
24.4%

Georgian Dream

Issue-based
3.3%

Partially issue-based
30.8%

Non issue-based
65.9%

Girchi

Issue-based
14.8%

Non issue-based
51.1%

Partially issue-based
34.1%

United National Movement

Issue-based
13.2%

Partially issue-based
18.4%

Non issue-based
68.4%
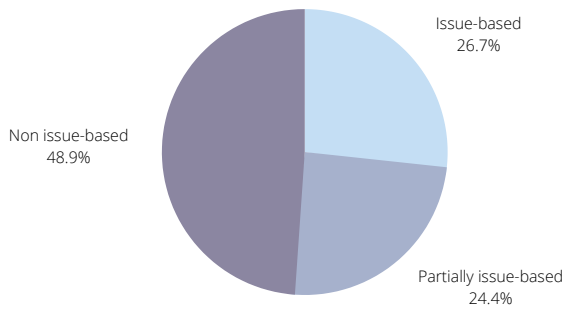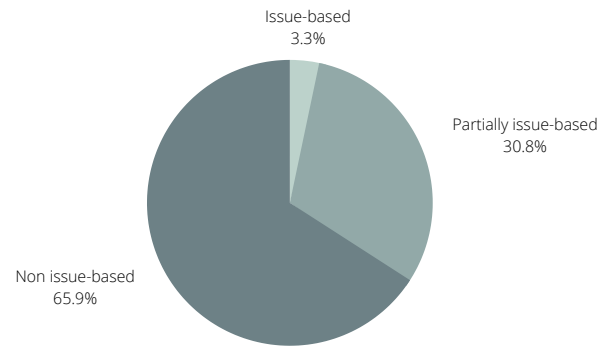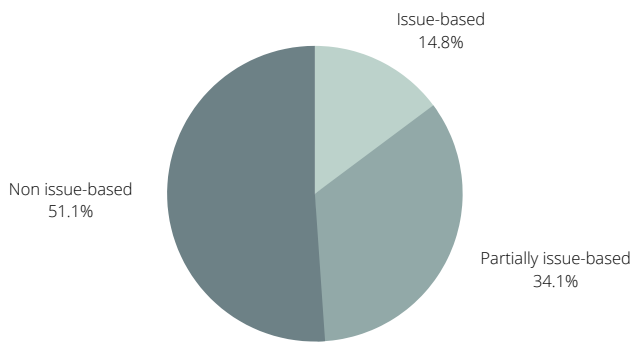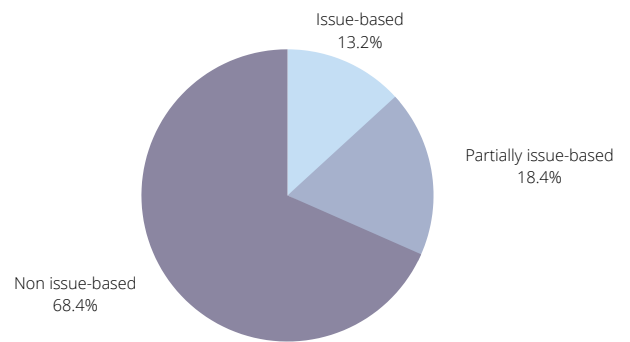
It is also possible to rank parties according to the average scores received (typically, an average score is not used for the categories, but since in this case categories are ordered, the average scores might be interesting). Average scores may be valuable because of their weights in the portion of the statements that were partially (score 1) and completely issue-based (score 2).

Table 3: Average scores for each party

Note: *Speeches (N=1160) made by the party representatives were ascribed scores 0, 1 or 2. Table lists the average score for each party.*

Party	Average Score	Average Score (only speeches longer than 20 seconds)	Average Score (per minute)
Lelo	0,86	0,92	0,56
Alliance of Patriots	0,77	0,91	0,86
Strategy Aghmashenebeli	0,78	0,77	0,47
Girchi	0,64	0,69	0,65
European Georgia	0,63	0,63	0,46
Citizens	0,59	0,73	0,52
Labour Party	0,48	0,54	0,44
Democratic Movement	0,47	0,52	0,47
United National Movement	0,45	0,47	0,31
Georgian Dream	0,37	0,45	0,22

According to the data in Table 3, the overall outcome was not changed. During their TV appearances, parties adhered to non-issue-based discussion more than to thematic ones. Apart from minor reallocation, the order – from the most thematic to the least – remained the same with parties, that received around 3% of the votes. according to the official data of the CEC, focusing more on issue-based discussions than other parties. As for the two largest parties in terms of electoral support – Georgian Dream and United National Movement – the party representatives were the least represented in the thematic group.

Main Findings and Limitations

Observing the TV appearances of the main political party representatives suggests that most of the speeches were not issue-based or program- and subject-oriented, which would point to policy change or policy implications. However, the extent to which the TV speeches were thematic differed from party to party. Parties that received around 3% of the votes during the 2020 parliamentary elections, according to the official data from the CEC, employed more issue-based discussions than the larger parties. Speeches made by Georgian Dream and United National Movement (these two parties received around 80% of the votes during the 2020 parliamentary elections) were the least issue-based, program- and subject-oriented. Considering the fact that the research covered only six TV channels, this report does not fully reflect the pre-election strategy of political parties and the nature of campaigning, since besides TV broadcasting, political parties used other means to communicate with voters. Conclusions and findings are only valid in reference to these six TV channels. The TV appearances of some of the parties were rather limited and fell significantly behind those of others. For instance, the total number of appearances of the representatives from the Alliance of Patriots was 90, out of which 84 related to one TV program – Sakartvelo Irchevs, TV Formula - while the remaining six related to Reaktsia, TV Pirveli. On the other hand, the total number of TV appearances of European Georgia was 222 and spanned five different TV channels.

It is also important to note that the coding of statements conducted by four different analysts included a significant level of subjectivity. Therefore, data and discussion presented in this part of the report portrays a more general picture and the specific numbers may not reflect reality with absolute accuracy.

Again, it should be realized that the media is not a passive actor simply reflecting the nature of the pre-election political party campaigning. Media outlets have different formats of programs and editorial policies, therefore, the programs differ in the extent to which they encourage issue-based, party program-oriented discussions. In these regards, the fact that some media outlets are dominated by certain parties may illustrate the different attitudes of political parties towards different media outlets. Figure 4 can illustrate a similar tendency, demonstrating that for instance TV Imedi covered mostly the representatives of Georgian Dream. Statements by the representatives of the ruling party were also covered by Rustavi 2, and not to the same extent by other media outlets (except for news programs).

Figure 4: Duration of speeches for each party by TV channels

Note: Each entry represents one speech. Colors correspond to parties.
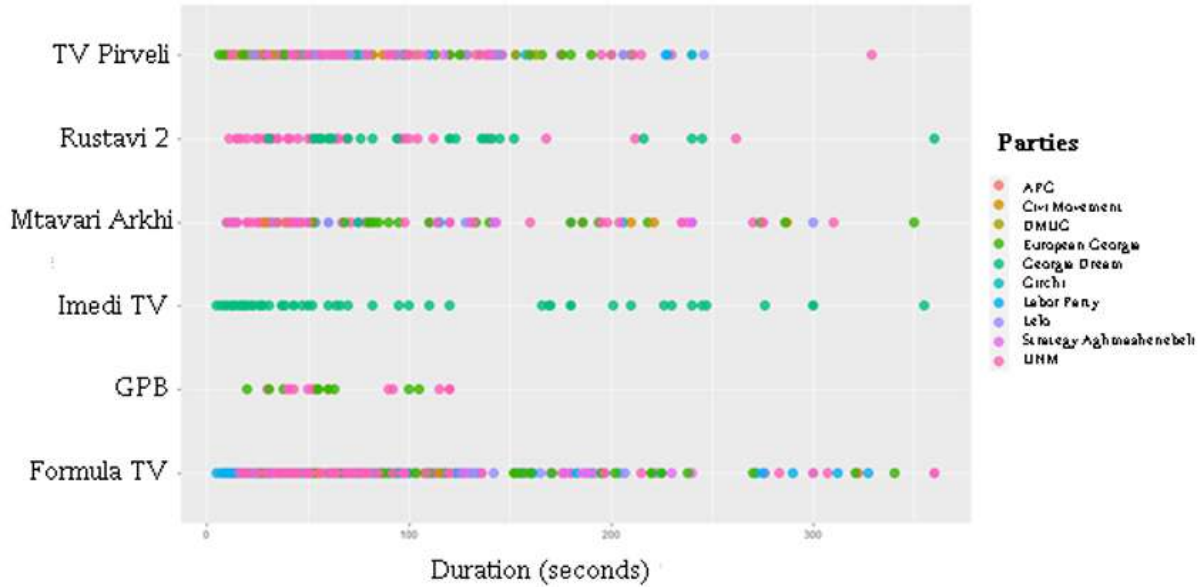
COC VIOLATIONS: THE RESULTS OF MEDIA MONITORING

Media monitoring was conducted for the last ten days of the campaigning (21-30 October). It studied the speeches of the political party representatives in the media, [13] served to detect the violations of the CoC by political party members, and to assess the key tendencies in these violations in order to reveal the dynamics and nature of political campaigning in the media. [14]

The following violations of CoC norms were monitored:

- use of hate speech, [15] discriminatory statements and xenophobic and / or intimidating expressions;
- use of violence and calls for it;
- respect the dignity of competitors, and refrain from personal insults;
- respect the rights of rival political parties / candidates to campaign; not spread false or fake information against political opponents;

[13] See the list of monitored media outlets in Annex 1
[14] See the Media Monitoring Methodology Annex 3
[15] Hate Speech is hereby defined as: any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor (UNITED NATIONS STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION ON HATE SPEECH, 2019)

- refrain from public statements, campaign materials (media, video, audio, social media, print) that contain allegations of slander, treason, terrorism, other criminal offenses, as well as incitement to hatred or conflict on national, ethnic, religious or other grounds;
- refrain from defamatory media statements, unsubstantiated information about other political entities, or statements contain threats, slander, or insults to a voter or election contestant.

Monitoring was limited to ten political parties (See the list of parties in Annex 2) that had received at least 1% of support in recent public opinion polls (NDI, IRI, Edison research).

Key Findings

Media monitoring revealed that political party representatives frequently violated the CoC in the media. For the ten days of the monitoring, more than 300 violations were detected. Most of these were personal insults, or unsubstantiated statements by politicians that accused opponents of crimes or misconduct or aimed to otherwise harm the reputation of the opponent in the eyes of the voters. Routine use of insults, accusations and slander in the media could only serve to divide and confuse the voters, rather than help them make informed decisions. However, politicians refrained from using hate speech or calling for mass violence through the media.

Media monitoring showed that even though 50 political parties were registered for the 2020 Parliamentary elections, the elections were mostly two-sided, and represented a battlefield for the ruling party on one hand, and the opposition on the other hand. Almost all the detected violations were made either by the ruling party referring to the opposition, or vice versa. The exception was the Alliance of Patriots, who violated the CoC in its address of both.

Most violations were made by the speakers who held high positions in the party (either the Top -10 party list, or the majoritarian candidate), which was to be expected, since most of the time they would get an airtime. Men also outnumbered women in making violations by nearly five times, however this statistic is significantly affected by the overall low number of women in political party leadership. For example, none of the ten monitored political parties had more than three women in their Top-10 lists. [16]

Several key events and developments affected the political campaigning in the monitoring period, and triggered violations, namely:

- <u>Robbery of a Zugdidi branch of the Bank of Georgia:</u> On 21 October, an armed man held hostages in a Zugdidi branch of the Bank of Georgia for several hours. Eventually, the hostages were released, but the robber escaped with cash. [17]

[16] (CEC 2020d)
[17] (Civil.ge 2020d)

This event triggered criticism of police effectiveness. Opposition politicians accused the government and the ruling party of cooperating with criminals and using them to win elections, while the ruling party accused the opposition of attempting to gain political points out of the situation.

- Spike in coronavirus cases: Coronavirus cases started spiking from the second half of September and continued increasing sharply throughout October. The opposition accused the government of using the pandemic to restrict freedoms, and discourage participation in elections, including restricting persons in isolation and quarantine from voting. On its part, the government accused the opposition of trying to paint the situation in grave colors and even of attempting to deliberately worsen the epidemic through large rallies.
- Election rules and campaigning: the elections themselves were an important topic for politicians. The opposition accused the ruling party of widespread vote-buying and intimidation of voters, while the ruling party claimed the opposition was planning a 'revolt of the masses'. In this regard it is worth highlighting the statement of the leader of the Georgian Dream party, Irakli Kobakhidze, the day before the elections. On the 30th of October, in the evening before the election day, Kobakhidze stated in a press briefing [18] that the Georgian Dream had documents demonstrating the Opposition's willingness to organize violent incidents during and after the election process, naming several members of the National Movement as organizers of mass destructive actions and he asked the Ministry of the Interior to start an investigation and make sure those incidents would be prevented. The timing of the statement gave no chance to the media or to political opponents to argue with his statements since most mainstream media outlets had already aired it live in prime time and most online media outlets had also reported on it.

Distribution of violations by political parties

All political parties violated the CoC at least once during the monitoring period. The number of violations made by parties can be closely linked to the overall airtime and coverage they received in the media. According to the EU-UNDP media monitoring report of TV news, the top three parties in terms of the airtime were Georgian Dream, United National Movement and European Georgia. [19] These were also the parties that made the most violations of the CoC.
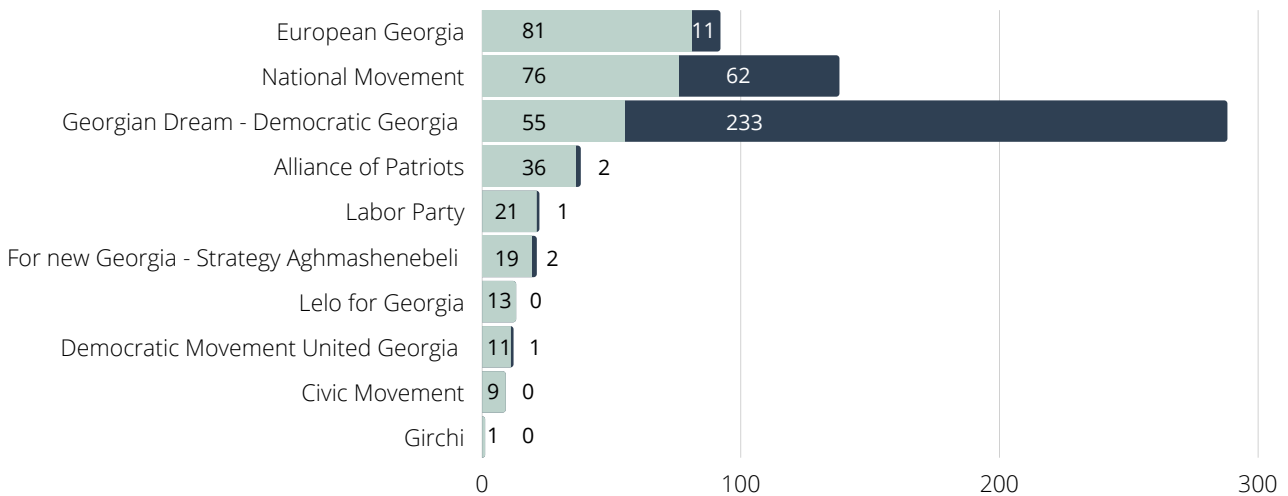
Almost all violations were made either by opposition parties against Georgian Dream, or vice versa. Thus, further deepening political polarization, which was reflected in the polarized media landscape. European Georgia members made more violations than any other party, followed by UNM and Georgian Dream.

[18] (Interpressnews 2020a)
[19] (Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics 2020)

Since the opposition parties were united against Georgian Dream, the ruling party topped the list of the parties as the addressee of violations. More than 70% of the violations were against Georgian Dream and on its part Georgian Dream targeted primarily the United National Movement. As a result, there were almost no violations against the smaller opposition parties.

Figure 5: The number of violations by parties   vs.   the Number of violations against parties

Party	By parties	Against parties
European Georgia	81	11
National Movement	76	62
Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia	55	233
Alliance of Patriots	36	2
Labor Party	21	1
For new Georgia - Strategy Aghmashenebeli	19	2
Lelo for Georgia	13	0
Democratic Movement United Georgia	11	1
Civic Movement	9	0
Girchi	1	0

In terms of content, both the ruling party and the opposition repeatedly made similar violations.

The opposition parties made offensive personal comments about the ruling party, using words such as "crazy," "Ivanishvili's clown," "Putin's appointee" and so on. Offensive statements were made against the party as a whole, too, such as calling Georgian Dream a "second virus."

Nor did Georgian Dream members refrain from offending their opponents both on a personal basis and as a group, using words such as "criminal mentality," "political vultures," "political looters," "radical opposition," and so on.

The opposition members accused the ruling party of vote-buying, and intimidating voters, cooperating with criminals, using the coronavirus pandemic to win elections, as well as causing the dire economic situation in the country and cooperation with Russia. For example, one of the opposition party leaders stated in a television show:

"This is a liar government, this is a traitor government, this is a Russian government, this is Bidzina Ivanishvili and his clan who are oriented against the country's interests, and all these must come to an end."

In turn, the ruling party members accused the opposition of cooperating with Russia and planning to destabilize the elections, as well as using the country's problems to gain political points, and operating thug groups.

"It is without a doubt that the real tactical objective of the radical opposition is not winning elections and gaining representation in the Parliament, but more a discreditation of the elections and harming free elections," - stated one of the leaders of the ruling party in the address on the opposition.

Out of the ten political parties, Girchi is the only party that refrained from violating the CofC. There was only one minor violation recorded by Girchi regarding the spread of unsubstantiated information. Girchi members did not resort to insulting their political rivals through media. However, the lack of detected violations by Girchi may be related to their relatively fewer appearances in the media. According to UNDP media monitoring, Girchi was not among the top seven parties monitored in news programs from June-November 2020, unlike some of their rival parties, such as United National Movement, European Georgia and Lelo.

The Alliance of Patriots also stands out from the overall trends. The party made accusations in addressing both Georgian Dream and the United National Movement, as well as European Georgia, mostly referring to the time when UNM was the ruling party. In addition, the Alliance of Patriots was actively communicating the idea that Georgian Dream and United National Movement had a secret agreement to keep the political field polarized with two centers, sidelining other political actors. The Alliance of Patriots was paying media outlets [20] to promote speeches of its party representatives, accusing the UNM government of a variety of crimes.

Distribution of violations by CoC clauses

Personal insults and defamatory statements and accusations prevailed among the violations by politicians. In about 15% of cases the statements were a mixture of insults, accusations, slanders and threats.

Overall, the abundance of such statements could only serve to divide and confuse the voters, rather than inform or convince. Classical symptoms of political polarization are the increasing popularity of populist groups in society, basing political debates on populist or emotional, not rational arguments, activating an "us" and "them" dichotomy in the political vocabulary, dehumanizing political opponents and mobilizing supporters against them, instead of supporting your own ideas. [21]

[20] (Interpressnews 2020b) (Interpressnews 2020c) (Interpressnews 2020d)
[21] (McCoy et al. 2018)

Figure 6: Distribution of CoC Violations by Type (%)

Category threat/hate speech includes cases when threat/hate speech took place in combination with insult, slander, or both
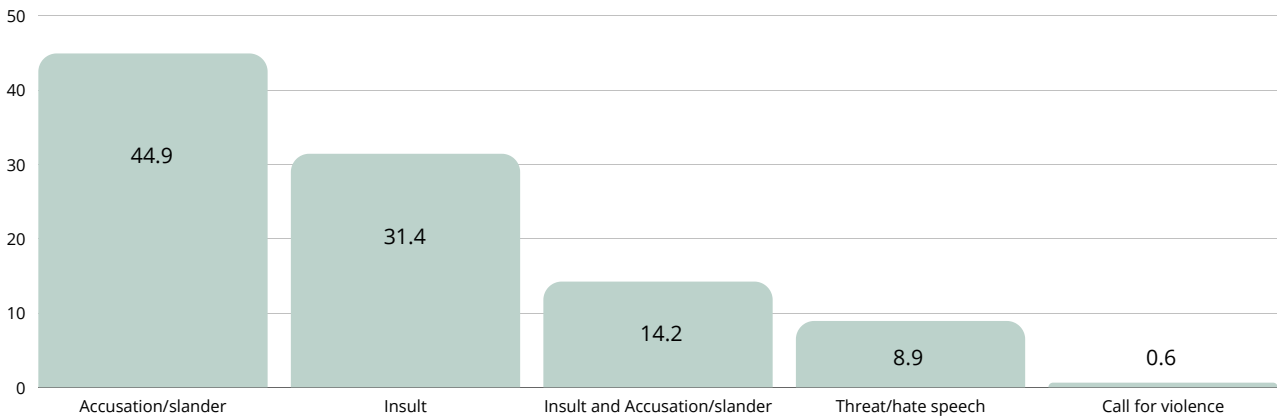
Confirming the accuracy of statements is beyond the scope of this research. However, the research assessed that the statements were often not substantiated by evidence and facts, and looked more like slander than the shedding of light on the misbehavior of the opponent.

For example, one of the politicians stated in a talk show:

"There is the whole brotherhood of Kaladze in the Parliament, Tsekhaviks, and robbers of this country, the construction businesses gave money to themselves. And who else? The big hotels."

We cannot exclude that some of such accusatory statements, which were common, contained an element of truth. However, the politicians were rarely able or willing to present any evidence.

Interestingly, even when evidence that would substantiate accusations (for example the reports by local watchdog organizations on the use of administrative resources, the reports of the media and human rights groups on the Rustavi 2 court case) was available, the speakers would not make a reference to such independent assessments when making accusations. In the end, the other party would simply dismiss or ignore the claims, or make counter-accusations, and the voters would be left to guess whether such a thing truly took place and to what extent.

In one example, an opposition politician, who made accusations that every "thief-in-law" was in collaboration with the Georgian Dream to collect votes, refrained from giving the details, saying that: "If he names specific individuals, then he has to provide proof."

Considering these factors, the research did not reveal much false and fake [22] information, and most statements were assessed as spreading unsubstantiated information, accusations and slander.

This does not mean that fake news was altogether absent from the election campaigning. For example, social media monitoring conducted by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) found that Facebook pages being used to discredit the ruling party had spread several fake new stories. [23]

In some cases, (about 30 such cases were detected), the targets of such insults and accusations were other relevant stakeholders, such as media representatives and NGOs, or various groups affiliated with this or that political party. For example, one of the leaders of the ruling party called a director of a private media outlet a coward, using a sexist word. [24]

Politicians did not use hate speech in the media, and did not make xenophobic statements. They also did not make many threats to the opponents or calls for violence. Several threats and calls for violence were detected during the monitoring period, but none of them were calls for mass violence. For example, one of the opposition leaders stated:

"I warn Tsulukiani, Ivanishvili, Gakharia, Kobakhidze and everyone, do not be tempted to falsify the elections, or I will break your hands."

An absolute majority of violations by separate political parties follow the general trend, and were either slander/accusation, or insult, or a combination of both. The exception was the Alliance of Patriots, where around a third of all party cases included threats. Overall, out of 29 cases including threat/hate speech, 11 cases were from the Alliance of Patriots.

Absence of hate speech and calls for violence in official party communication was also confirmed by other media monitoring reports. For example, EU-UNDP monitoring of social media found that posts containing hate speech and calls for violence were not shared in party Facebook pages. [25]

Even though media monitoring did not show that violence was a particular problem in the speeches of the politicians, there was evidence that the use of violence was one of the major problems during the election campaigning. Three leading Georgian watchdog organizations mentioned in their joint assessment that: "The pre-election environment was significantly damaged by the instances of violence, which manifested mostly as physical confrontations and assaults on party offices. Observers have revealed over 20 such cases." [26] This indicates that there may be differences in official party communication and election campaigning tactics.

[22] Fake information is hereby understood as false or misleading information deliberately presented as truth to achieve a political agenda
[23] (ISFED 2020)
[24] (Netgazeti.ge, 2020d)
[25] (Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics 2020, 36)
[26] (Transparency International 2020b)

Figure 7: Distribution of CoC Violation Types
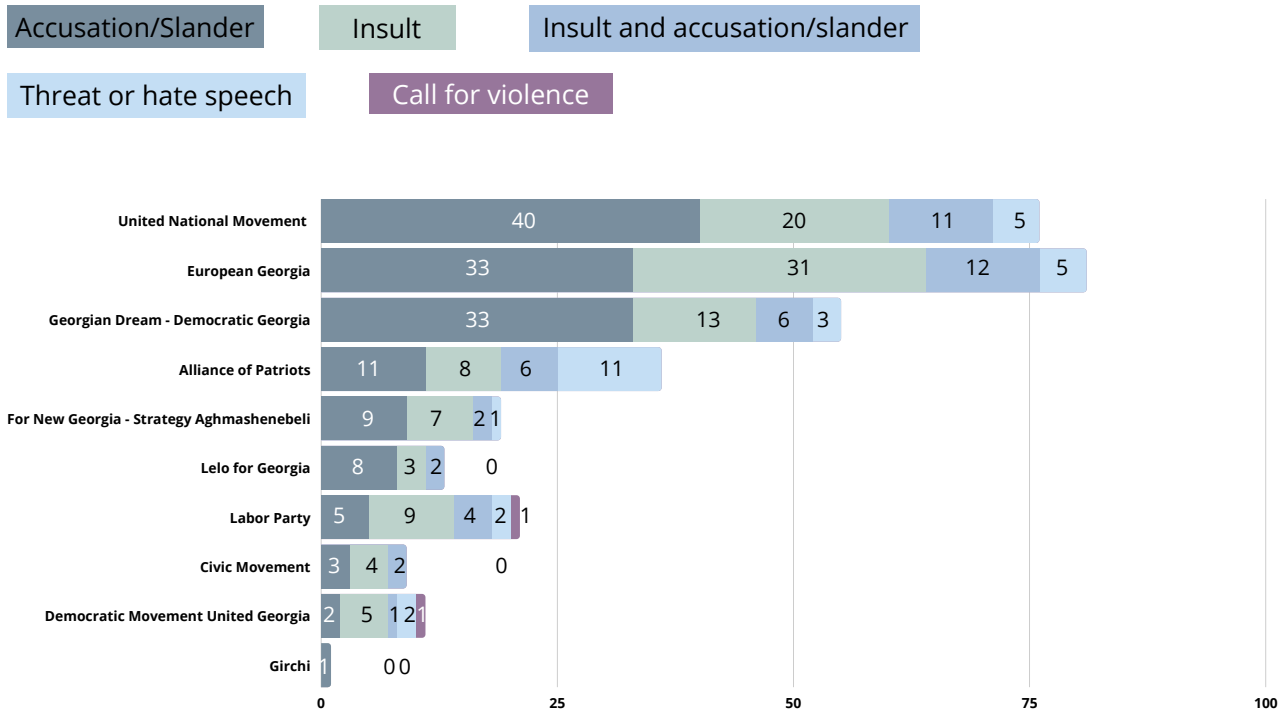
Distribution of violations by gender and party positions

Men made around five times more violations than women, but this was caused by an overall low number of women in politics and party leadership. Out of the ten monitored parties, none had more than three women in their Top-10 list, while less than 22% of all majoritarian candidates were women. [27]

Figure 8: Distribution of violations by gender
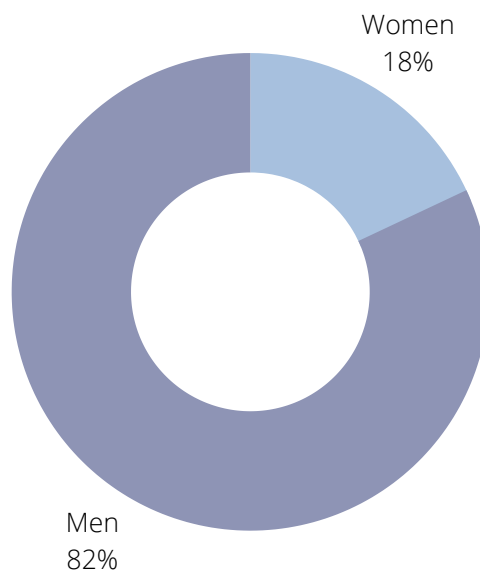
[27] (NDI Georgia 2020a)

No women from Girchi, Labour Party, Citizens and Georgian Dream made any violations. Again, this could be linked to the overall number of instances when women were chosen to speak for the party in the media. Such data has not been collected within this research.

The United National Movement is the party where violations were made by men and women most equally, while in the Democratic Union almost all violations were made by women - which was to be expected, since the leader of the party is a woman.

In terms of the content of violations, personal insults and unsubstantiated statements prevailed in violations made by both genders. However, if in case of men around half of the violations contained insults, only around a third of violations made by women were insults.

Almost all violations were made by the people in the party leadership. Around two thirds of the speakers who made violations were in the Top-10 party list, and more than half were majoritarian candidates. In the case of Georgian Dream, almost all violations were made by acting members of Parliament. Even though there were new individuals in the Top-20 party list, those individuals were not detected violating the CoC. Up to 70% of the violations from European Georgia members also came from acting members of Parliament. Since most of the other parties were not represented in the government, the majority of the speakers from other parties did not hold any official positions.

VIOLATIONS OF COC: STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT

During the second round of interviews the respondents (political party representatives and experts) were asked about specific violations: whether or not they considered flaws identified by monitors to be in violation of various principles of the CoC. In the framework of this stage of the research, 21 respondents (9 party representatives and 12 experts) were presented with 25 instances. The cases identified the violations of the following articles:

- Making public statements, campaign materials (media, video, audio, social media, print) that contain allegations of slander, treason, terrorism, other criminal offenses, as well as incitement to hatred or conflicton the national, ethnic, religious or other ground;
- Providing the media with defamatory, unsubstantiated information about other political entities, their members, and statements that contain threats, slander, or insults to a voter or election contestant;
- Disrespect for the right of rival political parties / candidates to campaign; spreading false and fabricated information about the opponents;
- Using hate speech, xenophobic and/or intimidating expressions;
- Disrespecting the dignity of competitors, and using personal insults.

Twenty-five cases identified as CoC violations by media monitors were presented to the respondents: nine party representatives and 12 experts. Most of the selected cases – twelve – were either the subject of interpretation or the opinions of the respondents were divided (see Table 4). Seven cases were considered a violation by all the respondents; and in six cases the case was not considered a violation. Each respondent was asked to evaluate at least two cases; therefore, the selected cases were assessed by more than one person.

Nine party representatives made 18 assessments in total. In eight instances they decided that the case presented to them was a violation of the CoC, in six they did not assess the case as a violation, and in four they could not say decisively if the case was a violation or not.

Twelve experts made 24 assessments in total. In 14 cases they assessed the case presented to them as a violation of CoC, in seven cases they did not decide this, and in three cases they could not say for sure if the case was a violation or not.

Table 4. Assessment of selected cases of CoC violations by party representatives and experts

Respondent	Violation	Not violation	Opinions divided	No of cases assessed
Party representatives	8	6	4	18
Experts	14	7	3	24
Both	7	6	12	25

(1) Examples of the cases on which the opinions divided:

"I want to shake this government, but how can it be done now, unfortunately, an absolute majority of the members of government are unicellular [imbecile]s, they do not know the basic standards and they do not know that they have to be silent."

"According to the National Movement's [Nats-movement] party number, five contracted persons with the concrete criminal past were trying to interrupt there, but they will never be able to stop me and my teammates doing the job we have as a duty."

(2) Examples of cases considered as violations by all the respondents to whom they were presented:

"A couple of minutes ago there was a demonstration by our opponents, they had a meeting and I could not imagine that they were so addicted to soviet nostalgia after the memory of the nine-year bloody regime. But prior to the elections they purified themselves. I cannot say a thing: in Georgia the oppressor government will never be back, likewise "Sovetskaia Gruzia" [Soviet Georgia] will never be back as well."

"I am warning Tsulukiani, Ivanishvili, Gakharia, Kobakhidze and absolutely all [the leaders of GD], to not even think about the election fraud, otherwise I will break your hand - you should know this."

(3) Examples of cases not considered as a violation by respondents to whom they were shown:

"Suddenly, they found themselves in unison with Gabedava [member of Georgian March], and pro-putinist groups, In Zugdidi everybody know who is who, the subjects of "zonderish" [the word comes from German Sonderkommando and in Georgian context it depicts the special groups hired to execute political opponents] Georgian Dream. Those people are one and the same – Alliance of Patriots, Georgian March, Georgian Dream, they have here a spiritual leader Ivanishvili and outside they have the main leader Putin."

Results of post-monitoring interviews showed that only half of the violations identified were assessed as violations by respondents. Where the experts did not consider cases presented by the monitors as violations of the CoC, the arguments could be summarized as follows:

- The majority of experts considered it essential to take into account context when identifying the violation in certain cases: what preceded the violation, what were the circumstances, what was the pre-election atmosphere, etc. Therefore, there may be a set of cases, when there was a technical breach of a principle of the CoC, however, considering the context, it may not be counted as a violation.
- Certain cases presented to the experts as a violation may be subject of interpretation. In most of these cases, a specific statement may be "irresponsible, but not a breach of the Code". [28] Moreover, "in general, ethics are easily subjected to interpretation and frequently ethical norms require further clarification"; therefore, it is hard to count specific acts as a violation of the Code. [29]

[28] Interview with the representative of Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism
[29] Interview with the representative of Transparency International Georgia

- Perception of a violation of the principles of the CoC is also determined by who is making a certain statement. If a political party member is at the same time holding an official position, unsubstantiated statements from him/her may be counted as a violation. However, similar rhetoric from a regular party member may be assessed as "more of a political statement", than a violation of a specific principle of the CoC. [30] Part of the same competition may be "winning over other's voters" - i.e. focusing on voters [31] - which, to certain extent decreases the gravity of the violation of the CoC.
- Seeing similar communication as a part of competition in today's reality may be another context in which a technical breach of the CoC would not be counted as a violation. Some experts think that it is hard for a political party to join the discussion without using harsh terms while speaking about an opponent: "If you do not say anything about opponent, what kind of political campaign and competition is it". [32] Some of the technical breaches frequently "fit in the opposition campaign". [33] "In other cases, issues are presented in an exaggerated manner, otherwise what should the politicians be doing during the pre-election campaign?" [34]
- According to expert opinion, objectifying is an important aspect in identifying some of the violations; without it we cannot assess some statements/cases to be in violation of the CoC, therefore we need to observe if certain violations were directed towards a specific subject/individual personally. In their opinion, this is important, because assessments made by political actors that are too generalized can equally be considered as violations or non-violations of the CoC.
- The last reason for not considering a breach of CoC principles as a violation is the gravity of violation in the context of other serious violations. Experts have been taking the view that sometimes a violation "is nothing compared" to what is taking place in politics in general. In some cases, the type of communication that may be seen as a violation of CoC principles may be viewed as "innocent criticism". [35]

When party representatives did not consider the cases presented by monitors to be in violation of CoC, the reasoning might be summed up as follows:

- Peculiarities of an especially intense **political reality** is the most frequent reason given as to why political party members do not view a set of cases as violations. Two issues may be identified in these regards: unhealthy party competition does not allow for any other alternatives for the party and forces it to keep moving in this direction. However, communicating with similar phrases and enthusiasm is "on demand" at the same time. [36]

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[30] Interview with the representative of Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy
[31] Interview with the representative of UN Development Program
[32] Interview with the representative of the Institute of Development of Freedom of Information
[33] Interview with the representative of Transparency International Georgia
[34] Interview with the representative of the Institute of Development of Freedom of Information
[35] Interview with the representative of Transparency International Georgia
[36] Interview with the representative of the party Citizens

"If there was a better environment, if you think about it, in normal countries politicians would be apologizing for similar phrases". [37] "I just do not have any other leverage". [38]

- Similarly, to experts the **political assessment and competition** factor is an important aspect for political party representatives as well. "If you are going into assessment and call someone <fascist> or abuser, this should be counted as a violation". [39] Sometimes a non-ethical expression "is not nice to hear, but we put party interests above our personal ones". [40]
- It is noteworthy that political party representatives in some cases focused on the **content of the statement** that was considered to be a violation. According to them, not every statement can be backed by arguments, however, there are discussions about these issues, which "everyone already knows" about. [41] Otherwise, "every statement that we make, unless having a court conviction, may be considered to be a slander". [42]
- In some cases, a party representatives' denial of violation of the CoC was related to the **context of the action**. In these regards, the arguments resemble the one provided by the experts. In a given situation what you respond to matters more than how you respond – in some cases, the environment where something very obvious and unacceptable occurs is such that it is impossible not to respond in the same way. [43]
- The last argument as to why the party representatives do not perceive a breach as a violation is the lack of **definition of terms** in the CoC. In most cases, this concerns the acts of slander, since political parties sometimes do not agree with the definition of slander provided in the document by the authors and do not consider the case to be in violation to the Code. This argument underlines the need for a more thorough discussion between the stakeholders at the time of the inception of the CoC.

On the other hand, based on the discussions held with experts and political party representatives, we can sum up common reasons for the respondents – representatives of both expert and political circles – to be consider as the major factors behind cases of violations of the CoC:

- The ruling party controls the financial and administrative resources, with which they can control the election process;
- For political parties, the main objective becomes emotional mobilization of the voters, i.e. "bringing them out" using aggressive and emotionally motivated communication;
- Political parties fear that they cannot attract attention using other tools and cannot compete with the dominant actors;
- Political parties do not have strong, functioning programs, so, for them, operating in an emotional, aggressive and negative style simplifies competition.

[37] Interview with the representative of the party Georgian Dream
[38] Interview with the representative of the Labour Party
[39] Interview with the representative of the party Alliance of Patriots of Georgia
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] Interview with the representative of the party United National Movement
[42] Interview with the representative of the party Strategy Aghmashenebeli
[43] Interview with the representative of the party United National Movement

ELECTION ASSESSMENTS BY LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

The implementation of CoC principles was assessed in the context of the broader election environment. The 2020 parliamentary elections were closely monitored by both local organizations and international observers. In terms of the assessment of the pre-election atmosphere, various reports were published on the media-environment and political competition to determine the main tendencies of the pre-election campaigning process. Reviewing the monitoring reports enabled better understanding of the pre-election context within which the principles of the CoC were being implemented.

The general tendencies in international observer mission reports showed that in the context of legislative changes, the pre-election environment was much healthier, more competitive and was functioning better. [44] According to the interim report of the Technical Election Assessment Mission of International Republican Institute (IRI – TEAM), electoral amendments [45] that incorporated many recommendations of international and domestic observers following the 2018 elections was welcomed. [46] However, according to assessments by international observers, all the achievements that were supposed to bring about a balanced and multiparty parliament, were overshadowed by various types of violations that hindered the aspiration towards a healthier political environment.

Joint and individual observations and assessments were conducted by local observation institutions. Two days before elections the Georgian Charter of Journalist Ethics, Transparency International and International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy published a joint pre-election environment assessment. According to this assessment, during the pandemic there was no clear separation line between the state and the ruling party, which contributed to an unhealthy election environment. The assessment identified the problem of occasional physical attacks and violence, and abuse of administrative resources, as well as alleged application of pressure, threats and interferences. There have been cases of obstructing and threatening media representatives, as well as of physical violence [against them]. Pre-election campaigning was held against the background of high polarization and mutual accusations among parties/candidates. A polarized media environment and sponsored information campaigns aimed at anonymous discreditation, that intensified in social media, further contributed to this tendency. [47]

[44] (OSCE/ODIHR 2020)
    (IRI 2020)
    (NDI Georgia 2020b)
[45] (Civil.ge 2020e)
[46] (IRI 2020)
[47] (Transparency International 2020b)

The mainstream messages of political groups have been critically analyzed by the Media Institute through a propaganda lenses. Among the findings was that violations that were most frequently observed were the attacking and demonizing of specific organizations or individuals. According to the report, scant factual backing and manufactured evidence were techniques used in allegations regarding the pro-Russian orientation of the opposition, which, in terms of the CoC principles amounted to a slander of the political competitor. Incidences of the use of false premises were also named as frequent elements in parties' communication strategies. The report identified the concrete norms of the CoC under the frequent violation, among them are the norms of conducting an issue-based campaign, promoting a peaceful election environment, using or spreading illegally obtained and / or false information, refraining from making public statements, issuing campaign material that contain allegations of slander, treason, terrorism, other criminal offenses and carrying out activities without discrimination. [48]

Almost every local or international report highlighted the visibly polarized environment in Georgia's political and media circles. Most of the reports mentioned in this chapter were not referring immediately to CoC principles, although the overall results of the international and the local reports are usually relevant to the principles given in the CoC document. This is obvious, as well, from the interviews with experts who represented the observer organizations: polarization was identified as a problem in OSCE/ODIHR and National-Democratic Institute reports. [49] According to international observers, polarization exists among the society, media and political circles, and in this regard, the focus on the activities encouraging polarization was important, and this was especially evident in the social media, although [50] various reports also noted polarization in traditional media. Negative screening and unverified information were among the main factors contributing to polarized pre-election political environment. [51]

It is notable that a monitoring report on media was also published by the National Communications Commission as one of the important elements influencing the pre-election environment. The Commission was observing pre-election advertisements, pre-election debates, news and public-political programs, pre-election agitation and public opinion surveys. According to the report, the national broadcaster had a more or less balanced approach in covering the election, however other major TV broadcasters were subject to criticism. The basis of the criticism was unequal broadcasting time and biased and subjective critical approaches defined by political views. [52] The National Broadcaster also published a report assessing subjects covered by broadcasting.

[48] (Media Institute 2020)
[49] (OSCE/ODIHR 2020)
     (NDI Georgia 2020b)
[50] (ISFED 2020b)
[51] (Institute of Development of Freedom of Information 2020)
     (Public Broadcaster 2020)
[52] (Communication Commission 2020)

According to the major findings of the report, election candidate coverage in news programs was based on their activities; analytical programs and talk shows focused more on parties that were outside voters' attention due to the polarized electoral and media environment. With visibly polarized actors, the public broadcaster had the highest indicator on neutral tone in its coverage. [53]

Another problem that was shared among the majority of the observers concerns traditional factors damaging for a healthy political environment in Georgia, such as activities focusing on violence and negative campaigns. During the pre-election campaign, there were cases of physical violence, campaigns to discredit candidates and parties and fake support pages. [54] The intensity violence and negative rhetoric in campaigning increased as election day approached. [55]

In this context, the abuse of administrative resources by various means was another customary challenge. As an example, we can cite various monitoring reports identifying pressure being brought to bear on observers, examples of politically motivated threats and pressure, voter buying and the use of administrative resources for election purposes, polarizing civil institutions and mobilizing them for election purposes, etc. [56] Research by Transparency International focused on the effectiveness of investigative bodies in these regards. The report emphasizes the ineffective investigation of cases, such as alleged violence on political grounds, dismissal of employees, using investigative bodies to discredit political actors, etc. [57] The use of institutional and administrative resources in the pre-election period, for instance using state-financed projects during agitation, should also be noted. [58] OSCE/ODIHR's concluding report also highlights this tendency and emphasizes the blurred boundaries between the ruling party and state, as well as the dominance of ruling party representatives in election commissions, which negatively affected the conduct of a healthy pre-election process. [59]

Meanwhile, international observer reports highlight long-term challenges, such as the representation of traditionally vulnerable groups in pre-election political processes. [60]

[53] (Public Broadcaster 2020)
[54] (ISFED 2020c)
    (ISFED 2020c)
    (IRI 2020)
[55] (NDI Georgia 2020b)
[56] (ISFED 2020ò)
    (Transparency International 2020c)
[57] (Transparency International 2020c)
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] (OSCE/ODIHR 2020)
[60] (IRI 2020)

According to the OSCE/ODIHR assessment, insufficient representation of women in election campaigning was damaging for the chances of a healthy pre-election environment. However, on the other hand, the election environment for ethnic minority representatives was much more inclusive this time. This inclusivity was only restricted for regions with minority settlements. [61]

It is interesting that the issue of inclusivity is perceived differently by the party representatives themselves: According to the 1st round of interviews all the parties' representatives perceived the degree of inclusion to be high within their parties. They indicated female participation, youth involvement and ethnic minorities' inclusion as among their assets in pre-election campaigning. Georgian Dream promoted their gender quotas and measured female involvement in the pre-election campaign based on their appearance on the stage during the presentations. UNM claimed their party program to be based on women's inputs and participation. Two parties out of eight had established special units for women. Youth participation mostly included assisting candidates, organizing side-events, and participating in party campaigns (five parties out of eight). Among the ethnic minorities' integration, party representatives mostly mentioned individuals from the Abkhaz, Kurd, and Ukrainian communities. However, representatives from the Azerbaijani and Armenian populated settlements were rarely named.

Therefore, numerous monitoring reports and assessments conducted by local and international organizations named violations that were damaging to healthy competition and contributing to a tense and polarized pre-election environment. So, it is shown that it is particularly important to find ways to encourage political parties and their candidates to work harder to create pre-election conditions that are based on transparent, balanced and fair competition. Comprehensive implementation of the principles outlined in this document would help balance the flaws identified in the various reports and go some way to reducing their damaging influence on the pre-election environment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The CoC for political parties was signed in 2020, before the Parliamentary elections by 40 parties. In the end, the political parties, like the experts and representatives of observer organizations, welcomed the introduction of the CoC. In the long-term, the CoC may become an important part of Georgian political tradition, violation of which would be damaging to a party's image, which would therefore facilitate the implementation of CoC commitments by parties and by political actors in general.

[61] (OSCE/ODIHR 2020)

As for the implementation of the CoC during the 2020 pre-election period, the document has not facilitated any fundamental changes: violation of CoC principles by all major political parties was evidenced in the pre-election environment. Political parties had not established any new internal mechanism/units to ensure the implementation and monitoring of CoC and have not issued specific instructions about the commitments taken under the CoC. What is more, some of the parties even denied the fact that they had signed the CoC. There were also cases when party representatives were not familiar with CoC content or other signatory parties.

Media monitoring by the representatives and leaders of the ten main political parties identified more than 300 CoC violations by the ruling party as well as the opposition. Violations included mostly personal insults or unsubstantiated statements and allegations. Less common violations included the use of hate speech and calls for violence. The research did not find any instances of fake news.

It also needs to be noted that in electoral and organizational terms, the big parties were the least characterized by issue-based, program- and subject-oriented discussions during their TV appearances. However, here, in addition to the role of the party, the role of the media was important since numerous programs encouraged issue-based discussion to various extents.

The media is not a passive actor simply reflecting pre-election the campaigns of the political parties. Given the research methodology for this report, we cannot discuss the cause-and-effect aspects, however, an interesting association was identified between TV channels and parties. For instance, statements of the ruling party representatives were covered mostly by TV Imedi and Rustavi 2, while opposition parties were less visible on TV Imedi (news programs excluded).

Establishing the CoC is a step forward as it contributes to raising awareness among politicians, activists and citizens of the rules of the game. Despite the fact that multiple CoC violations were identified during the 2020 parliamentary elections, parties failed to put in sufficient effort to integrating the CoC within their structures. Regardless of this, in the long-term, the CoC will contribute to fair pre-election campaigns, based on the practice of informing the voters.

The challenges found in the report reflect the complexity of Georgia's political environment and will remain relevant for the foreseeable future. Some of these challenges are related to the political culture, which cannot be changed in a day. It needs longer engagement from the donor community, international partners, civil society, academia, and media, as well as the parties and their supporters.

Recommendations

For Political Parties:

- Ensure effective intra-party communication with regards to the CoC norms and content by the party leaders. Distribute specific instructions that will contribute to awareness of the CoC within the internal structure of a party;
- Work and establish an effective intra-party mechanism to ensure the implementation and monitoring of CoC commitments, conformity with which would be ensured by the parties' own regulations;
- With the active involvement of the political parties and close cooperation with the CEC and other interested organizations, establish a permanent inter-party platform ("interparty council"), that would ensure interparty communication on ethical norms in terms of agreement, mutual understanding, prevention of violations, language, and appropriate behavior;
- If there are cases of differing interpretations of CoC articles, discussions should be held via the inter-party platform to clarify any vague aspects of the Code, to prevent the violation of the principles;
- Instead of the traditional negative campaigning, offer a stronger positive agenda to support the spirit and principles of the CoC. This would also reflect voters' preference for positive campaigning, as shown by public opinion polls.

For CEC:

- Implement specific result-oriented measures to achieve an improvement in trust and cooperation in the political environment of, aimed at reaching compromise among the parties;
- Organize and facilitate the establishment of a neutral platform ("interparty council") in close cooperation with the parties that could be used to raise and discuss issues in the CoC content, monitoring mechanisms and existing violations. Similar neutral platform could contribute to a better execution and monitoring of CoC commitments. In addition to party representatives, the involvement of media outlets and non-governmental organizations in the work of the interparty council would be desirable;
- Contribute to informing civil society, the pubic, media, international organizations and other stakeholders about the CoC's content to significantly increase the sense of accountability of parties towards society;
- Create an information platform to carry details regularly of violation of CoC principles by those involved in elections for local or international organizations or other stakeholders in the research and monitoring of election process. Provide relevant information on the CoC and its implementation so that election monitoring by the CSOs and international observers could include coverage of the CoC.

For the International Partners and Donors:

- Even though impact of the CoC was limited, changing political culture is a long-term process and short-term fix could not be expected. International partners and donors should continue engagement in dialogue and compromise – based relationship building between political parties. Persistent support to consensus based politics is important, in cooperation with all international actors active in Georgia;
- Push introducing the CoC concept at an early stage before the elections, allowing time for it to be internalized within the parties, agree on the principles, communicate with the party members and set up implementation and monitoring mechanisms;
- Support the establishment of forum among the political parties ("interparty council") that met regularly to discuss ethical norms among political parties – with the aim of improving the monitoring mechanisms; it is also important to focus on encouraging the main political actors to reach political compromises;
- Ensure direct/ bilateral engagement with political party leadership to discuss ways in which to ensure better compliance on abiding by the CoC;
- In order to ensure a competitive and fair election environment and increase the sense of responsibility among the political parties and the effectiveness of the Code, it is important to:

  - Encourage more involvement of media outlets and journalists, which would help inform the public of the importance of the CoC;
  - Continue research and support for public discussions for the upcoming elections to ensure that the dynamic of CoC implementation is constantly observed, which would raise the quality of accountability on the part of the political parties;
  - Include CoC in the election monitoring reports, reflecting on the ethical principles in it for of political campaigning;
  - Given the Georgian political context, it is desirable to narrow the focus of the CoC in line with the gravity and quality of violations, since there is a perception among the parties that the Code is a general one and all-encompassing and that some parts of it are regulated by other legal norms. Narrow down the language of the CoC, defining terms in the document, so it is less open to interpretation;
  - Ensure active involvement of the main media outlets which will be involved in upcoming elections, as their active involvement in the discussions of the CoC is desirable. This could be facilitated through a separate document, which would be signed by main media outlets. While the document would be tied to the existing CoC in terms of content and principles, but it would be different in regards to commitments.

- Plan and organize activities – debates, conferences and public discussions - to ensure that the international experience and the benefits of implementing the CoC norms are shared with political parties and civil society as much as possible.

<u>For civil society and media organizations:</u>

- Include CoC in the election monitoring reports, reflecting on the ethical principles in it for political campaigning;
- Media organizations could support and actively disseminate the results of the CoC monitoring;
- Support ethical campaigning in everyday engagement with political parties, setting the expectation for the upholding of the CoC. Reflect on their role in the future elections and CoC, from its inception to implementation;
- Inform wider society about the existence of the CoC, its content and the challenges in implementation;
- Support de-polarization of the political process. Opinion polls show the political maturity of Georgians, who now favor a multiparty parliament and consensual politics over polarization and one-party politics. So, it is advisable for both local and international research organizations to address voters' attitudes towards ethical campaigning in their surveys.

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8. Alliance of Patriots of Georgia. Personal Communication. January 12, 2021
9. Labour Party of Georgia. Personal Communication December 22, 2020
10. Strategy Aghmashenebeli. Personal Communication. December 26, 2020
11. United National Movement. Personal Communication. December 22, 2020

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Monitored Media Outlets:

	Radio/Television	Online Media
National media	Georgia Public Broadcaster	Netgazeti
	Imedi TV	News On.ge
	Rustavi 2	Publika
	Mtavari Channel	InterpressNews
	Formula	Radio Liberty
	TV Pirveli	Tabula
	Objektivi	Ambebi.ge
		PalitraNews
Regional Media	Marneuli Radio	SK News
		Marneuli Radio Web
		LivePress
		Mozaika
		Qartli.ge

Annex 2: Monitored Political Parties

1. Georgian Dream–Democratic Georgia
2. National Movement
3. European Georgia
4. For New Georgia-Strategy Aghmashenebeli
5. Alliance of Patriots
6. Labor Party
7. Civic Movement
8. Lelo for Georgia
9. Girchi
10. Democratic Movement United Georgia