Notes for coding of tone in sentences

The coding interface will show you a random sample of sentences, one by one, in which a political actor appears.

You should answer just one question in this coding:

OverallTone: How would you describe the overall tone expressed in this sentence?

1|Positive
0|Neither positive nor negative; unclear
-1|Negative

In this coding you should focus on the (combination of) words and determine whether they are, in total, positive or negative. Note that this should be done with no particular point of reference or perspective. THIS MEANS THAT EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE ACTORS IN THE SENTENCES YOU CODE, YOU SHOULD NOT PAY ATTENTION TO THAT. WE ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN THE OVERALL TONE OF THE SENTENCE, NOT THE TONE AS SEEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ACTORS.

Be aware that you do not necessarily have to agree with something in order to code the tone, it is not your opinion of the content that matters. Look for instance at the following sentences that have been coded based on whether the words in them are negative or positive:

- Immigrants are lazy and dishonest (Negative, regardless of your position)
- A strict immigration policy is good for the country (Positive, again regardless of your thoughts)
- EU condemns Gert Wilders (Negative, despite the fact that a majority of people likely would see this as a positive action)

Some sentences are, from this perspective, unclear or hard to categorize as either positive or negative. Such sentences should be coded '0', for instance:

- Immigrants are hard working but integration is failing
- Parliament discussing immigration policies

Also note that we do not ask you to take into account other dimensions of the language, for instance elements that would indicate irony or sarcasm. Say for instance you were to code this sentence:

- They have been happy and able to enjoy minister X's liberal use of public funds.

Most would read this as some sort of attack, indicating that the undeniably positive tone in the sentence hides another meaning. But we're just after the tone and would therefore code it as positive. That is not to say that the meaning or intention of the author was positive, but we would have to use a different approach to code that.

A few more examples (some of the words that led to the choice of code marked in red)

Sentence	Overall Tone
Corbyn leaves May sounding defensive on Brexit	Neg
Corbyn said a no-deal Brexit would cost jobs and undermine living standards.	Neg
May asked what Labour meant by staying in the customs union.	0
Labour MP Stephen Kinnock says he had "constructive talks" with cabinet ministers David Lidington and ….	Pos
However, May says her "door remains open" and she would be "happy to discuss" Mr Corbyn's own proposals on Brexit	Pos
They want comprehensive health screening of all migrants from outside the EU coming to Britain for more than six months…	Pos
EU 'have strengthened ties with America'.	Pos
The situation in Scotland is fascinating because each voter has to vote for a councillor, an MP, an MSP and an MEP which gets very confusing.	Neg
INDUSTRY bodies and energy analysts attacked the European Union's controversial emissions trading scheme yesterday…	Neg
EU funds and capital is desperately needed.	Neg
Mr Blunkett's statement restricting the benefit rights of new EU nationals coming to work in Britain.	Neg
The Commonwealth, the break-up of the Empire, devolution and membership of the European Union will also be covered.	Neg
This applies to British, EU and non-EU students.	0
Despite the Tanzanian government, the European Union and charities pumping millions of pounds into fighting fistula, the number of cases of the debilitating condition are increasing every year.	Neg
PRODUCERS of new ITV show Celebrity Wrestling should approach Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.	0
Jackson Carlaw, Scottish Tory deputy leader, said: "I find it hard to believe that comparing Scotland to a country that the UN describes as having 'one of the world's smallest and least developed' economies is what the SNP considers as making a positive case for independence."	Neg
The Tories' diminishing poll lead has raised the spectre of a hung parliament, and of chaos and gridlock in government at the worst possible time.	Neg
They say that every little helps, but this is definitely "little" - in fact it's almost as bad as the 25p a week rise that Labour gave pensioners a few years back.	Neg
The UK's status as a safe haven for investors has cut the cost of borrowing by the Treasury to a 300-year low.	Pos
I'm white and not offended by Diane Abbott's comments, one of the best MPs we've got.	Pos
Hobbs campaigned with others, notably Iris Burton, editor of Woman's Own magazine, Emma Nicholson, the Liberal Democrat peer, and the Save the Children Fund to raise more than £3m to build dedicated isolation cubicles at the Westminster children's hospital and to support patients, parents and nursing staff.	Pos
And yet, within barely the space of an hour, just sitting there appeared to evoke extraordinary reactions, first from a smiley, jovial, wisecracking figure barely recognisable as Gordon Brown.	Pos