Local Elections 2021
KYRGYZSTAN

Social Media Monitoring Report
(12 March – 9 April 2021)

6 May 2021
Bishkek, Bratislava

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I. INTRODUCTION

Between 12 March 2021 and 9 April 2021, Media Development Center, a Kyrgyz media organization, and MEMO 98, a Slovak non-profit specialist media-monitoring organization, monitored social media in the run-up to the 11 April local elections.

The main purpose of this monitoring was to determine the impact of social media on electoral integrity and the extent to which social media provide important information that voters need in their decision making.[1] Television is the primary source of information about politics, but the growing relevance of social media has to be acknowledged, and so we continued with the monitoring of Facebook and Instagram.[2] We were interested in determining to what extent are social media used in Kyrgyzstan during elections. MEMO 98 and Media Development Center (MDC) monitored social media prior to the 4 October parliamentary elections as well as the 10 January 2021 early presidential election.

There are an estimated 2.5 million social media users in Kyrgyzstan which is approximately 40 per cent of the population (comparing to 22 per cent of social media users in the Central Asia region), with a 2.1 million Instagram audience and 610,000 Facebook audience (people that can be reached by either Facebook or Instagram ads on the respective platforms).

The monitoring included Facebook and Instagram accounts of actors within four categories (politicians, political parties, authorities, and media). Out of initial list of 25 political parties that were contesting local elections in the capital Bishkek, leaders of these parties and president Japarov; 3 official, local election-related, authorities, the monitoring eventually included those actors who had public pages or accounts on Facebook and Instagram at the time of the monitoring. Such accounts were found for 8 politicians, 21 political parties and 3 official institutions on Facebook, and 22 politicians, 20 political parties and 2 official bodies on Instagram.[3]

Politicians, parties, official authorities produced a total of 2,519 posts on Facebook and 2,153 on Instagram. These posts generated as many 286,407 interactions on Facebook and 1,816,570 on Instagram.

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1 *2020 World Press Freedom Index* from Reporters Without Borders ranks Kyrgyzstan as 82 (out of 180 countries, +1 from 2019, and +6 from 2015), assessed as a country with '*problematic situation*' (there are two higher and two lower categories).

2 According to the *Digital 2020 (Kyrgyzstan),* a research conducted annually by We Are Social and Hootsuite, there is 39 per cent of social media users in the country.

3 The monitoring also followed activity of 11 Facebook pages and 11 Instagram accounts of media outlets.

Political background

Elections of deputies of local councils (local *keneshes* – elected legislative bodies) were initially scheduled to take place in some cities and regions of Kyrgyzstan on 12 April 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a state of emergency was introduced in Bishkek, Osh and several regions of the country. The former President Jeenbekov signed a decree postponing local elections for an indefinite period. Following the October 2020 events and the change of power, the newly elected president Japarov[4] set the date for the local elections to be 11 April 2021.[5] A constitutional referendum took place on the same day with the local elections. The corresponding law on holding a referendum on the Constitution was adopted by the Parliament (*Jogorku Kenesh*) by a majority vote and was signed by President Japarov in March 2021.

The constitutional reform had an impact on the electoral processes. In accordance with the new version of the Constitution, the number of parliament (MPs) remains unknown.[6] In addition, it is not clear from the text of the document how will the MPs be elected. This uncertainty has led many parties to pay more attention to local elections. On the other hand, local elections were regarded as test of popularity of political actors prior to elections to the Parliament scheduled for autumn 2021. At the same time, the events of October 2020 significantly influenced the civic activity, which led to the formation of new political parties that do not have large financial resources but enjoy the support of some part of the population.

According to the legislation, election campaign for city *keneshes* lasted 30 days, and for the local rural *keneshes* 20 days. Candidates in city keneshes could not run independently (they had to be nominated by a political party), whereas for rural keneshes, candidates could be self-nominated. In total, 56 political parties participated in the local elections across the country. Elections were organized in 28 city and 420 rural *keneshes*. However, the main struggle between the parties was for mandates in Bishkek' s local council. In terms of the level of competition, the elections to the Bishkek City Kenesh (hereinafter - BCK) were even more competitive than October 2020 elections to the Parliament. In total, 25 parties nominated as many as 1,800 candidates to contest 45 mandates available in BCK. This level of competition probably led to use of various unethical methods of influencing voter's choices. For instance, according to the analysis of Facebook accounts conducted by factcheck.kg,[7] some political parties allegedly used non-genuine accounts in their election campaigns.

4 Available at https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-55595377
5 Available at https://kaktus.media/doc/431542_mestnye_vybory_v_bishkeke_i_v_oshe_naznacheny_na_11_aprelia._japarov_podpisal_ykaz.html
6 According to the new Constitution, the number of parliament members will be determined by the Constitutional Law.
7 Available at https://factcheck.kg/vybory-v-bgk-kakie-partii-opirayutsya-na-fejkovuyu-podderzhku/

II. FINDINGS

- The monitoring was conducted from 12 March until 9 April 2021. It focused on 32 public accounts of political subjects (politicians, political parties, official institutions) across Facebook and 44 such accounts on Instagram.
- Monitored Facebook accounts of political actors produced a total of 2,519 posts, with as many as 1,819 posts produced by political parties, 212 posts by politicians and 488 posts by authorities. All these Facebook posts of political actors generated as many as 286,407 interactions.
- Instagram accounts of monitored political actors produced a total of 2,153 posts - so even with the higher number of accounts on Instagram, the number of posts was smaller than on Facebook. This number included 1,631 posts by political parties, 361 by politicians and 161 by authorities. All Instagram posts together generated as many 1,816,570 interactions. The interaction rate on Instagram is generally higher than on Facebook (this was noted also in previous elections); Instagram posts saw about 6 times as many interactions as Facebook's posts.
- On Facebook, among the key politicians (out of 8 profiles monitored), the most active one was N. Tuleev[8] (103 posts) followed by President S. Japarov (51 posts) and B. Tolbaev[9] (31 posts). These politicians dominated also in terms of interactions, with the following figures: Tuleev (21,578), S. Japarov (11,090) and B. Tolbaev (6,957), followed by O. Babanov[10] (2051) and K. Soorunkulova[11] (1,324).
- Same politicians were also very active on Instagram, with the most active one being Anjelika Kairatovna (72 posts), followed by president Japarov (54 posts), N. Tuleev (48 posts) and I. Karypbekov (44 posts). In terms of interactions, A. Kairatovna dominated with more than 910,000 followed by N. Kadyrbekov (332,000) and S Japarov (less than 94,000).

8 N. Tuleev, the leader of the political party *Ak Bata*, ran for the Bishkek City Hall. In 2008-2010, he was the mayor of Bishkek. In autumn 2010 he was a deputy of parliament from the *Ata Jurt Kyrgyzstan* party. In 2010, he was charged with economic crimes, as well as charges of involvement in organizing the April riots. In 2013, the court sentenced N. Tuleev to 10 years in prison. In 2016, N. Tuleev was released under an amnesty in accordance with a court decision, as well as in connection with the fact that he fully compensated for the damage.

9 B. Tolbaev is a businessman, founder and head of a micro credit company, as well as a philanthropist and former presidential candidate who ran in January 2021. B. Tolbaev ran for the Bishkek City Hall from the political party *Ata-Jurt Kyrgyzstan*.

10 O. Babanov former leader of the parliamentary faction and the political party *Respublika*, former prime minister (2011-2012)

11 K. Sooronkulova is a former judge of the Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic. Leader of the political party *Reforma*. She participated in the parliamentary elections in October 2020, ran for president in January 2021, and participated in the elections for the Bishkek City Hall.

In the run up to the 10 January 2021 presidential election, Anjelika Kairatovna produced the most popular Instagram posts (at that time as a social media influencer).

- Of 21 accounts of political parties followed on Facebook, 8 produced more than 100 posts. The most active party was Ak Bata (209 posts) followed by Emgek (200 posts) and Respublika (183 posts). In terms of interactions, Tynchtyk was the most effective, as its 116 posts received 37,000 interactions. Respublika followed with 33,000 interaction and Yntymak was third with 29,000 interactions.

- On Instagram, parties generated a smaller number of posts compared to Facebook (1,631 vs 1,819, respectively). Iyman Nuru was the most active with almost 200 posts produced, followed by Reforma (175) and Respublika (156). In terms of interactions, Nash Narod clearly dominated with 80,000 interactions (only with 70 posts), followed by Iyman Nuru 45,000), Reforma (36,000) and Tynchtyk (33,000).

- The Bishkek City Hall was by far most active among three authorities monitored, on both platforms. On Facebook, it produced over 376 posts and 124 on Instagram.

- For the monitored media, of some 200 posts with highest interaction rate on each of the two platforms, only a relatively small number of posts dealt with political issues. In Facebook and Instagram, there were only 24 and 40 such posts respectively. The incumbent president Japarov was clearly in the centre of the monitored media focus, as roughly two thirds of political posts were dedicated to him. More specifically, he was subject of 16 Facebook and 27 Instagram posts and was portrayed mainly in a neutral way.

- *Elections* as the main topic overwhelmingly dominated in posts by politicians and political parties, both on Facebook and Instagram. The Bishkek and Osh City Halls focused on issues related to *transport* and *infrastructure*. In the media's posts with highest interaction rate, topics related to elections and politics were not in the centre of the media attention. The issues dominating the media posts on both platforms were *Foreign affairs*, *COVID-19* and *Social issues*.

- Political actors used advertising on the Facebook-owned platforms. The total amount spent on these ads was at least twice as high as the amount spent during the January elections (some 30,000 USD in these elections, for some 2,600 ads, compared to around 16,000 USD in January elections, for some 1,740 ads).

- Similar to previous monitoring, disinformation campaign played its negative role also during the local elections campaign. A need to introduce a workable online mechanism and to increase digital media literacy is even more urgent after this campaign.

III. CHARTS

Facebook

Chart 1

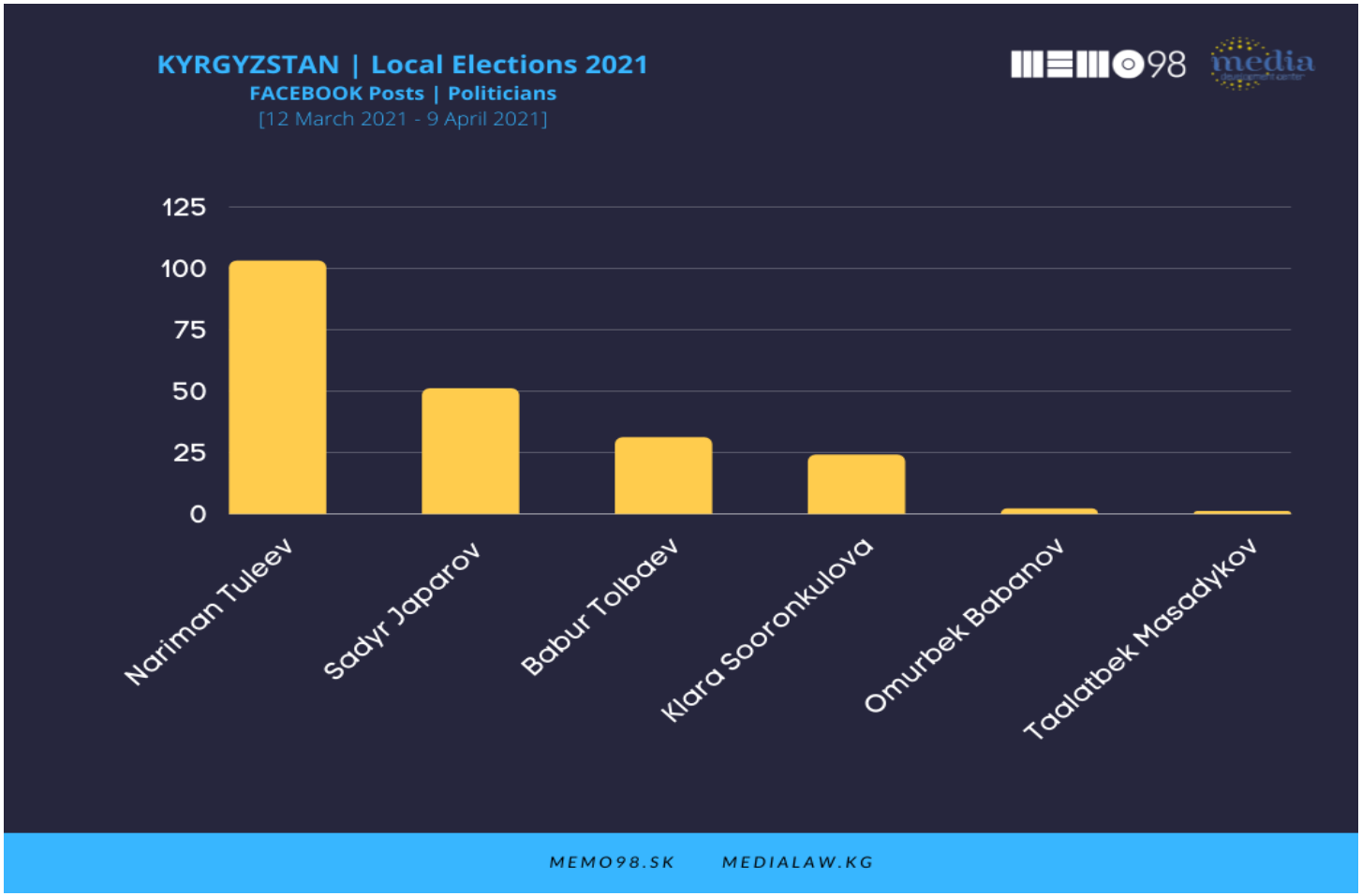


Chart 2

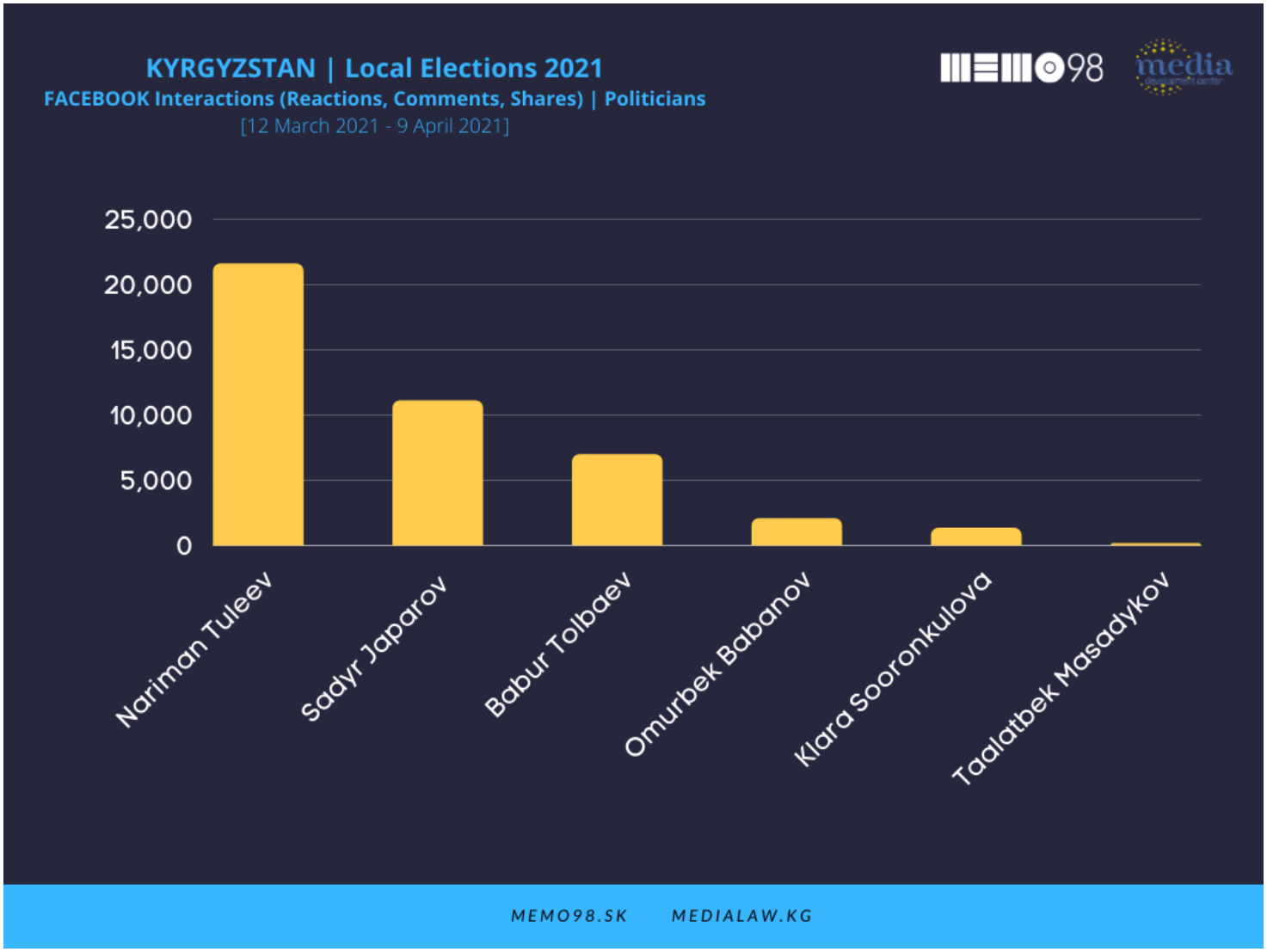

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Interactions (Reactions, Comments, Shares) | Politicians
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0
Nariman Tuleev
Sadyr Japarov
Babur Tolbaev
Omurbek Babanov
Kiara Sooronkulova
Taalatbek Masadykov
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 3

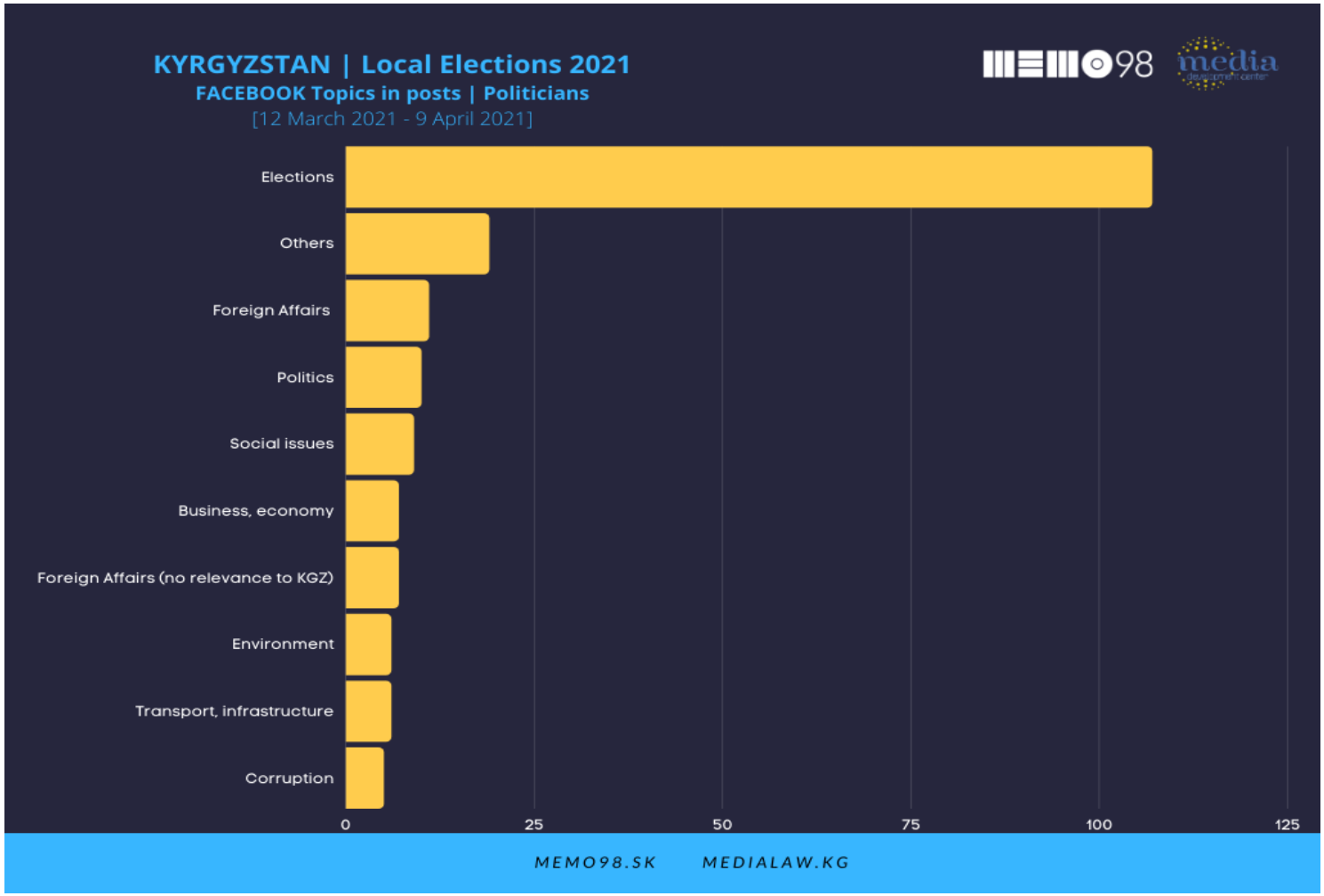

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Topics in posts | Politicians
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
Elections
Others
Foreign Affairs
Politics
Social issues
Business, economy
Foreign Affairs (no relevance to KGZ)
Environment
Transport, infrastructure
Corruption
0
25
50
75
100
125
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 4

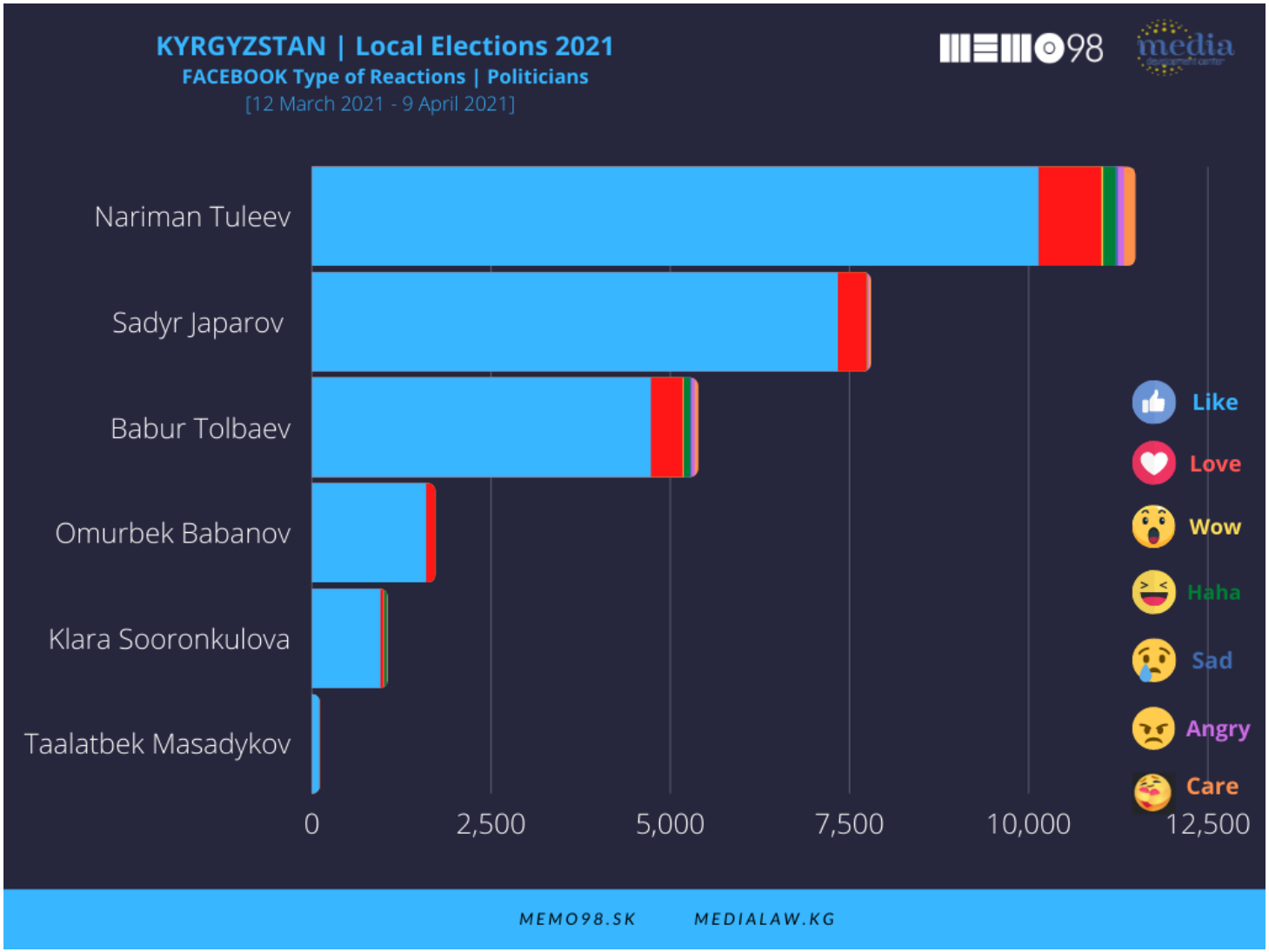

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Type of Reactions | Politicians
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
Nariman Tuleev
Sadyr Japarov
Babur Tolbaev
Omurbek Babanov
Klara Sooronkulova
Taalatbek Masadykov
0
2,500
5,000
7,500
10,000
12,500
Like
Love
Wow
Haha
Sad
Angry
Care
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 5

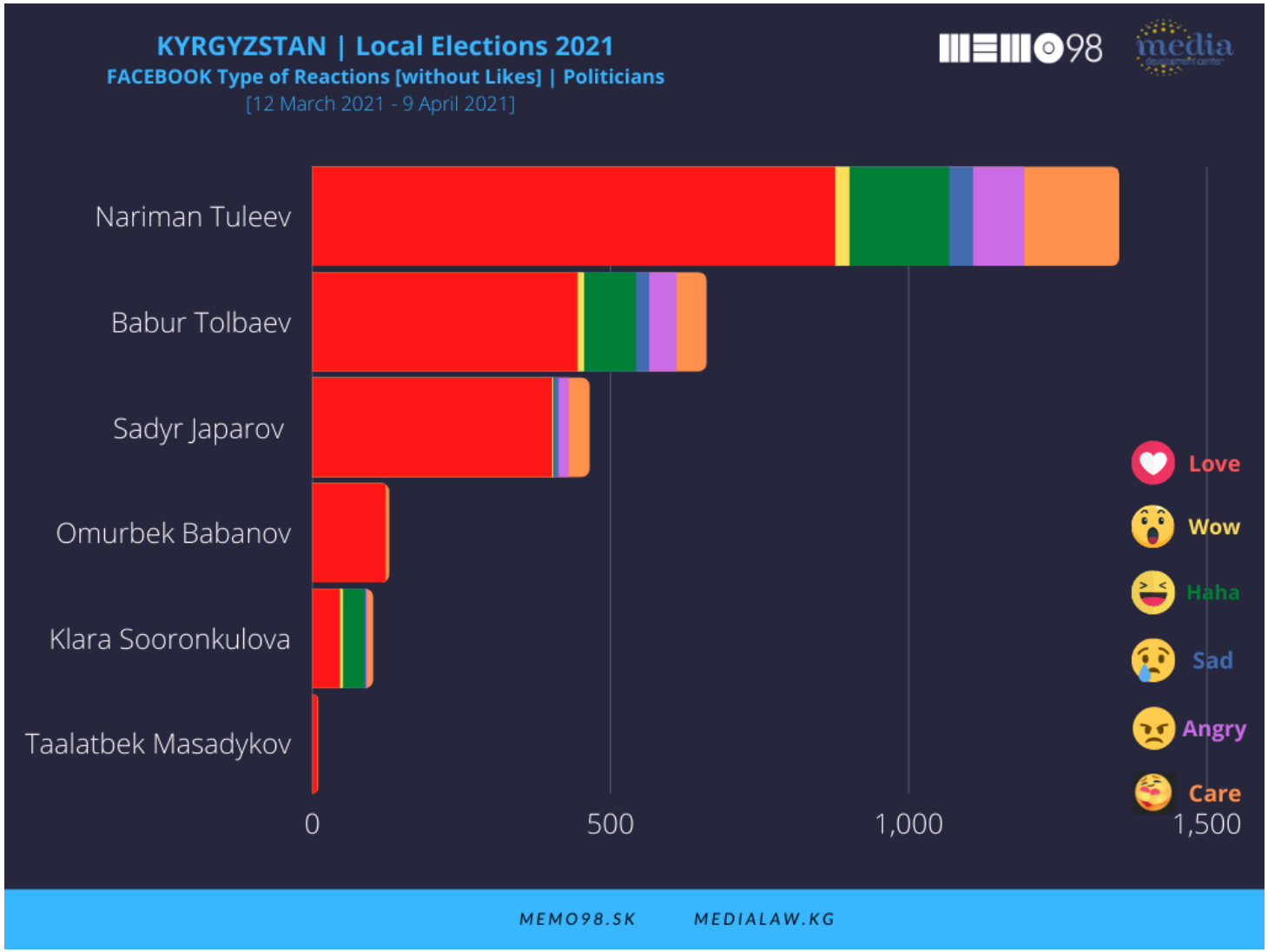

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Type of Reactions [without Likes] | Politicians
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
Nariman Tuleev
Babur Tolbaev
Sadyr Japarov
Omurbek Babanov
Klara Sooronkulova
Taalatbek Masadykov
0
500
1,000
1,500
Love
Wow
Haha
Sad
Angry
Care
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 6

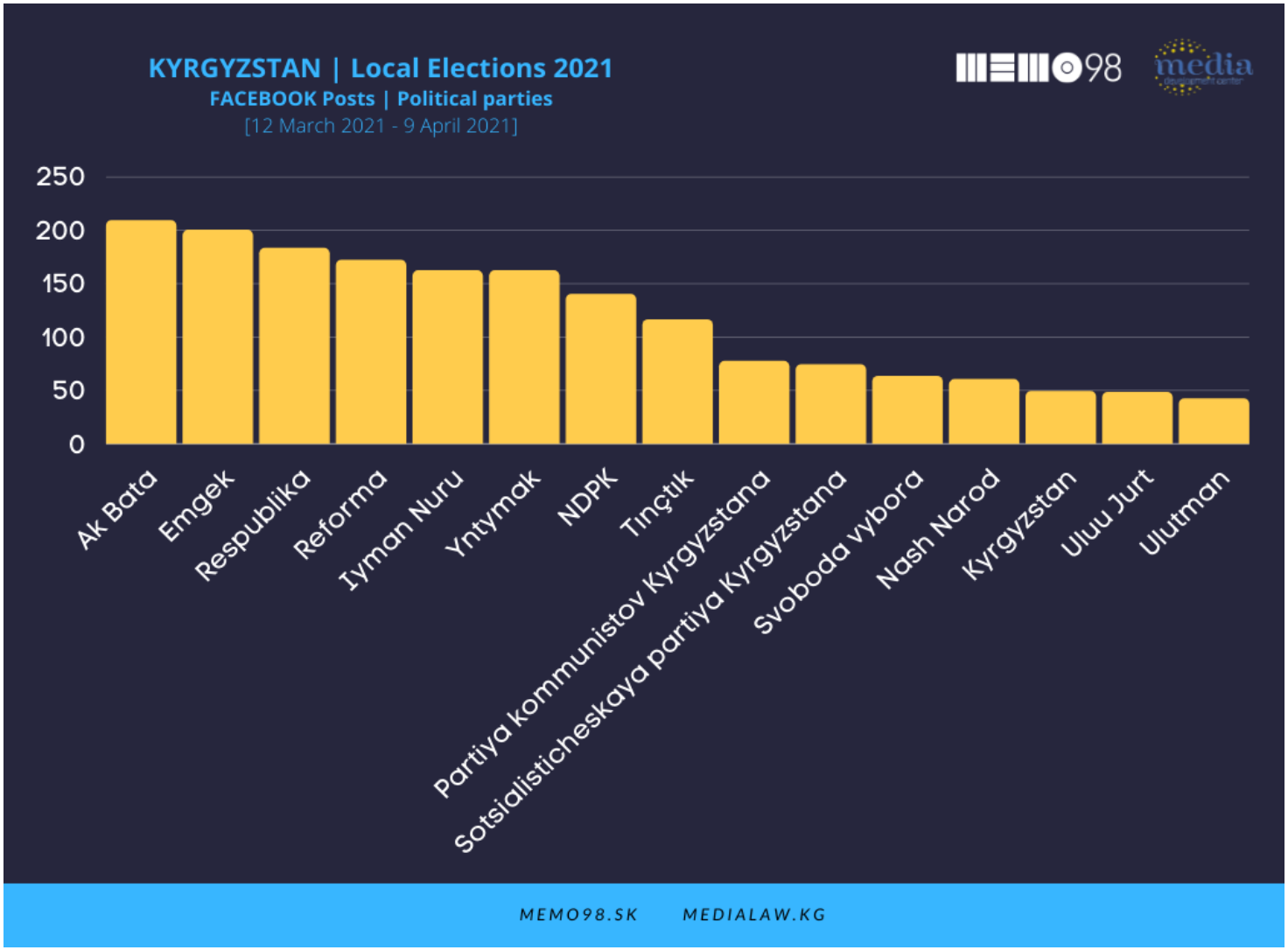

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Posts | Political parties
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
250
200
150
100
50
0
Ak Bata
Emgek
Respublika
Reforma
Iyman Nuru
Yntymak
NDPK
Tinçtik
Partiya kommunistov Kyrgyzstana
Sotsialisticheskaya partiya Kyrgyzstana
Svoboda vybora
Nash Narod
Kyrgyzstan
Uluu Jurt
Ulutman
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 7

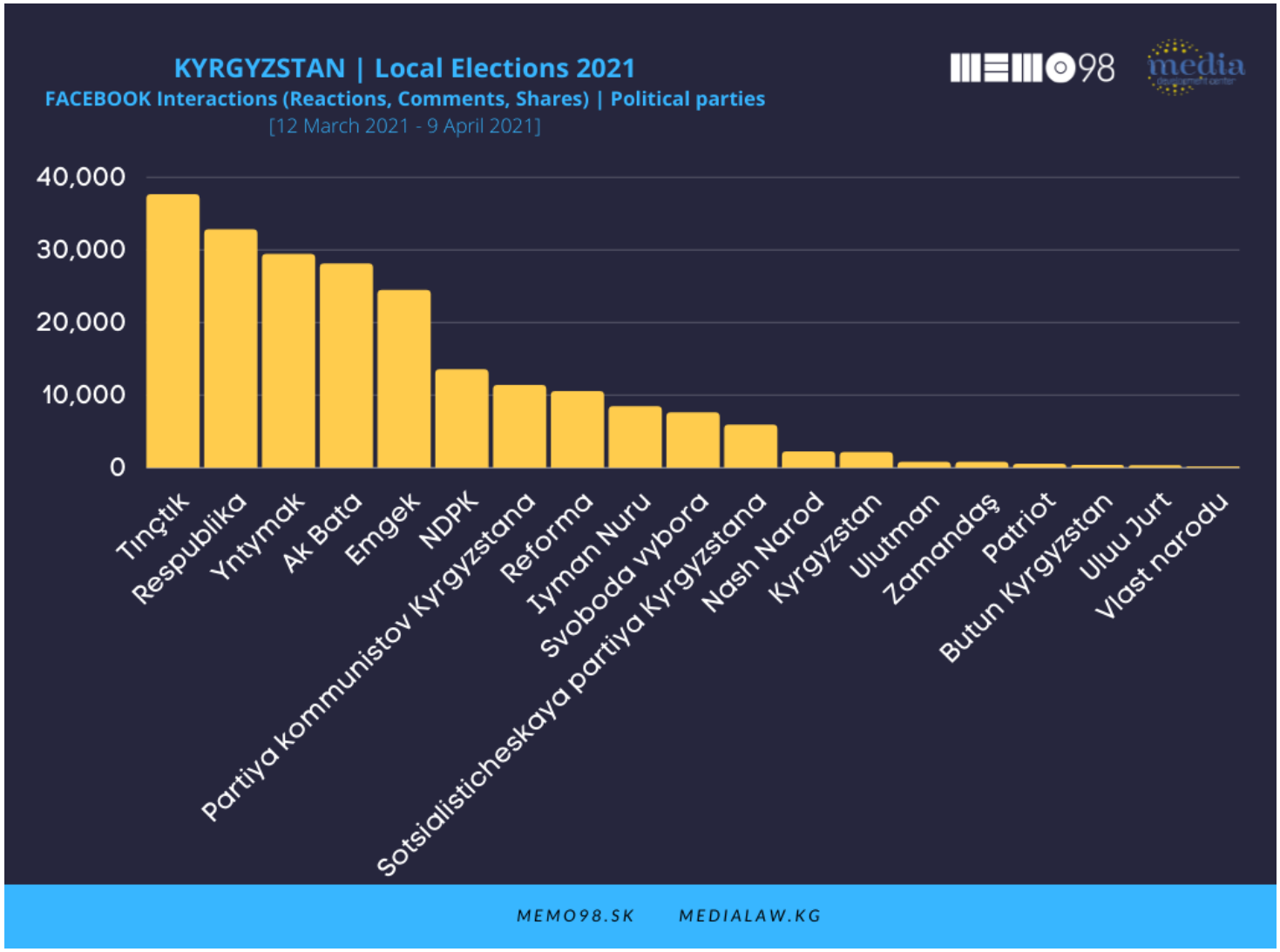

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Interactions (Reactions, Comments, Shares) | Political parties
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
40,000
30,000
20,000
10,000
0
Tinçtik
Respublika
Yntymak
Ak Bata
Emgek
NDPK
Partiya kommunistov Kyrgyzstana
Reforma
Iyman Nuru
Svoboda vybora
Sotsialisticheskaya partiya Kyrgyzstana
Nash Narod
Kyrgyzstan
Ulutman
Zamandaş
Patriot
Butun Kyrgyzstan
Uluu Jurt
Vlast narodu
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 8

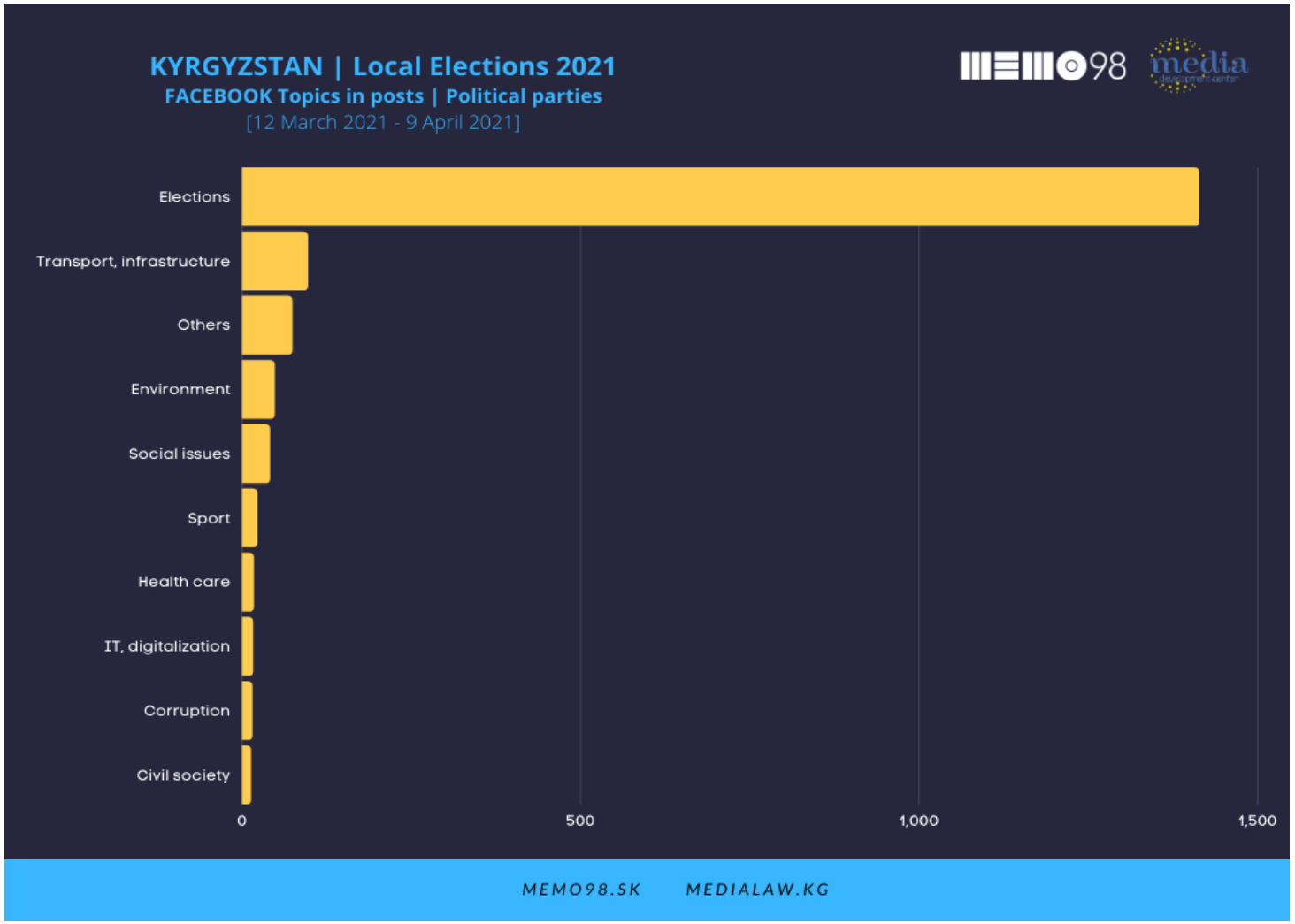

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Topics in posts | Political parties
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
Elections
Transport, infrastructure
Others
Environment
Social issues
Sport
Health care
IT, digitalization
Corruption
Civil society
0
500
1,000
1,500
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 9

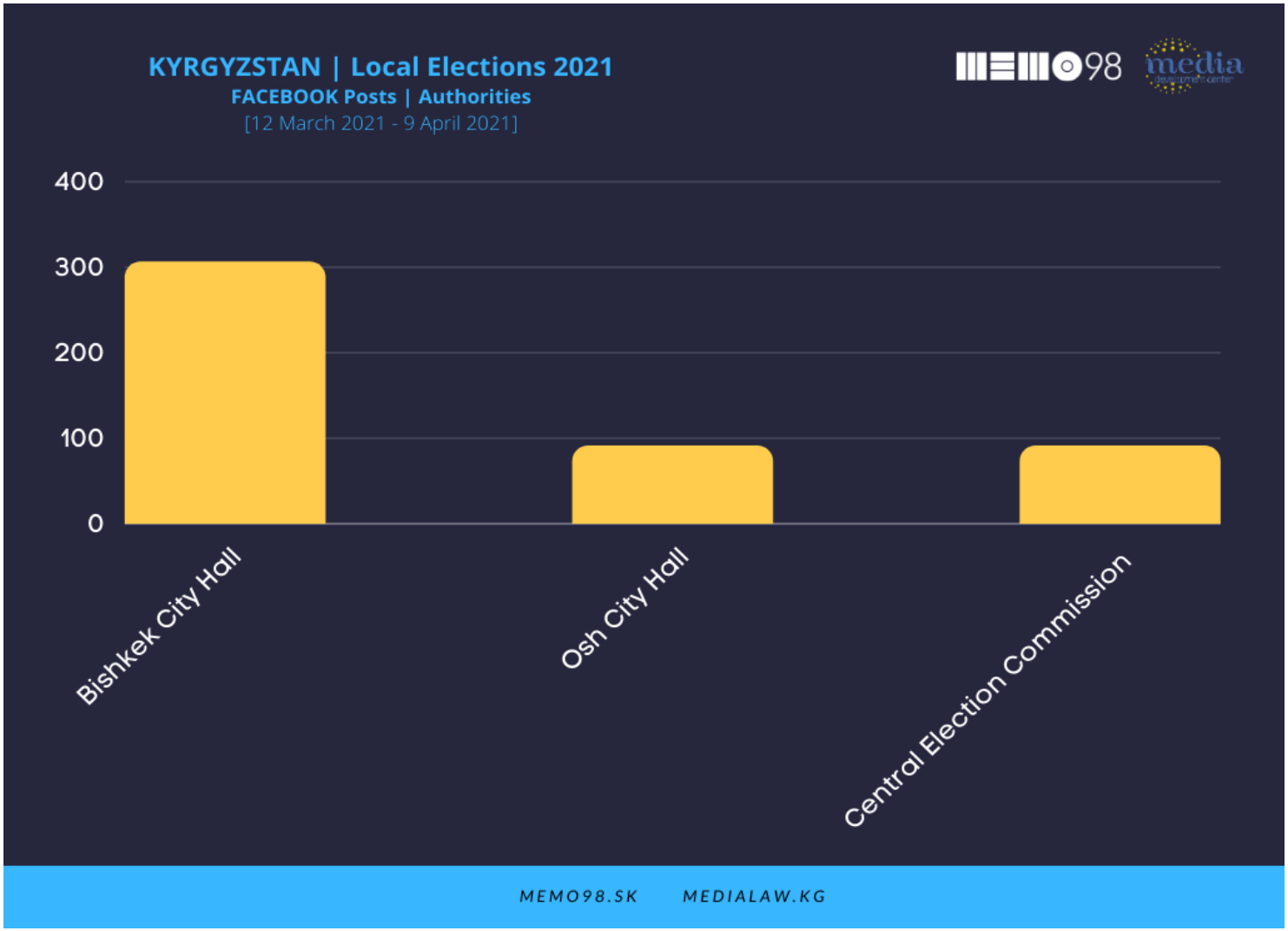

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Posts | Authorities
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
400
300
200
100
0
Bishkek City Hall
Osh City Hall
Central Election Commission
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 10

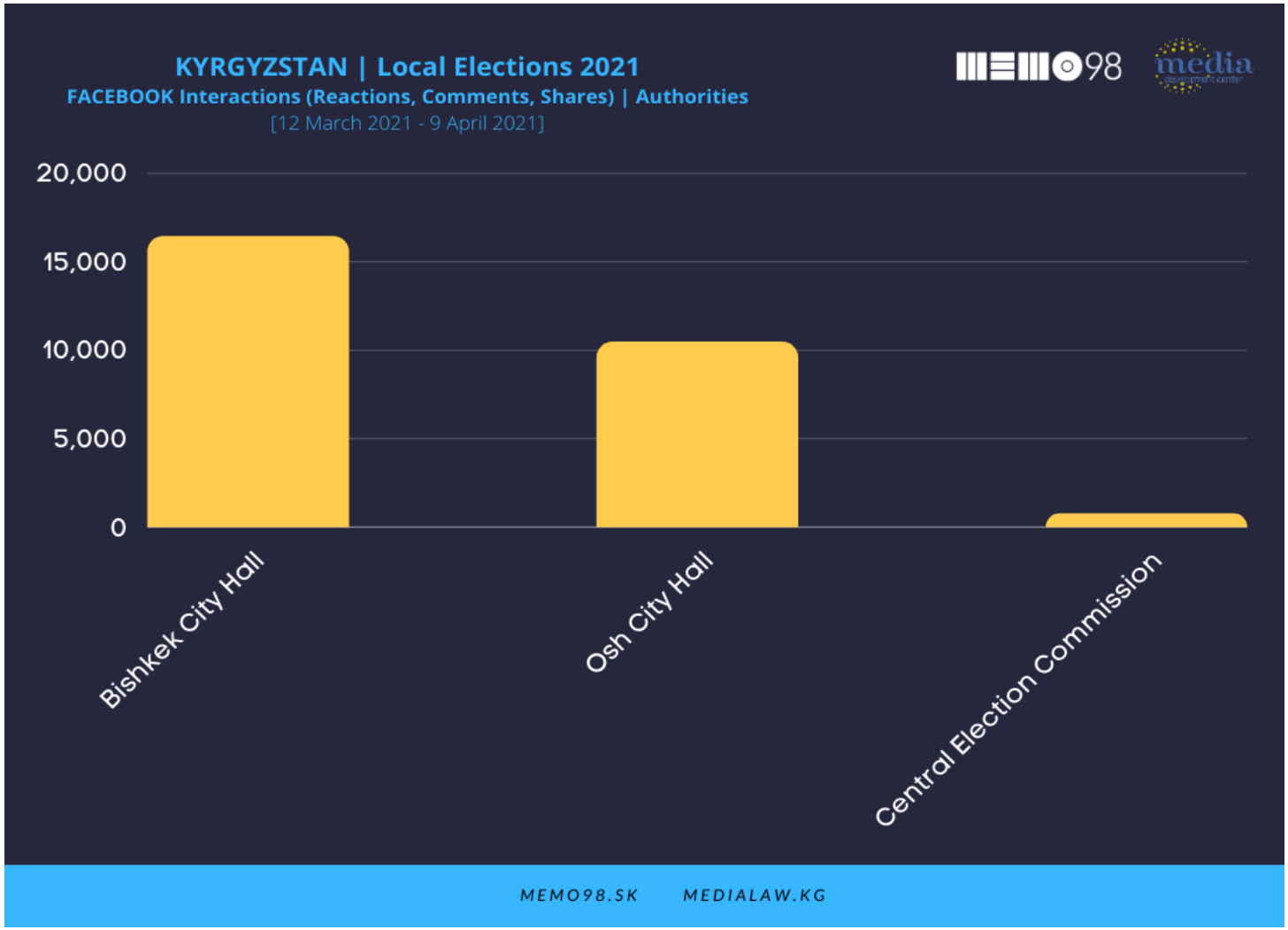

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Interactions (Reactions, Comments, Shares) | Authorities
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0
Bishkek City Hall
Osh City Hall
Central Election Commission
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 11

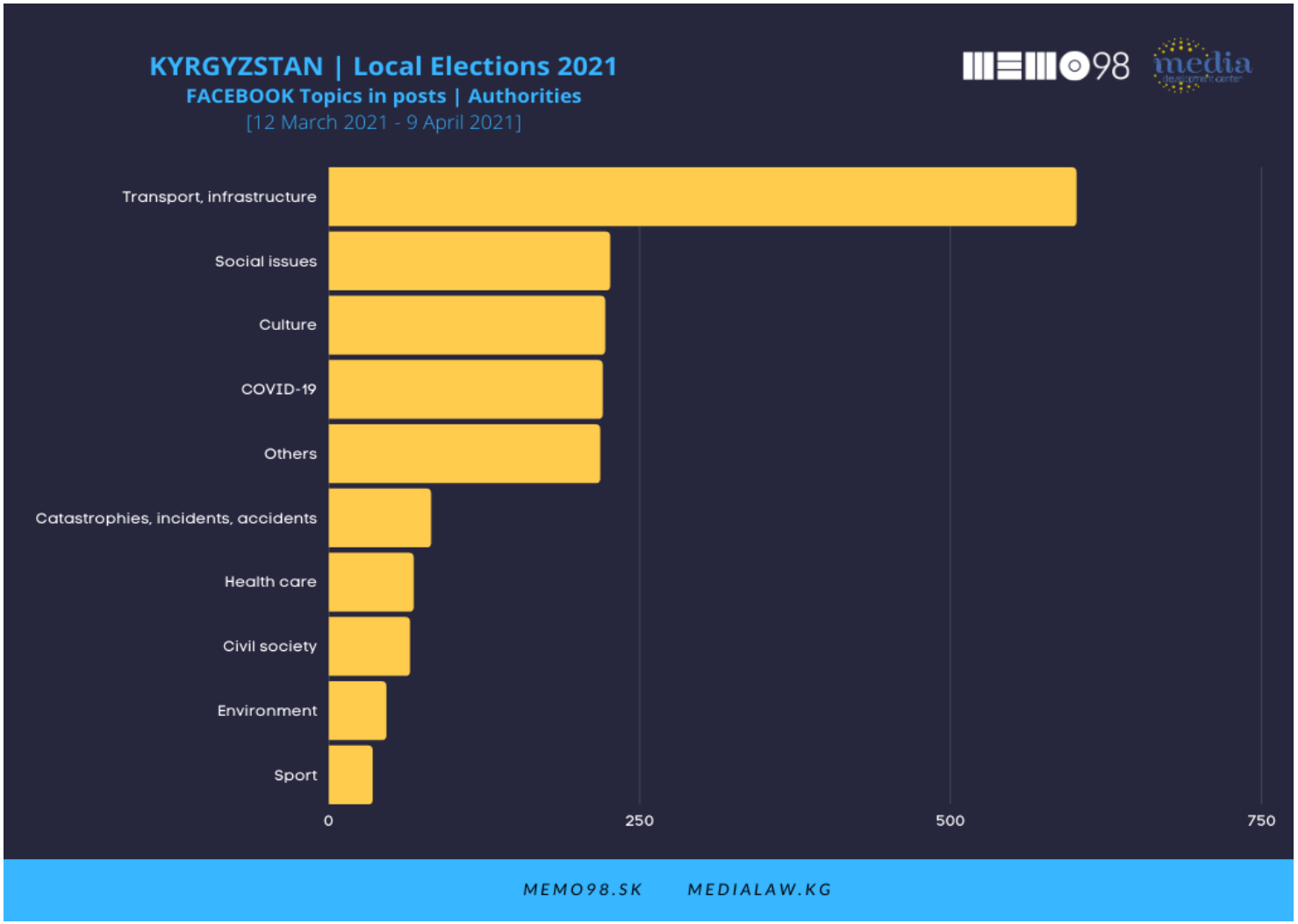
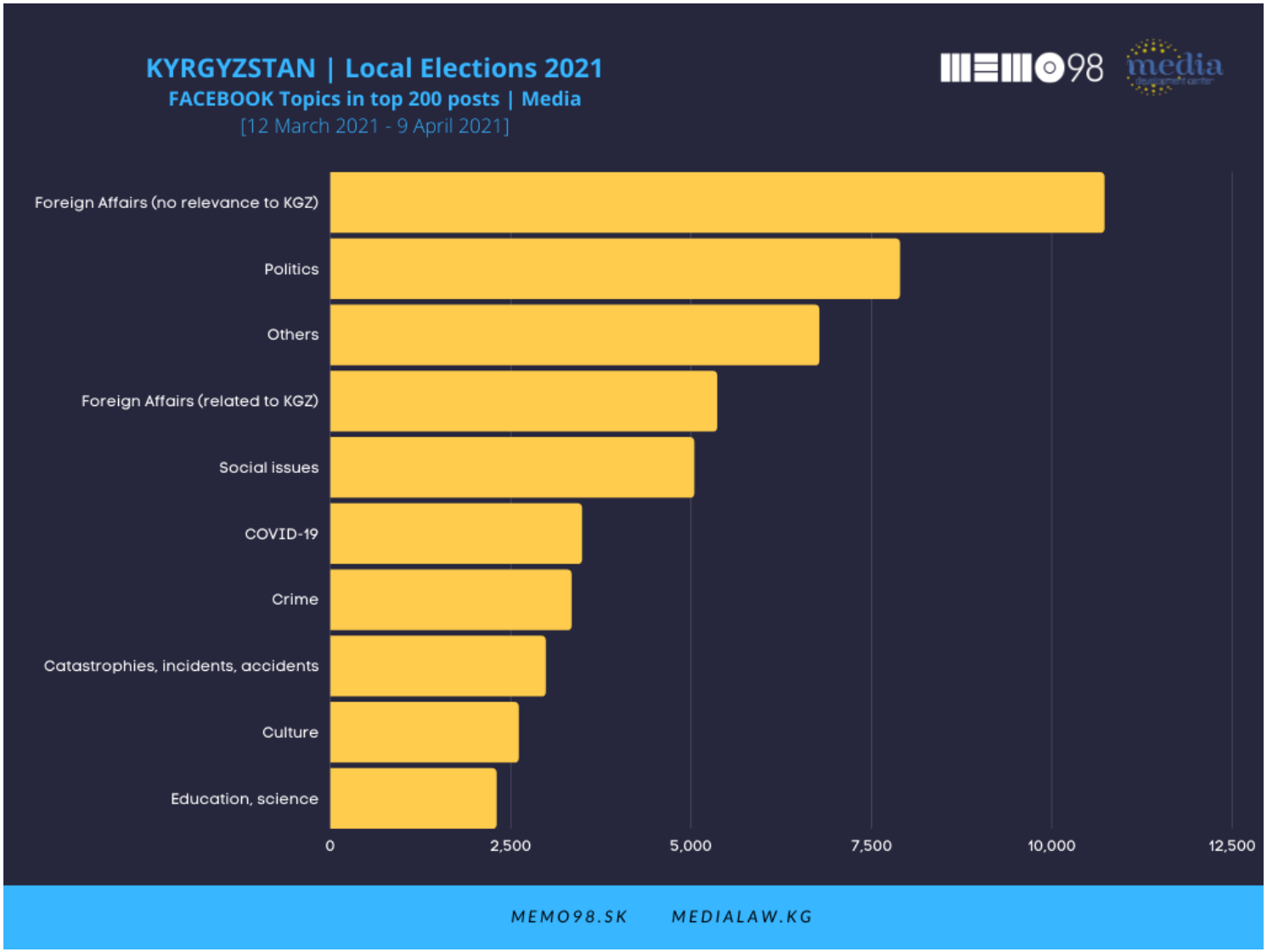
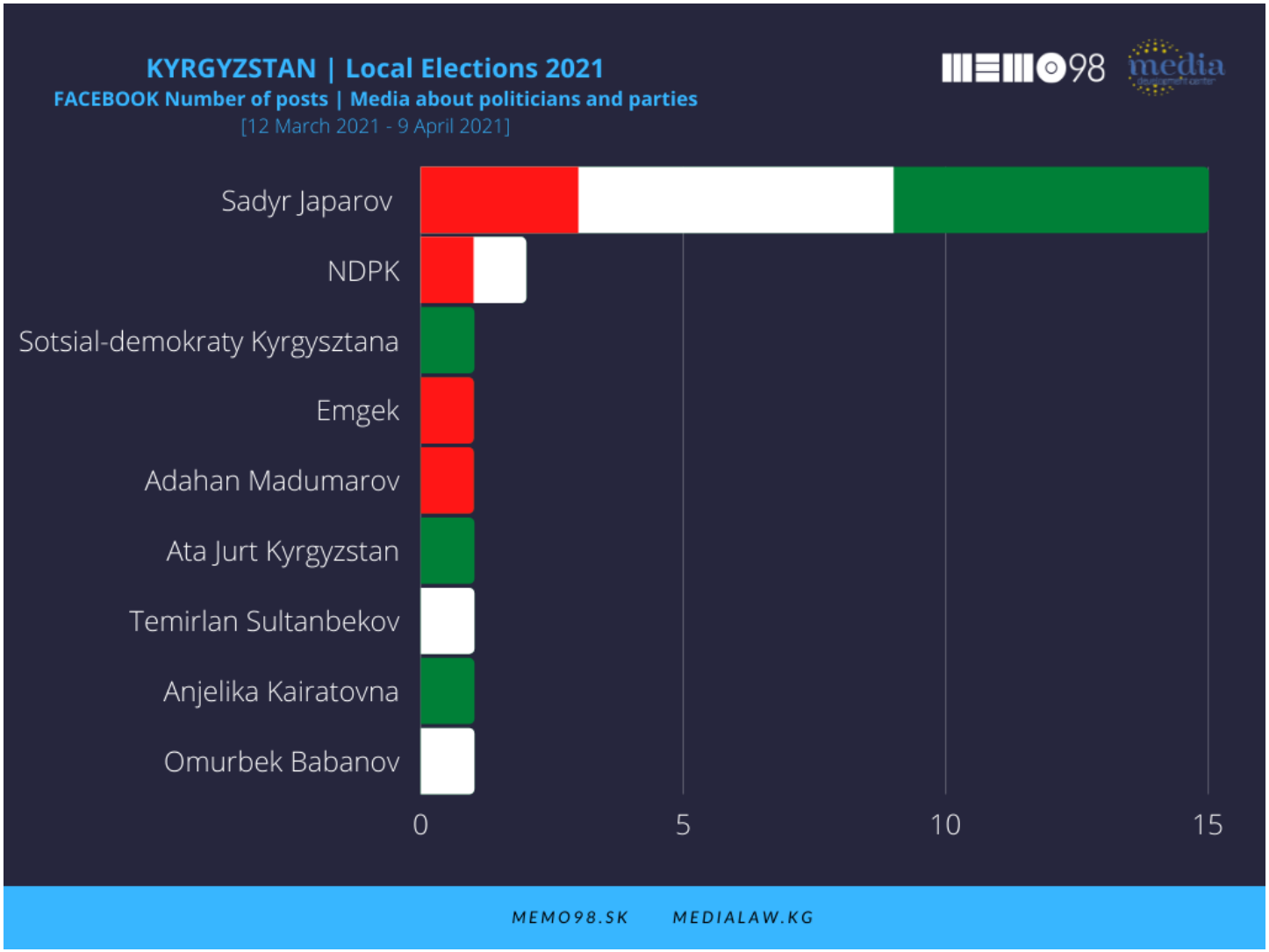

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
FACEBOOK Topics in posts | Authorities
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
Transport, infrastructure
Social issues
Culture
COVID-19
Others
Catastrophies, incidents, accidents
Health care
Civil society
Environment
Sport
0
250
500
750
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 12[12]



12 Number of interactions shown for media outlets reflects only top 200 posts within the category 'media' (with the highest number of interactions).

Chart 13[13]



13 Number of interactions shown for media outlets reflects only top 200 posts within the category 'media' (with the highest number of interactions). As for the colors, green represents positive tone, white neutral and red negative manner of coverage.

Instagram

Chart 14

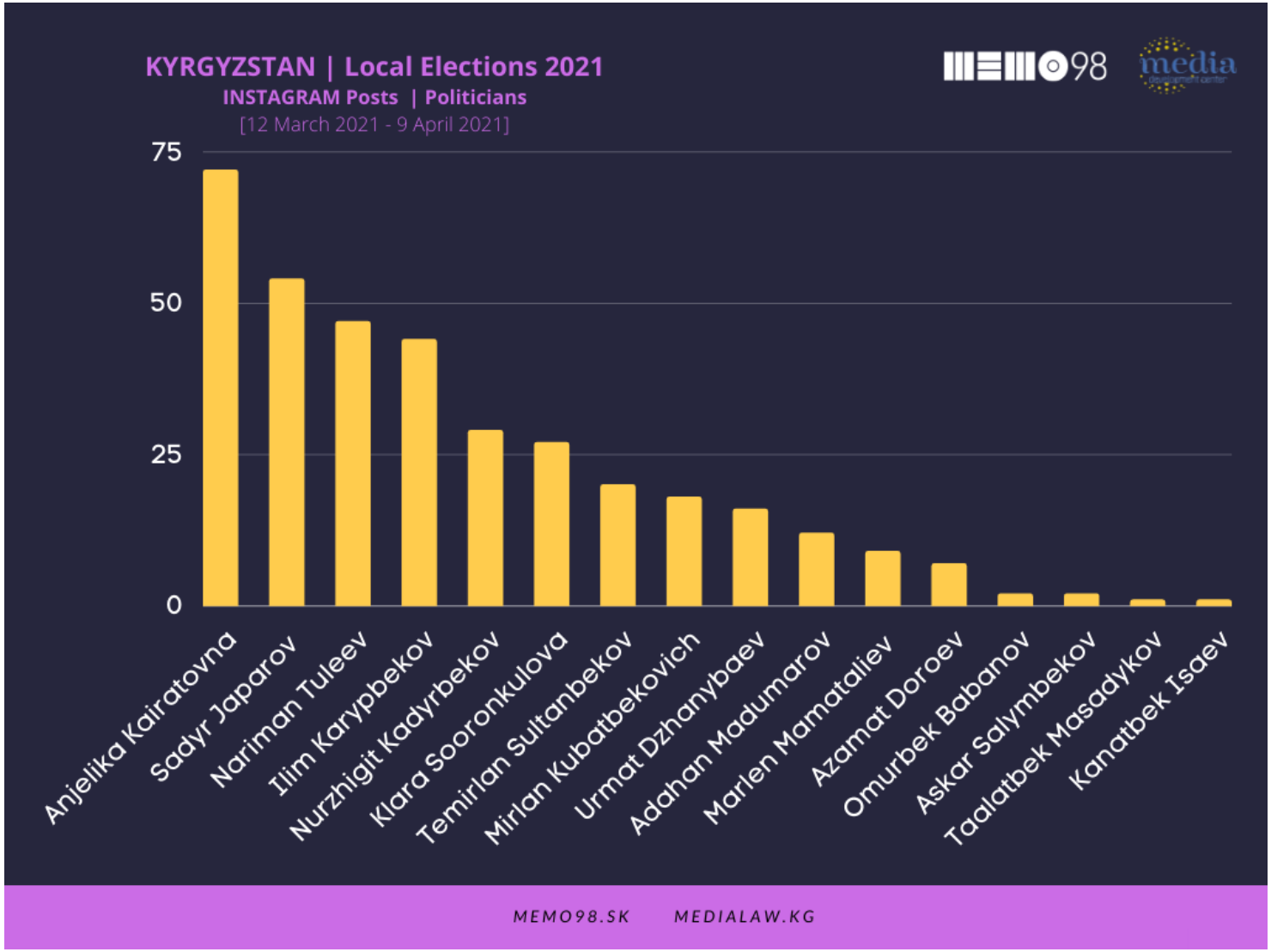


Chart 15

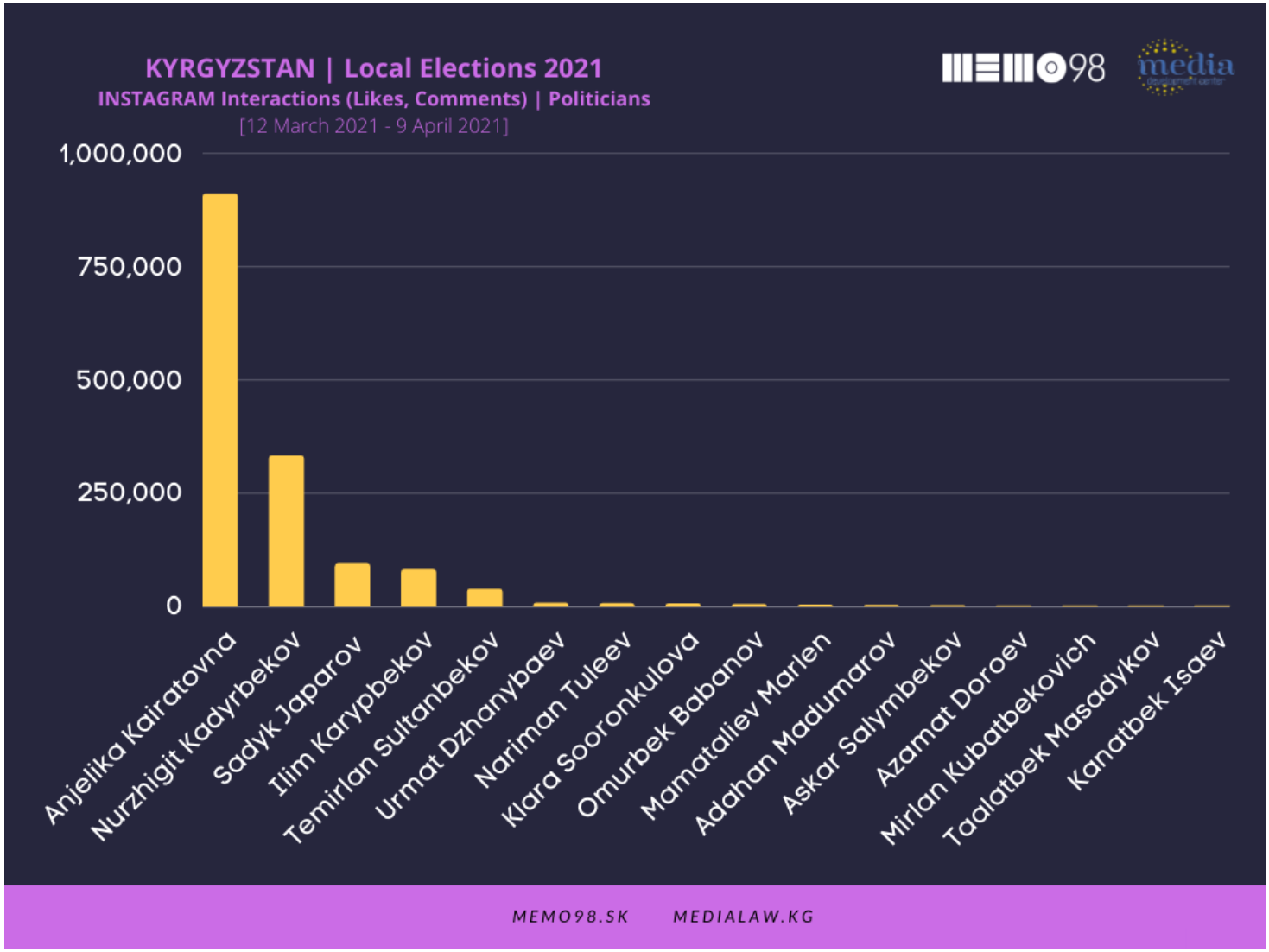

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
INSTAGRAM Interactions (Likes, Comments) | Politicians
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
1,000,000
750,000
500,000
250,000
0
Anjelika Kairatovna
Nurzhigit Kadyrbekov
Sadyk Japarov
Ilim Karypbekov
Temirlan Sultanbekov
Urmat Dzhanybaev
Nariman Tuleev
Klara Sooronkulova
Omurbek Babanov
Mamataliev Marlen
Adahan Madumarov
Askar Salymbekov
Azamat Doroev
Mirlan Kubatbekovich
Taalatbek Masadykov
Kanatbek Isaev
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 16

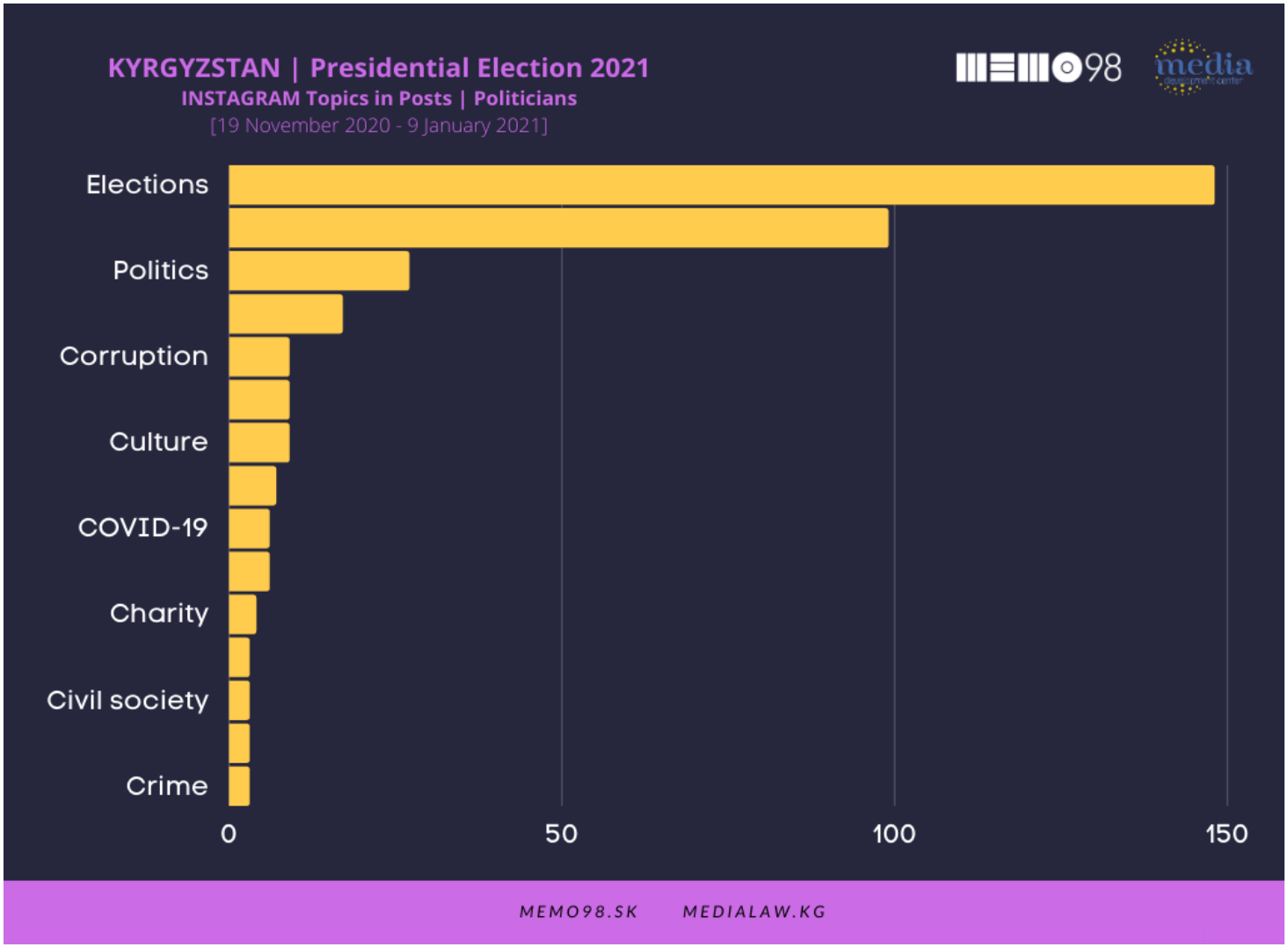

KYRGYZSTAN | Presidential Election 2021
INSTAGRAM Topics in Posts | Politicians
[19 November 2020 - 9 January 2021]
Elections
Politics
Corruption
Culture
COVID-19
Charity
Civil society
Crime
0
50
100
150
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 17

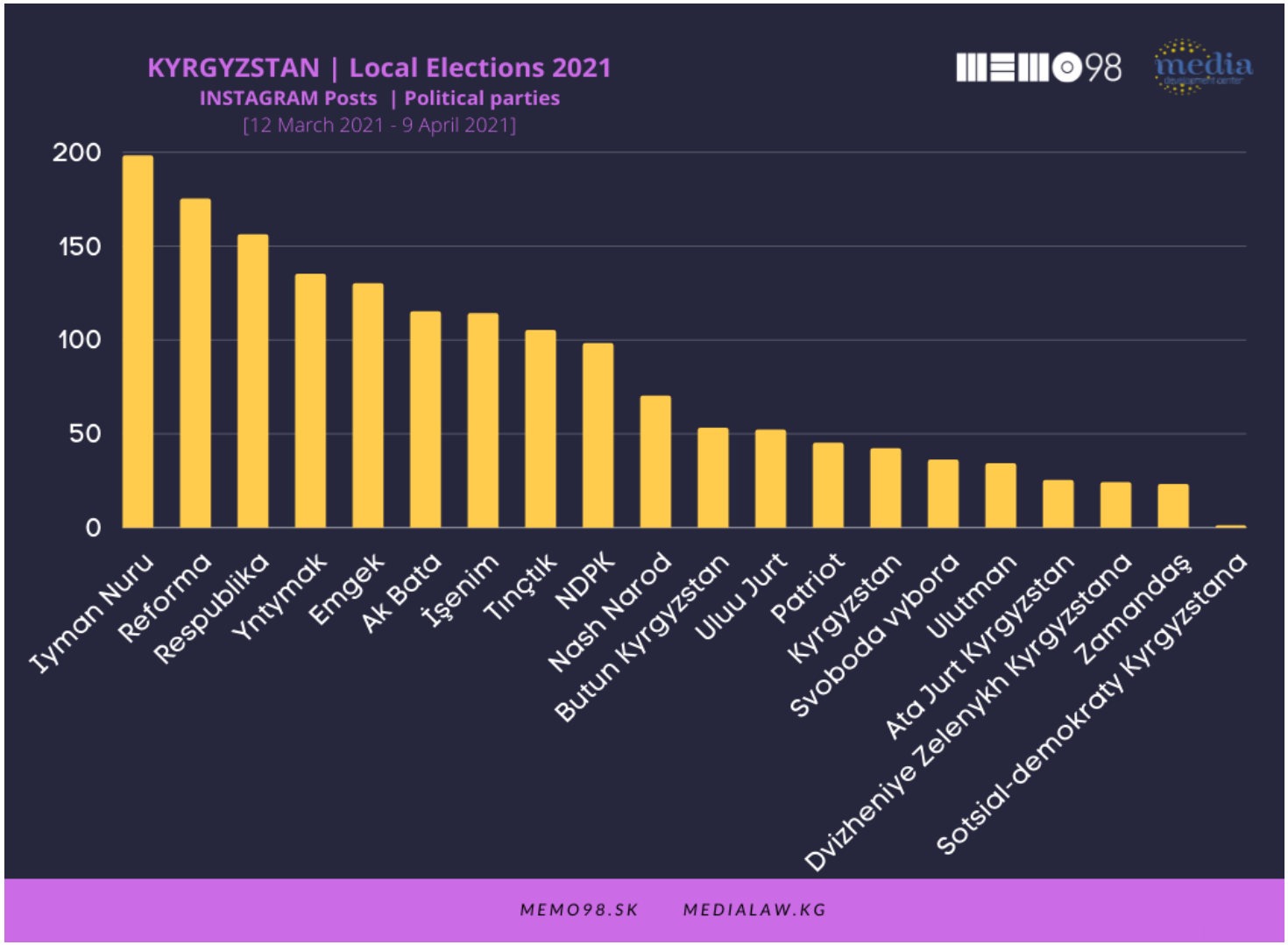

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
INSTAGRAM Posts | Political parties
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
200
150
100
50
0
Iyman Nuru
Reforma
Respublika
Yntymak
Emgek
Ak Bata
İşenim
Tınçtık
NDPK
Nash Narod
Butun Kyrgyzstan
Uluu Jurt
Patriot
Kyrgyzstan
Svoboda vybora
Ulutman
Ata Jurt Kyrgyzstan
Dvizheniye Zelenykh Kyrgyzstana
Zamandaş
Sotsial-demokraty Kyrgyzstana
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 18

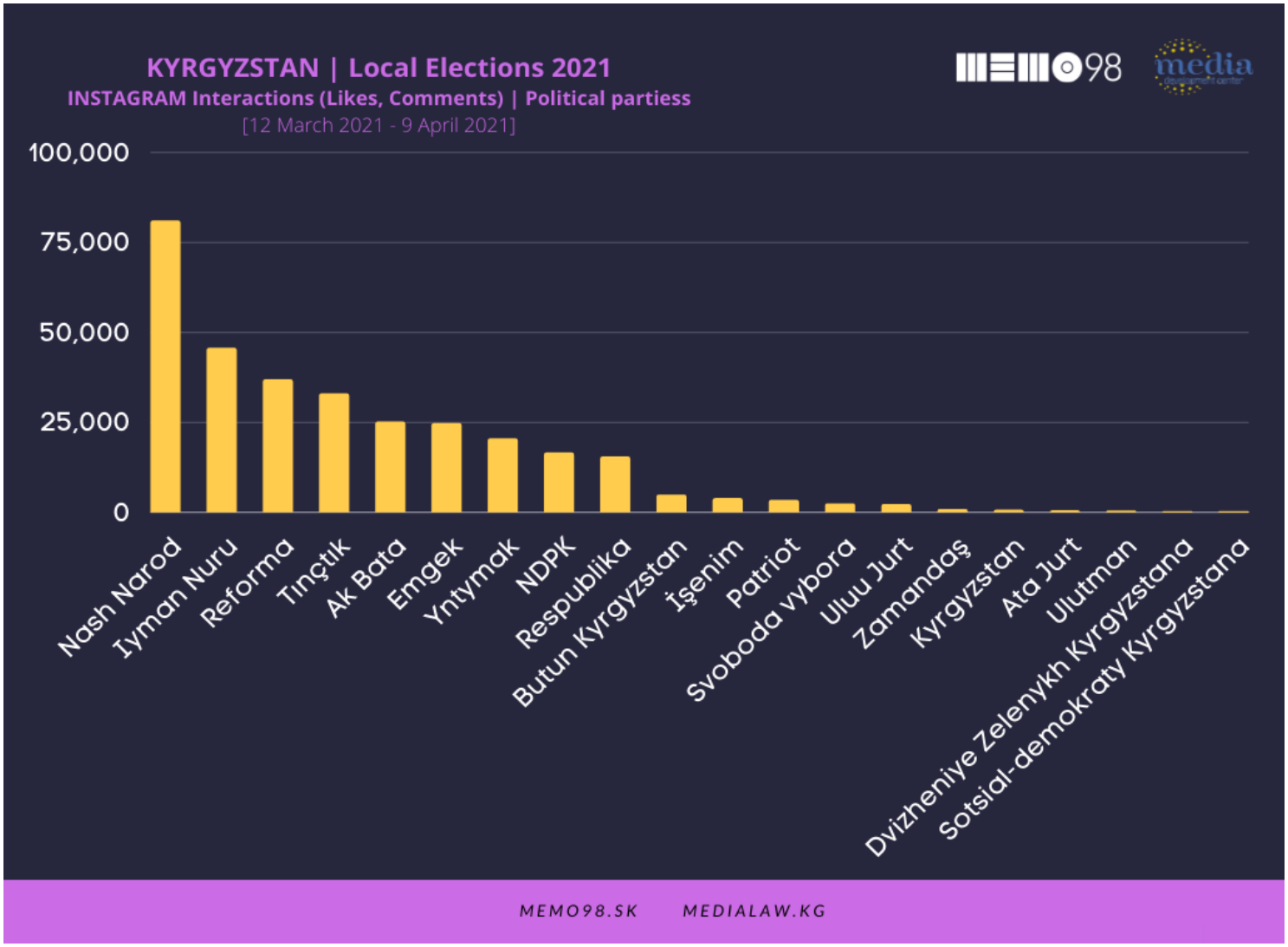

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
INSTAGRAM Interactions (Likes, Comments) | Political partiess
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
100,000
75,000
50,000
25,000
0
Nash Narod
Iyman Nuru
Reforma
Tınçtık
Ak Bata
Emgek
Yntymak
NDPK
Respublika
Butun Kyrgyzstan
İşenim
Patriot
Svoboda vybora
Uluu Jurt
Zamandaş
Kyrgyzstan
Ata Jurt
Ulutman
Dvizheniye Zelenykh Kyrgyzstana
Sotsial-demokraty Kyrgyzstana
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 19

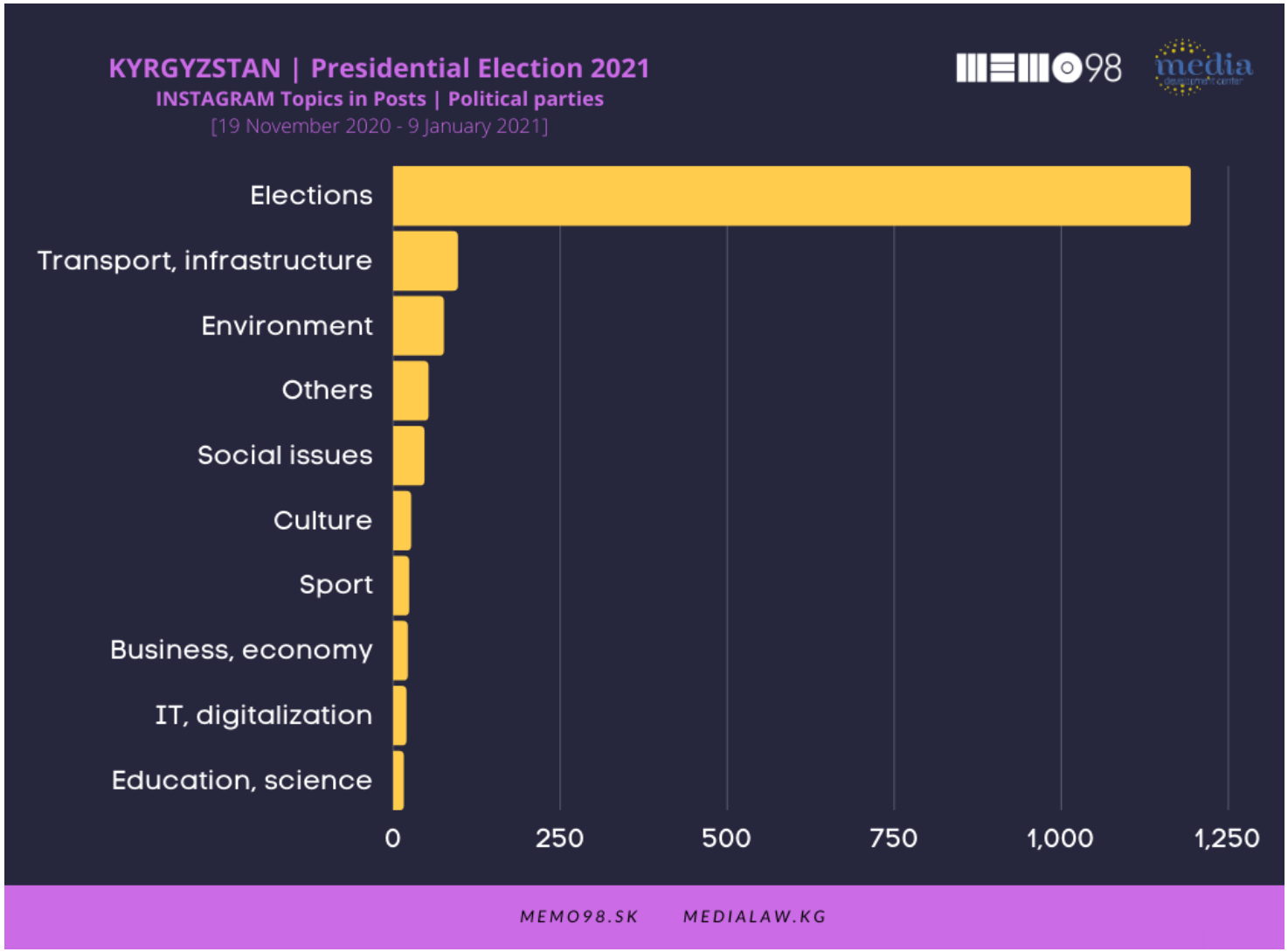

KYRGYZSTAN | Presidential Election 2021
INSTAGRAM Topics in Posts | Political parties
[19 November 2020 - 9 January 2021]
Elections
Transport, infrastructure
Environment
Others
Social issues
Culture
Sport
Business, economy
IT, digitalization
Education, science
0
250
500
750
1,000
1,250
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 20

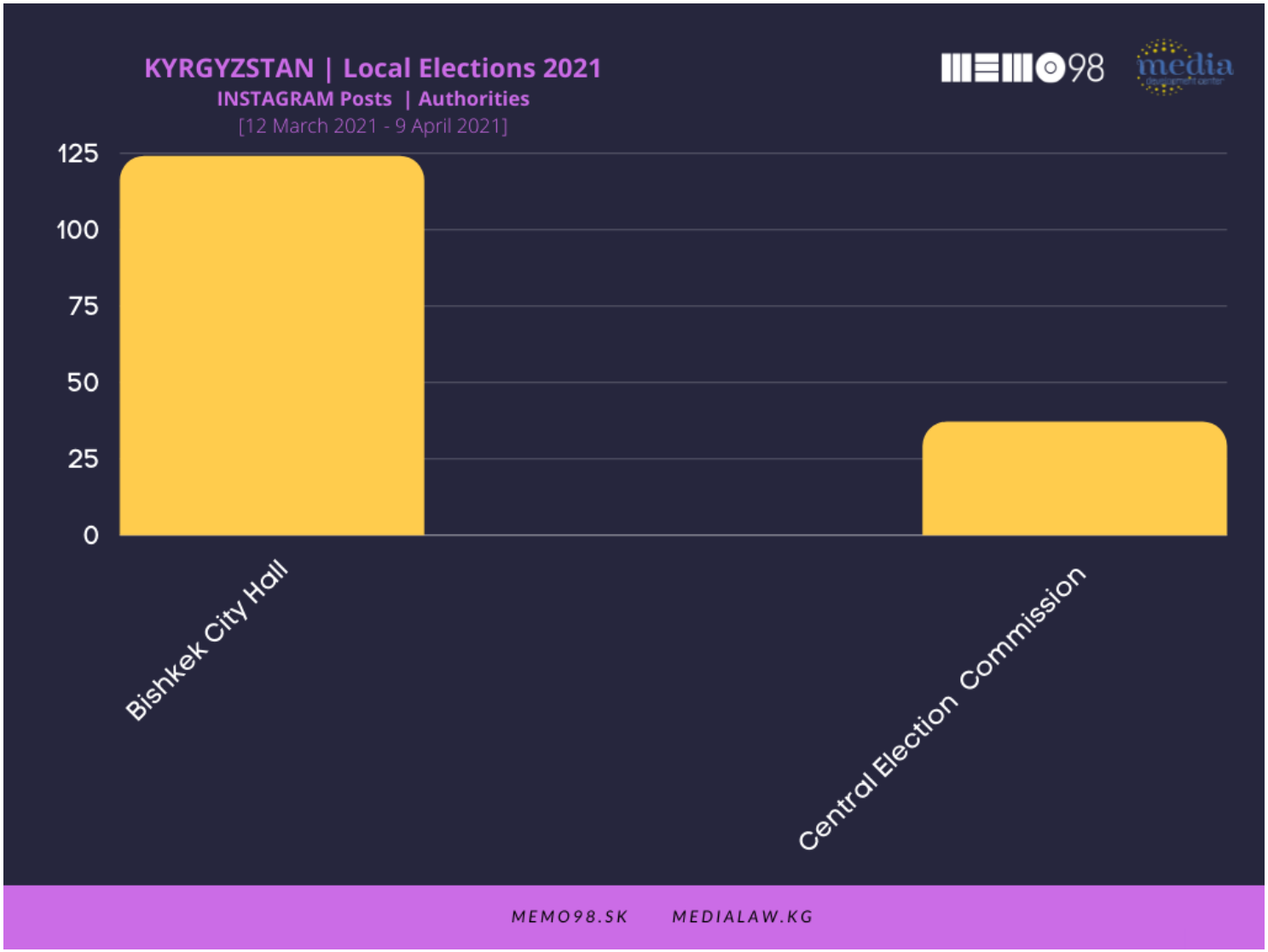

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
INSTAGRAM Posts | Authorities
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
125
100
75
50
25
0
Bishkek City Hall
Central Election Commission
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 21

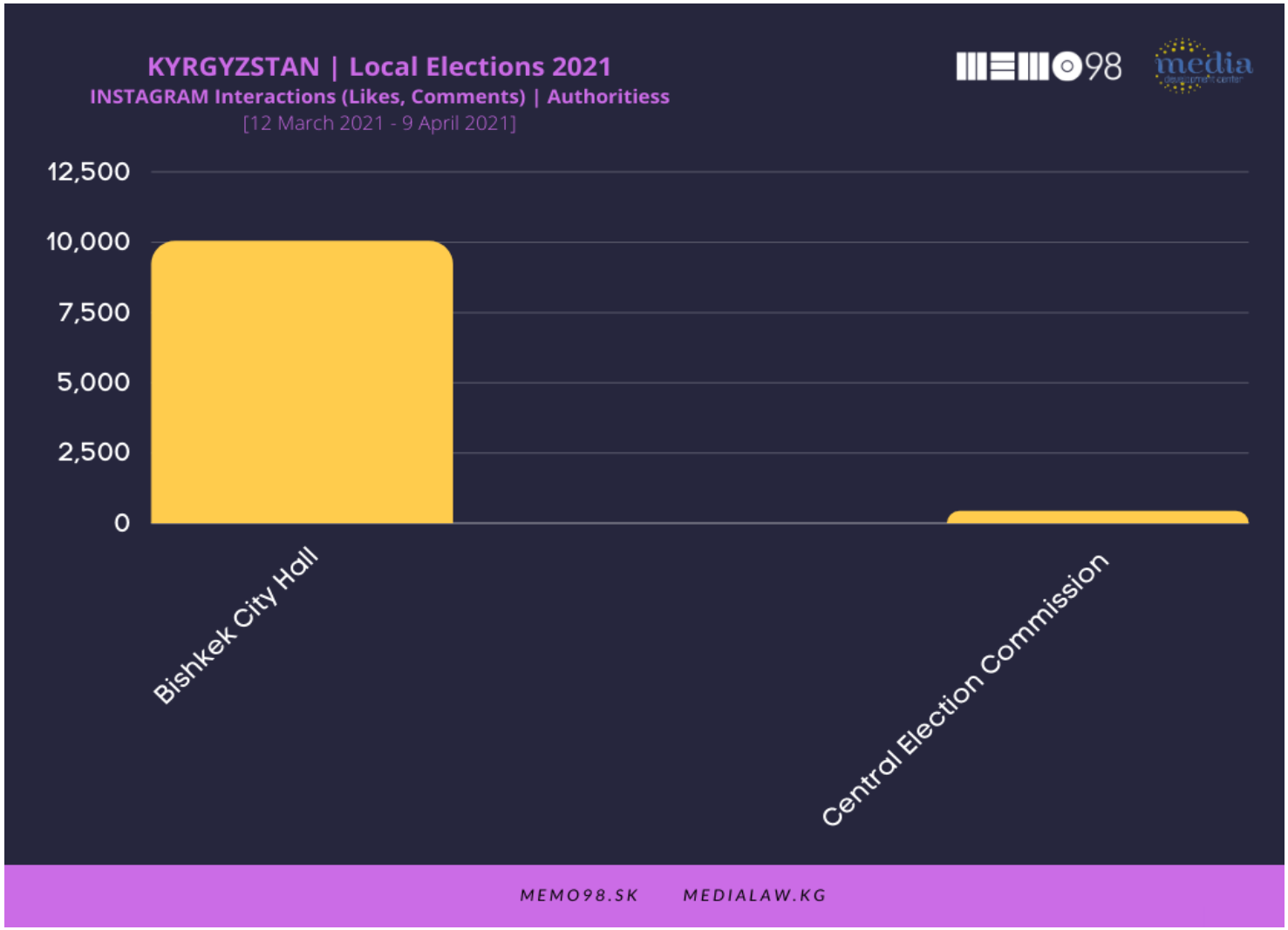

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
INSTAGRAM Interactions (Likes, Comments) | Authoritiess
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
12,500
10,000
7,500
5,000
2,500
0
Bishkek City Hall
Central Election Commission
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 22

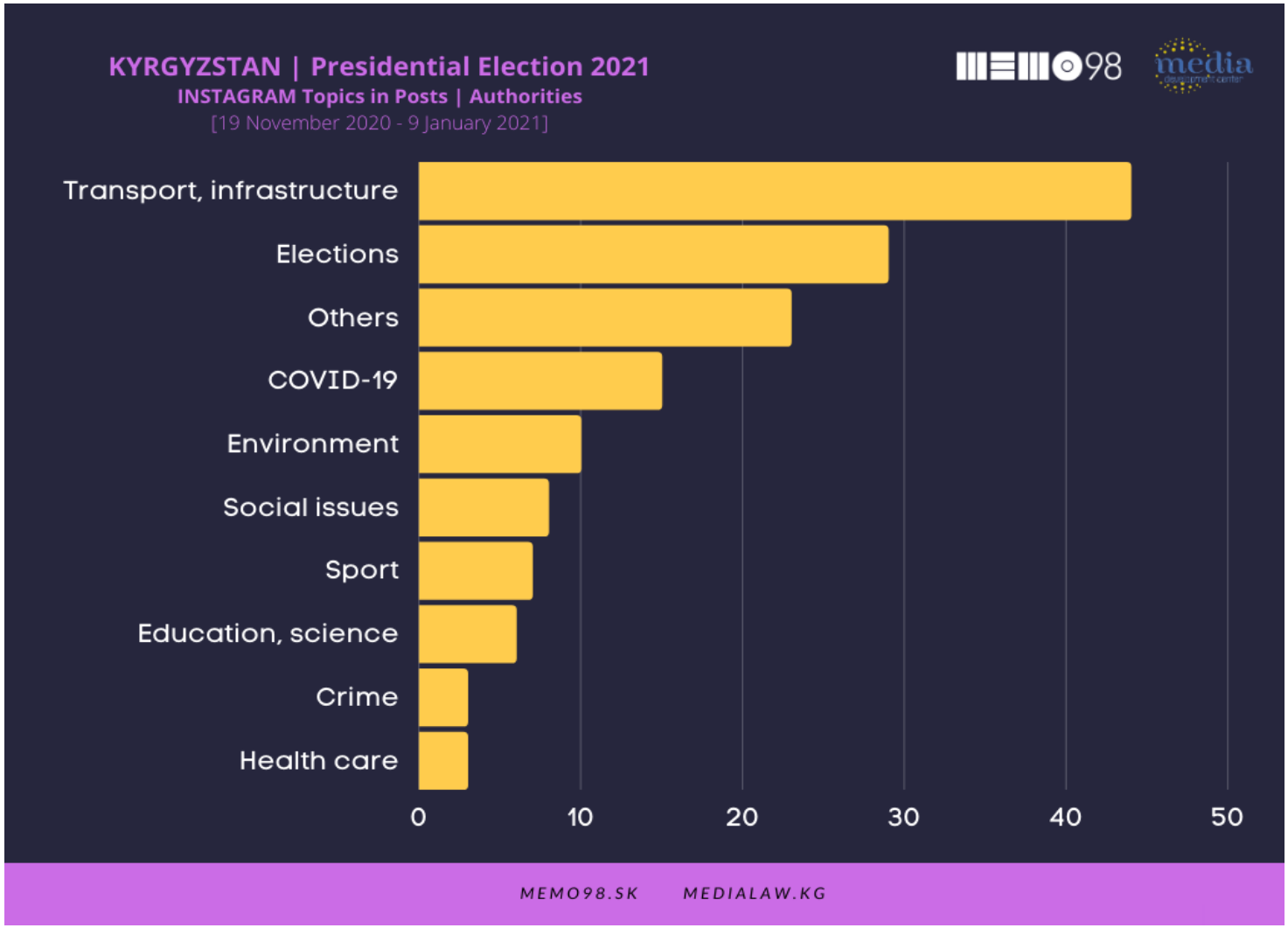

KYRGYZSTAN | Presidential Election 2021
INSTAGRAM Topics in Posts | Authorities
[19 November 2020 - 9 January 2021]
Transport, infrastructure
Elections
Others
COVID-19
Environment
Social issues
Sport
Education, science
Crime
Health care
0
10
20
30
40
50
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 23

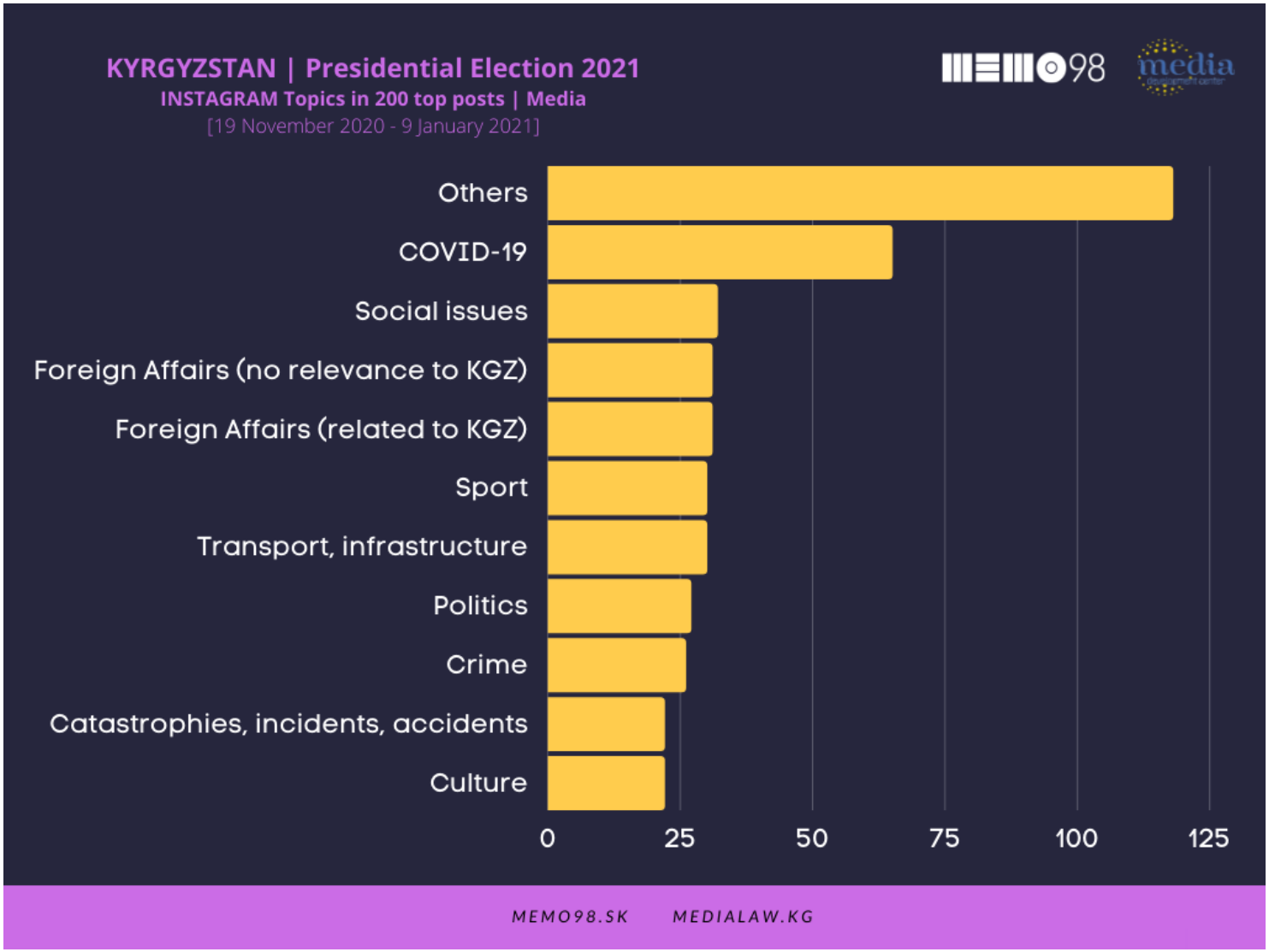
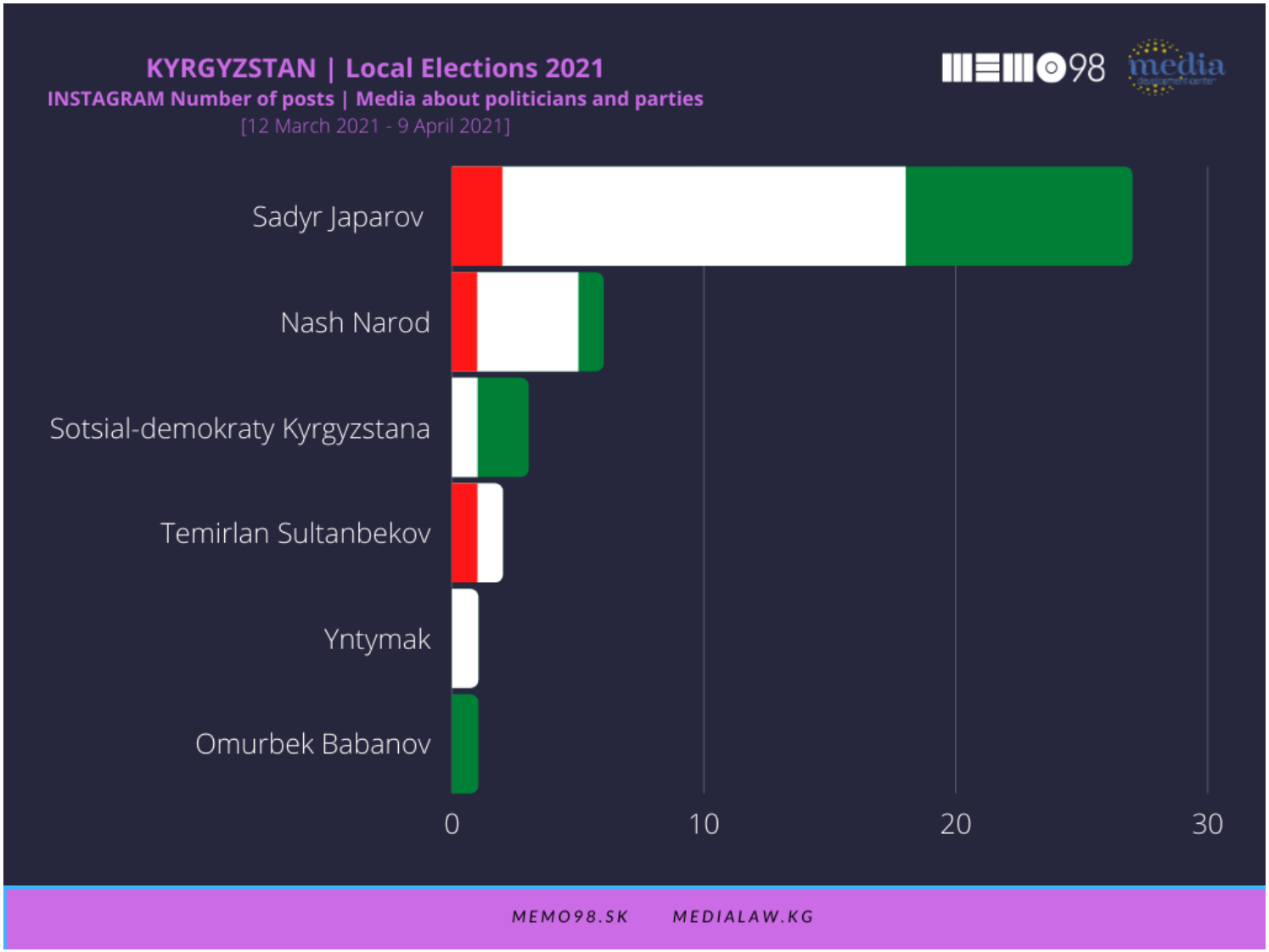

KYRGYZSTAN | Presidential Election 2021
INSTAGRAM Topics in 200 top posts | Media
[19 November 2020 - 9 January 2021]
Others
COVID-19
Social issues
Foreign Affairs (no relevance to KGZ)
Foreign Affairs (related to KGZ)
Sport
Transport, infrastructure
Politics
Crime
Catastrophies, incidents, accidents
Culture
0
25
50
75
100
125
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

Chart 24

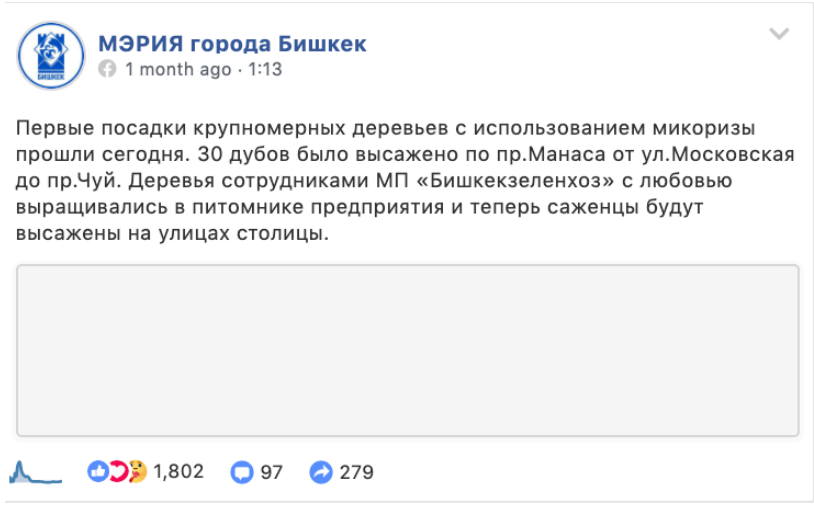

KYRGYZSTAN | Local Elections 2021
INSTAGRAM Number of posts | Media about politicians and parties
[12 March 2021 - 9 April 2021]
Sadyr Japarov
Nash Narod
Sotsial-demokraty Kyrgyzstana
Temirlan Sultanbekov
Yntymak
Omurbek Babanov
0
10
20
30
MEMO98.SK
MEDIALAW.KG

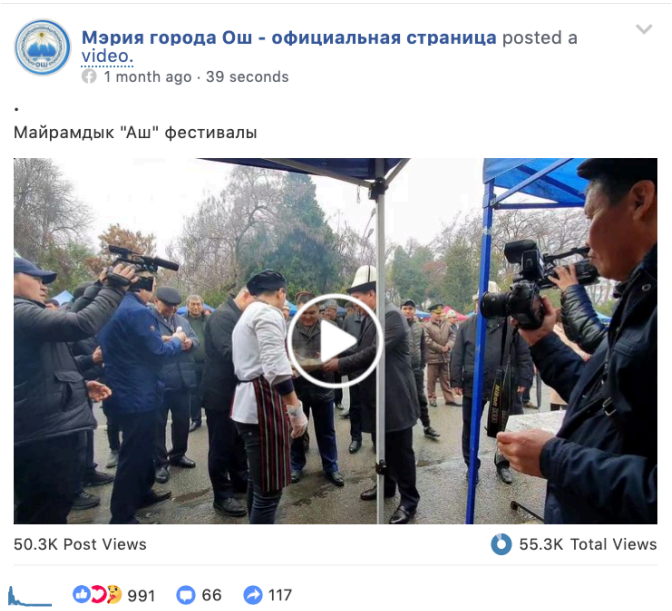
IV. TOP POSTS

Facebook

Authorities

Post of the *Bishkek City Hall* received the most interactions. The mayor's office reports that it has planted trees. The municipality plants trees and flowers every year.

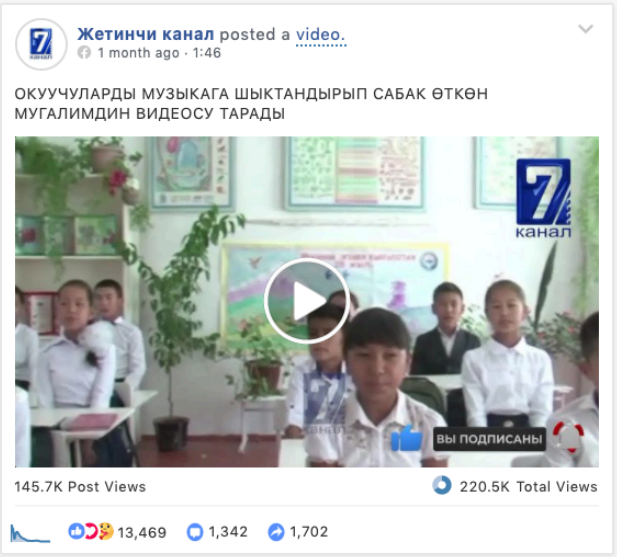




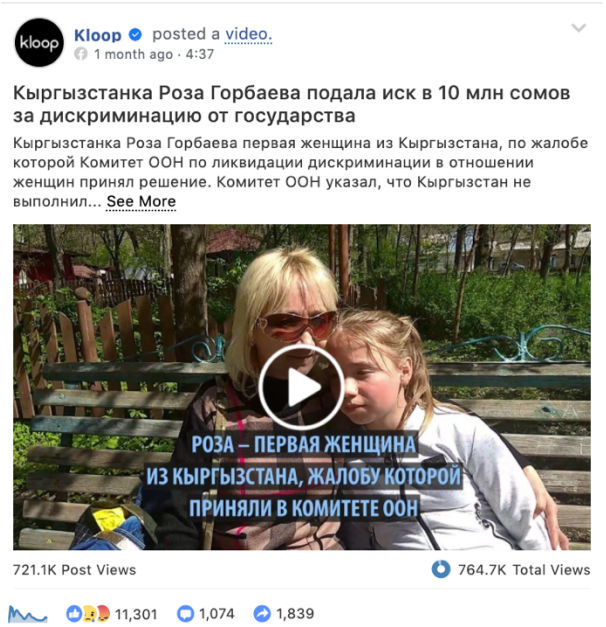
Osh City Hall post about the food was the most viewed one. On March 21, Kyrgyzstan celebrates the day of the vernal equinox - the Nooruz holiday. In honour of this holiday, the mayor's office prepared pilaf (an honourable meal in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) and treated residents, offering this festive mood.

Media

Two most popular posts within the monitored period posted by *Sputnik* and *Jetinchi TV* were not election-related.



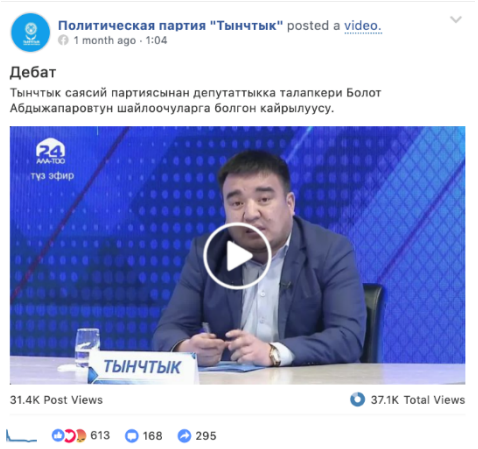
The most viewed post from *Kloop.kg* post about Roza Gorbayeva was also outside the election context. She is the first woman from Kyrgyzstan, on whose complaint the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women made a decision. The UN Committee indicated that Kyrgyzstan did not fulfil its obligations under nine articles of the Convention by violating the rights of a woman prisoner and demanded that the Kyrgyz government provide Gorbagyeva with adequate compensation.



Parties

Post of the *Communists Party of Kyrgyzstan* was the most viewed one and also received the most interactions. Here, the hero of the video praises the Communist Party, the Soviet regime, talks about the achievements of the Soviet Union and criticizes the capitalist system.

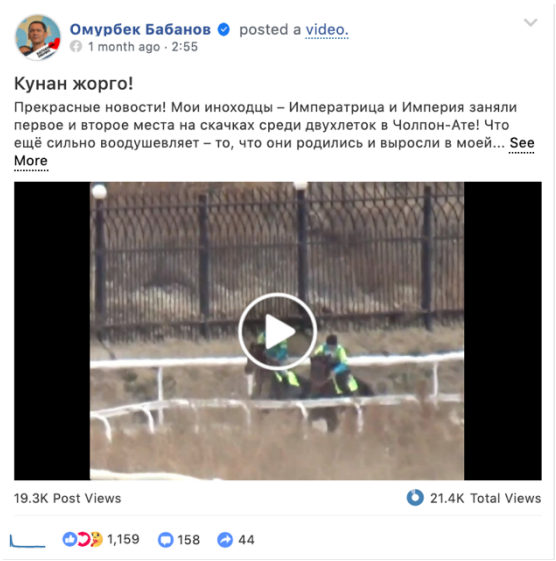
Post of the political party *Svoboda vybora*. A well-known Kyrgyz ballerina, who is also a candidate of this party, campaigns for her party, and speaks a little about herself.



Post of the political party *Tınçtık*. Its candidate Bolot Abzhaparov, who is also a journalist, appeals to voters with calls to vote for his party.

Politicians

The most interactions were noted by the post of *Babur Tolbaev*, leader of the political party *Ata Jurt Kyrgyzstan*, a well-known philanthropist and successful entrepreneur, says that he prefers his mother's campaign to any debate with opponents.



Omurbek Babanov, ex-head of the political party *Republika*, ex-prime minister of Kyrgyzstan, talks about the achievements of his horses – this post was the mostly viewed among politicians. It is known that the politician maintains livestock, including thoroughbred horses, and participates in various races.

Nariman Tuleev, the leader of the party *Ak Bata* and ex-mayor of Bishkek, once again goes live through social networks and makes promises to voters.

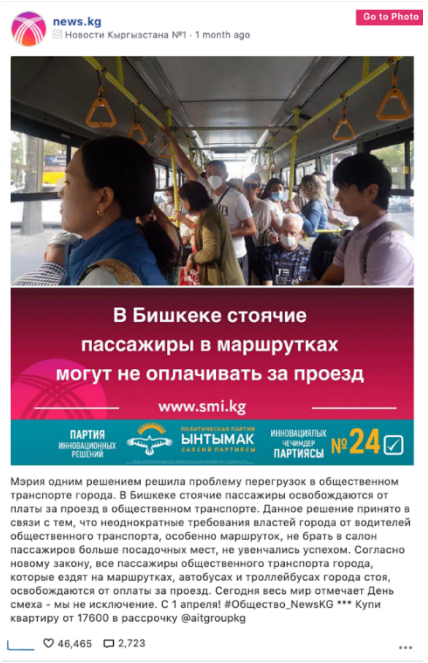
Instagram

Authorities

Post of *Bishkek City Hall* received the highest interactions. The Mayor's Office reports on the work done to update road signs and markings for the convenience of citizens.

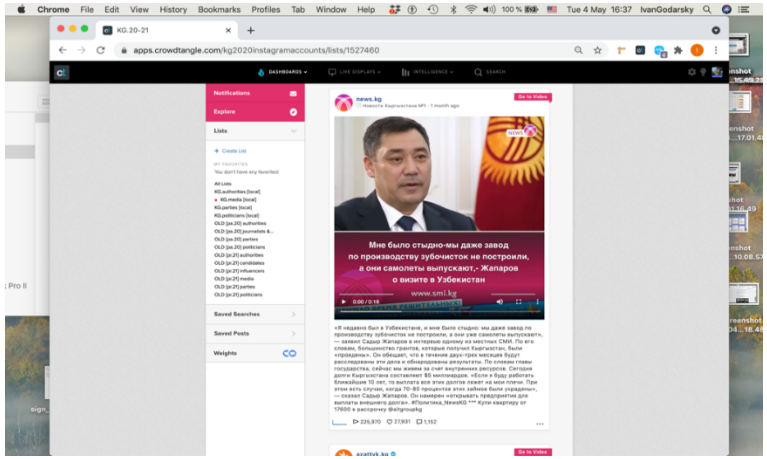
Post of *Bishkek City Hall* was the most viewed post. Video report on the clean-up. In the springtime every year the municipality plants trees, flowers and organizes ‘subbotniks’.

Media



The most interactions received the *news.kg* post, not related to the election. This news agency played a prank on the residents of Bishkek in honour of the day of humour - April 1. The post says that if a passenger in public transport does not have enough space, he may not pay for travel. For Bishkek residents, the problem of transport is very urgent and painful.

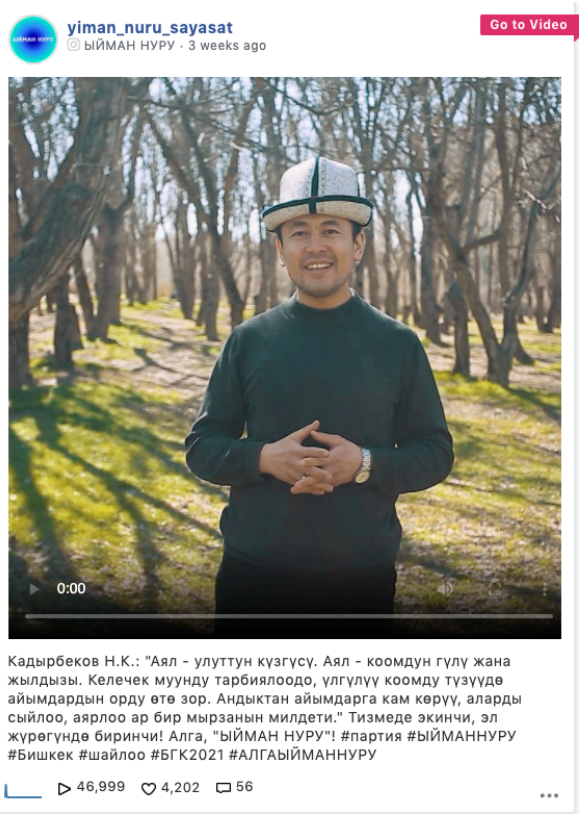
News.kg post with a quote from President Japarov was the most viewed politics-related post. President visited Uzbekistan and was amazed at how much they surpassed Kyrgyzstan in the economy. Upon arrival, he said that there is not even a toothpick factory in Kyrgyzstan, and he was ashamed.

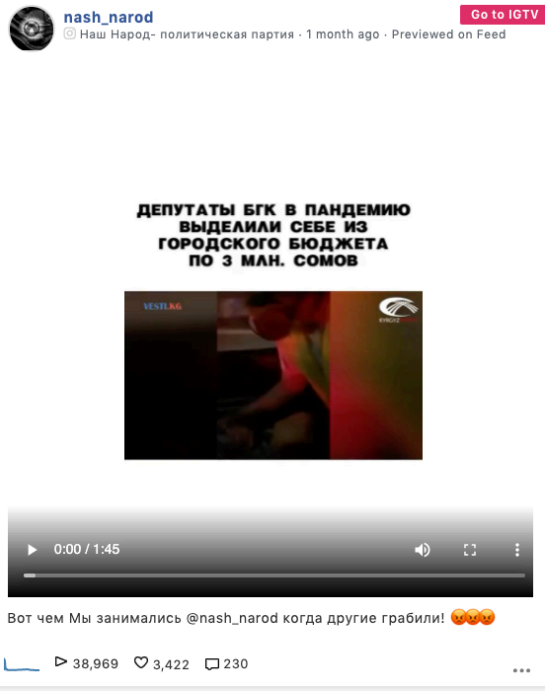


Parties

Post of the political party *Nash Narod* – a banner with their election program was the post that produced the most interactions.

Post of the *Iyman Nuru* party. This party positions itself as living and leading politics according to the canons of religion - Islam. Here the leader of the party talks about what a woman should be in a family and society. What should be a family, etc.



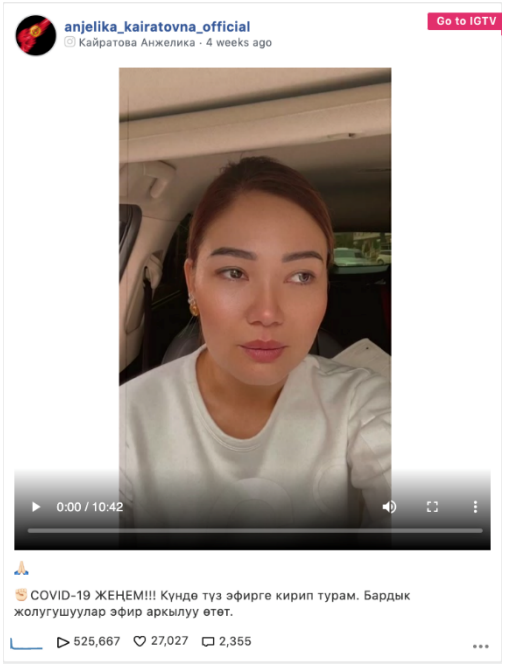


Post of the party *Nash Narod*. During the election race, the ex-mayor, now the head of the Ak Bata party, who is also running for elections, said that the deputies of the Bishkek city council allocated themselves 3 million soms during the pandemic under the pretext that they would help the townspeople. This statement has not been proven, but during the elections it was used by other parties, including this party – Nash Narod.

www.medialaw.kg, www.facebook.com/Центр-Медиа-Развития-1995092810629708, +996 312 663006
www.memo98.sk, memo98@memo98.sk, www.facebook.com/memo98.sk, +421 903 581 591

Politicians

Posts by *Anjelika Kairatovna* were the most popular and viewed. Anjelika is a famous and most popular singer in Kyrgyzstan, an influencer with the maximum number of subscribers. She is a candidate for deputy from the party Nash Narod. This winter I got into an accident, and this post is a video report from the ritual of getting rid of troubles.



Here, the singer, candidates for deputies, says that she fell ill with COVID-19, but she is optimistic, she says that she will be in touch with her subscribers - the electorate through social networks.

Anjelika in national dress with a child. She congratulates Kyrgyz people on March 21, the day of the vernal equinox.

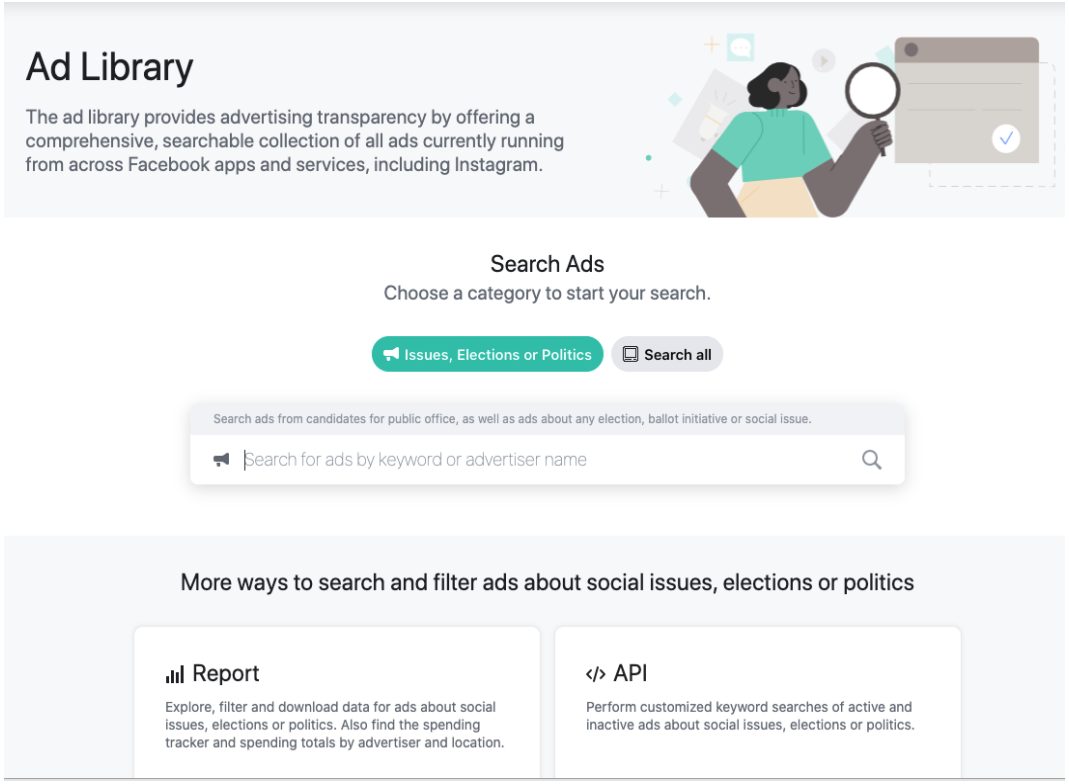
Post of *Nurzhigit Kadyrbekov*. He is the leader of the party *Iyman Nuru*, which positions himself as honest, fair, living and ruling according to religious canons - Islam. He says that each person must first of all begin to educate himself before demanding anything from another.

Post of *President Japarov*. On April 7, information appeared in the media that a guy had extinguished “an eternal flame” in Bishkek. He did it for the hype. He was detained under Article 120 "Vandalism". The Victory Monument was erected in 1985. Its grand opening was timed to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the Great Victory over fascism. The majestic memorial was built as a tribute to the memory of grateful compatriots. President Japarov said that he was very upset by such behaviour of young people.

V. ADVERTISING

Facebook's Ad library that offers data about ads on Facebook-owned platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Audience Network, and Messenger) has been operational in Kyrgyzstan from August 2020.

According to the Ad Library, various actors promoted some 2,600 ads on social issues, elections, or politics in the last three months period (from 24 January until 24 April 2021).[14]



The total amount spent on these ads was at least twice as high as the among of funds spent in January elections – at least 30,000 USD in the current elections (for some 2,600 ads) compared to around 16,000 USD in January elections (spent on some 1,740 ads).

In total, over 400 actors used advertising on the Facebook-owned platforms, of which 48 spent each more than 100 USD.

Out of various subject using paid advertising the biggest spenders were the political parties; their order according to funds spent is as follows: Emgek, Reforma, Iyman Nuru,

[14] Facebook's Ad Library for Kyrgyzstan does not enable to specify precise timeframe, the presented timeframe is a 3-month period covering the period after presidential election, campaign prior to the 11 April 2021 local elections and subsequent events in two weeks after.

Respublika and Ak Bata. Each of these five parties spent more than 2,000 USD (ranging from some 2,746 by Emgek to 2,066 by Ak Bata).[15]

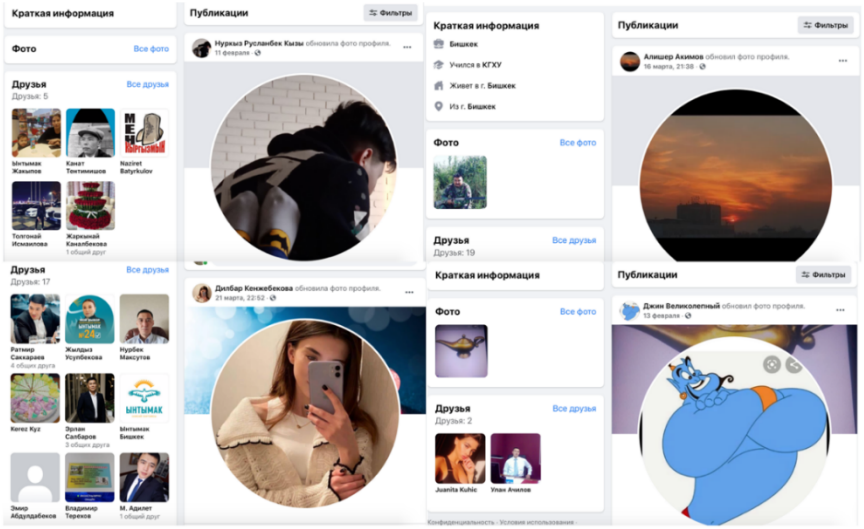
The highest number of ads – 187 - were purchased by NDPK, which spent on them less than 1,450 USD.

Individual political actors - order by amount of spent	Amount spent in USD	Total amount of ads
Emgek	2,746	90
Reforma	2,576	74
Iyman Nuru	2,194	69
Respublika	2,113	54
Ak Bata	2,066	84
NDPK	1,436	187
Jengishbek Nazaraliev (Svoboda vybora)	1,040	9
Yntymak	873	53
Kymbat Alymbekova (Sotsial-demokraty Kyrgyzstana)	778	63
Svoboda vybora	693	15

[15] Most of the parties promoted their respective advertisements until the election day. However, there were two other parties (Freedom of the Choice and NDPK) that promoted their paid ads also afterwards.

V. DISINFORMATION

While television remains the main source of information for the majority of citizens, especially in the regions, the growing popularity of social networks began to have a high degree of impact on the formation of public opinion and, subsequently, on the socio-political situation in the country. Election campaigns are among the most relevant areas in politics for using Internet as a channel of communication.



In connection with the constitutional reform, in particular the electoral legislation amendments, there were certain ambiguities that have focused a lot of attention on the local elections of various political forces. In the campaign, social networks were used by many politicians. Unfortunately, some actors of the electoral process used social media to manipulate the public, although not to the same extent as prior to the October 2020 parliamentary elections or the January 2021 presidential election.[16]

According to an analysis of the independent resource Factcheck.kg, coordinated inauthentic behaviour on Facebook was noted also during the local elections.[17] The same organization collected and analysed data from users who left comments under posts on the pages of parties running for the Bishkek municipality (Bishkek City *Kenesh*), as well as under the posts of party leaders, and found that practically every

[16] According to Facebook's report on Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior from December 2020, there were multiple occasions of such behavior observed by the pages and groups in Kyrgyzstan, already dating back to 2017. Most recently, in December 2020, Facebook removed 121 Facebook accounts, 46 Pages, 7 Groups, and 41 Instagram accounts that originated in Kyrgyzstan and targeted domestic audience. The report mentions three major clusters of Inauthentic Coordinated Behavior originating in Kyrgyzstan, one around the 2017 presidential election when Facebook removed 193 Facebook accounts, 246 Pages, 50 Groups and 30 Instagram accounts, another related to domestic news and current events, including elections between 2017-2020 when Facebook removed 92 Facebook accounts, 4 Pages, 11 Groups and 30 Instagram accounts and the third cluster concerns October 2020 and January 2021 elections. The report suggests that around 31,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, around 11,000 accounts joined one or more of these Groups and around 8,800 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts. As for promotion, around 1,250 USD was spent for online ads on Facebook and Instagram for these accounts.

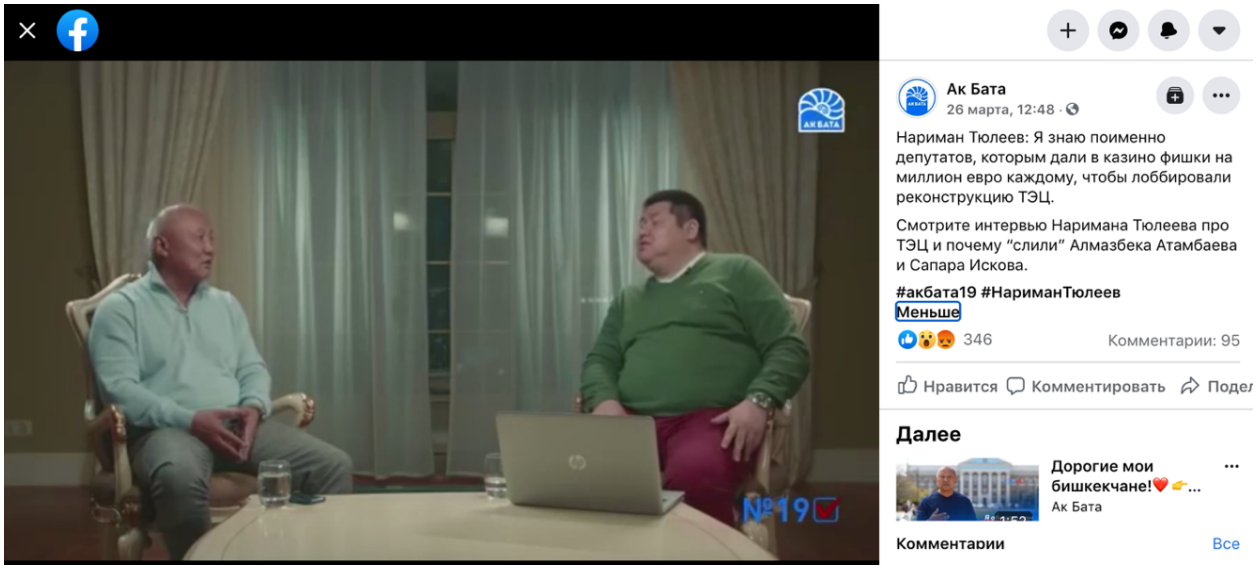
[17] Available at https://factcheck.kg/vybory-v-bgk-kakie-partii-opirayutsya-na-fejkovuyu-podderzhku/

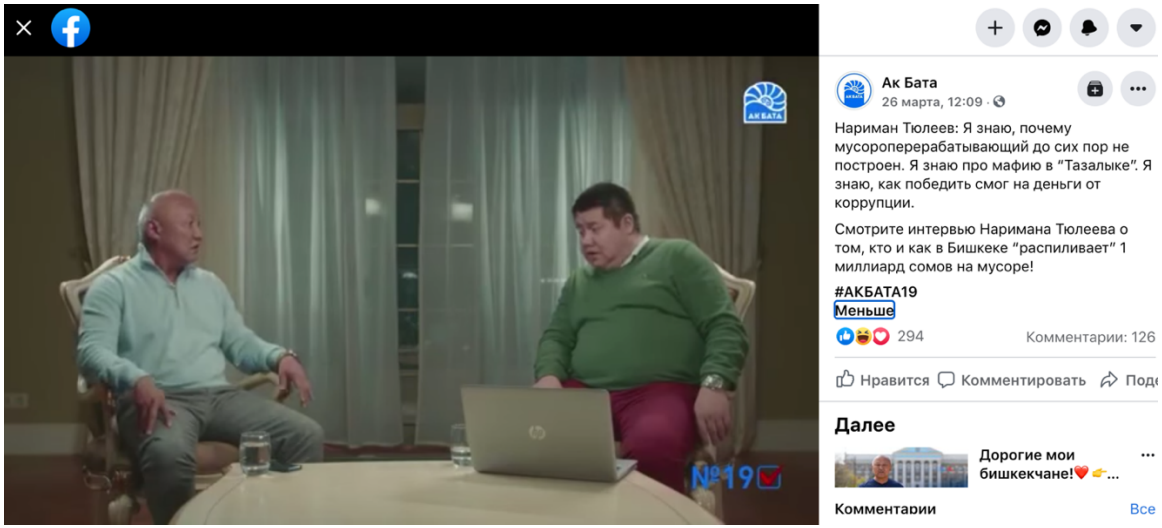
second account involved in conversation was potentially non-genuine. Most such accounts were created on the eve of local elections.

In addition to high presence of such non-genuine activities, activities of political actors on social media were also problematic in several ways. Many politicians used the tactic of direct flirting with voters using unfounded populist promises, as well as denigrating their political opponents, accusing them of illegal acts. Below are some striking examples:

N. Tyuleev' in interview about the CHP (Combined heat and power plant) indirectly accused A. Atambaev and S. Isakov:

"I know by name the deputies who were given chips worth a million euros to each in the casino to lobby for the reconstruction of the CHP. […] I know why the waste processing facility has not yet been built. I know about the mafia in «Tazalyk». I know how to win smog with money from corruption".



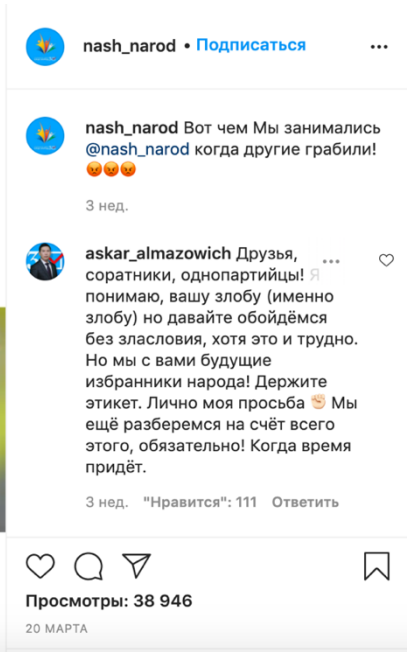


One of the parties running for the Bishkek city *Kenesh – Nash narod* often presented the image of volunteers that assisted in mobilizing voters during the pandemic COVID-19, thus creating a positive pro-good action image of the party, at the backdrop of a simultaneous negative messaging against the current establishment:

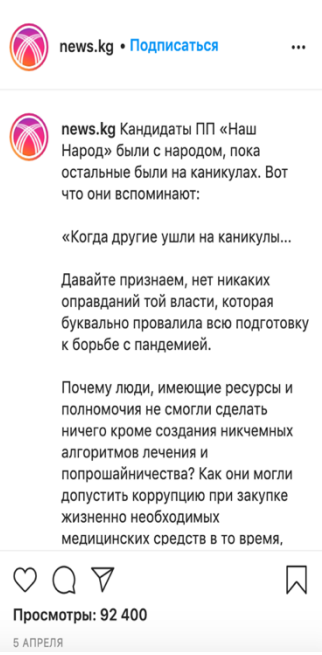
"*The deputies of the BCK in the pandemic took themselves 3 million soms from the city budget». Commentary on the post: «This is what we were doing @nash_narod when others were robbing!*"

"When the others went on vacation, with whom did the people stay?"

ДЕПУТАТЫ БГК В ПАНДЕМИЮ ВЫДЕЛИЛИ СЕБЕ ИЗ ГОРОДСКОГО БЮДЖЕТА ПО 3 МЛН. СОМОВ
VESTI.KG
ПРИШЛО ВРЕМЯ РЕШИТЕЛЬНЫХ!
ВРЕМЯ МОЛОДЫХ!


nash_narod • Подписаться
nash_narod Вот чем Мы занимались @nash_narod когда другие грабили!
3 нед.
askar_almazowich Друзья, соратники, однопартийцы! Я понимаю, вашу злобу (именно злобу) но давайте обойдёмся без злословия, хотя это и трудно. Но мы с вами будущие избранники народа! Держите этикет. Лично моя просьба Мы ещё разберемся на счёт всего этого, обязательно! Когда время придёт.
3 нед. "Нравится": 111 Ответить
Просмотры: 38 946
20 МАРТА

Когда другие ушли
на каникулы, с кем остался народ?
www.smi.kg


news.kg • Подписаться
news.kg Кандидаты ПП «Наш Народ» были с народом, пока остальные были на каникулах. Вот что они вспоминают:
«Когда другие ушли на каникулы...
Давайте признаем, нет никаких оправданий той власти, которая буквально провалила всю подготовку к борьбе с пандемией.
Почему люди, имеющие ресурсы и полномочия не смогли сделать ничего кроме создания никчемных алгоритмов лечения и попрошайничества? Как они могли допустить коррупцию при закупке жизненно необходимых медицинских средств в то время,
Просмотры: 92 400
5 АПРЕЛЯ

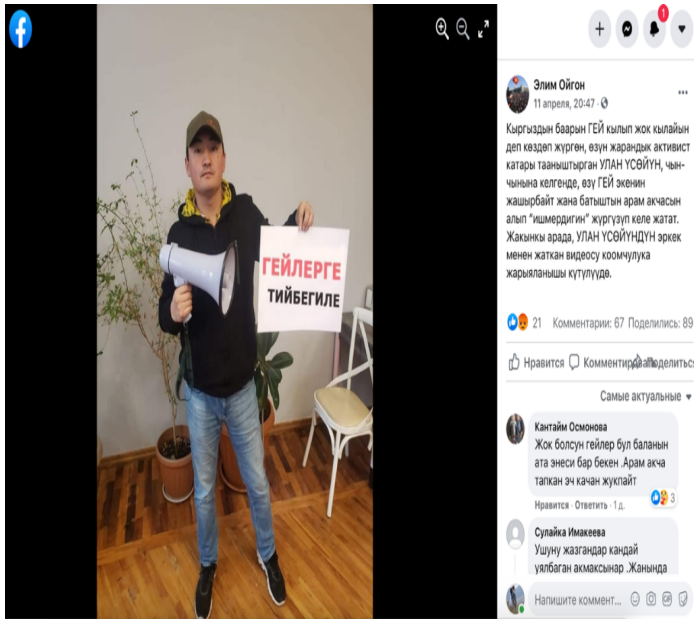
During the monitoring period, there were some media outlets (News.kg, Delo.kg) that promoted Russian propaganda. Pro-Russian political scientists were often invited as experts:

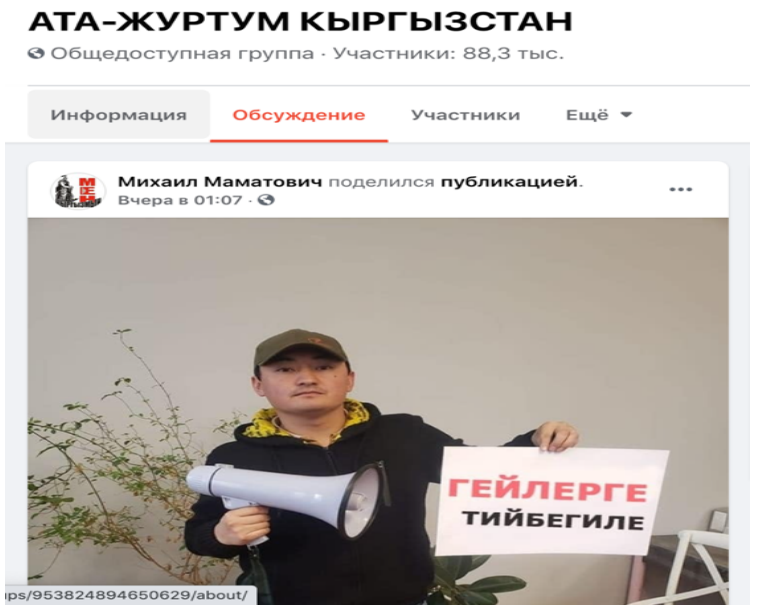
"*There is open pressure on the government of Kyrgyzstan from the US State Department*".

In public groups, representatives of civil society who openly opposed constitutional reform and criticized the government were often denigrated, like in the following example.

Photo-fake: *"The so-called civic activist ULAN USOIUN[18], who wants to make all Kyrgyz gay and destroy them, in fact does not hide the fact that he is gay himself and receives money from the West for his "activities". A video with ULAN USOIUN, where he sleeps with a man, is expected soon".*

"Don't touch gays"





[18] Ulan Usoiun is a well-known civic activist in Kyrgyzstan, feminist, founder and head of the public fund *Kochmon Nomad*, who is engaged in the revival of Kyrgyz traditions. The authorities stigmatized him, since it is the LGBT label that is very negatively perceived by many people. For many years now, not the first authorities have been trying to denigrate the activist.

METHODOLOGY

The applied methodology consists of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the selected social media content.

The quantitative analysis focuses on the number of posts generated by political actors (candidates, parties, politicians, with the assistance of CrowdTangle[19]) or other monitored entities and the tone of the coverage (in media posts[20]). In case they promote them, we track it as positive; in case they criticize them, we track it as negative. In case they only introduce these issues or stories without stating their positions, we track it as neutral. The monitoring also focused on the thematic structure of the posts.

Social media **posts** served as a reference and monitoring unit that was further analysed by monitors. For categories of media only the top 200 posts (according to their interaction) were analysed. The project monitors first identified 200 posts with the highest interaction rate and assigned them topics. Furthermore, they identified those posts which dealt with political issues or elections, assessing the way different political actors featured in those posts were presented.

[19] CrowdTangle (a social media analytics tool owned by Facebook) "tracks public posts on Facebook, Instagram and Reddit, made by public accounts or groups. The tool does not track every public account and does not track private profiles or groups, so this data is not representative of performance across the entire platform. The numbers shown here reflect public interactions (likes, reactions, comments, shares, upvotes and three second views), but do not include reach or referral traffic. It does not include paid ads unless those ads began as organic, non-paid posts that were subsequently "boosted" using Facebook's advertising tools. Because the system doesn't distinguish this type of paid content, note that some high-performing content may have had paid distribution. CrowdTangle also does not track posts made visible only to specific groups of followers." The tool was applied on the published posts after three-days period so that the interaction generated by the post is relatively stabilized.

[20] In media charts the color identification is as follows: green represents positive tone, white is neutral and red means negative manner of the coverage.

List of actors/topics

Political parties

Ak Bata
Ata Jurt Kyrgyzstan
Aykol Kyrgyzstan
Butun Kyrgyzstan
Demokraticheskoye dvizheniye Kyrgyzstana
Dvizheniye Zelenykh Kyrgyzstana
Emgek
İşenim
Kyrgyzstan
Nash Narod
NDPK
Partiya kommunistov Kyrgyzstana
Patriot
Reforma
Respublika
Sotsial-demokraty Kyrgyzstana
Sotsialisticheskaya partiya Kyrgyzstana
Svoboda vybora
Tınçtık
Ulutman
Uluu Jurt
Vlast Narodu
Yntymak
Yyman Nuru
Zamandaş

Politicians/party leaders

Adahan Madumarov	Butun Kyrgyzstan
Anjelika Kairatovna	Nash Narod
Askar Salymbekov	Emgek
Azamat Doroev	İşenim
Babur Tolbaev	Ata Jurt Kyrgyzstan
Bobushev Ulan	Patriot
Elkinbek Aşirbaev	Tınçtık
Erkin Bulekbaev	Dvizheniye Zelenykh Kyrgyzstana
Georgiy Belov	Vlast Narodu
Ilim Karypbekov	NDPK
Iskhak Masaliyev	Partiya kommunistov Kyrgyzstana
Kanatbek Isaev	Kyrgyzstan

Kerimbekov Bakıt	Aykol Kyrgyzstan
Klara Sooronkulova	Reforma
Mamataliev Marlen	Yntymak
Mariya Vavilova	Svoboda vybora
Mirlan Orozbaiev	Uluu Jurt
Nariman Tuleev	Ak Bata
Nurzhigit Kadyrbekov	Yyman Nuru
Omurakunov Askar	Zamandaş
Omurbek Babanov	Respublika
Sadyr Japarov	President
Taalatbek Masadykov	Sotsialisticheskaya partiya Kyrgyzstana
Temirlan Sultanbekov	Sotsial-demokraty Kyrgyzstana
Turdumaliev Kayrat	Ulutman
Urmat Dzhanybaev	Demokraticheskoye dvizheniye Kyrgyzstana

Media

24.Kg	Kloop News
7 Kanal	Kyrgyz Azattyk
AKIpress	News.kg (Instagram)
April TV	Next TV
Debati.kg	Sputnik Kyrgyzstan
Kaktus Media	Super Info

Authorities

Central Commission for Elections and Referenda
Bishkek City Hall
Osh City Hall

Topics

1	Agriculture
2	Army/military
3	Business, economy
4	Culture

5 Catastrophies, incidents, accidents
6 Charity
7 Corruption
8 Crime
9 Civil society
10 Education, science
11 Environment
12 Foreign Affairs (not related to Kyrgyzstan)
13 Foreign Affairs (related to Kyrgyzstan)
14 Health care
15 IT, digitalization
16 Judiciary
17 Media
18 Minorities
19 Politics
20 Religion
21 Social issues
22 Sport
23 Transport, infrastructure
24 Others
25 COVID-19
26 Elections

ABOUT

Media Development Center
The public foundation Media Development Center is a non-profit organization established in 2002 with the aim of promoting freedom of speech and expression in Kyrgyzstan, as well as to help build the capacity of the media and journalists by encouraging best practices in journalism, promoting professional ethics, institutionalizing dialogue between the state, media and civil society, as well as the promotion of media networks in Kyrgyzstan. Since 2010, the Media Development Center has been monitoring the media during the parliamentary and presidential elections in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Media Development Center is one of the first organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic that monitors social media platforms during the election period.

MEMO 98
An internationally recognized, independent, and non-profit specialist media institution with 22 year-long of experience conducting media monitoring and research and assisting civil society groups. Using tested and approved methodologies and tools, we provide media analysis and media monitoring with tangible results, in particular during election periods. Having participated in more than 120 election observation missions and about 150 media & election-related projects and training in more than 55 countries (in the Commonwealth of the Independent States and the Balkan countries, but also in Africa, Asia, South America, and the Middle East), our experts provide assistance on media & electoral and other democratic arrangements.

Authors
Nurjan Musaeva, Media Development Center
Nurgul Abdykerimova, Media Development Center

Marek Mračka, MEMO 98
Ivan Godársky, MEMO 98
Rasťo Kužel, MEMO 98
Braňo Kohn, MEMO 98

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