



## Election Monitoring of TV-Channels

August 18 – September 18, 2013

In connection to the presidential elections of 2013, CRRC Georgia continues its media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU-UNDP program. The monitoring will continue from May 15 until November 15 and will cover the main evening news programs on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV and the following private channels: Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia and Channel 9, which stopped broadcasting at the end of August. This report contains the media monitoring results from August 18 until September 18, inclusive.

Following key findings were identified as the result of monitoring of main evening news releases on televisions during this monitoring period:

- Presidential candidates and their campaigns were actively covered in the main evening news releases on all the channels (except the Adjara TV). Despite this, however, the candidates failed to be represented among the top five subjects according to the allocated time on any of the channels.
- Coverage of central news increased on Adjara TV in September. As for the presidential candidates, their election campaign was covered only if their activities were taking place in Adjara.
- The share of positive coverage of presidential candidates is quite high on all the channels, which is linked to the active coverage of their campaigns, speeches and statements.
- The number of extensive, analytical and balanced stories increased compared to the previous monitoring period.
- There were cases observed during this monitoring period, when different channels covered one and the same news from different angles. The viewers

would get quite dissimilar impression regarding a particular subject or event depending on which channel's news release they were watching.

- It is possible to say that in general, there was no clear polarization observed on the majority of channels during the period from August 18 until September 18, inclusive. Often the reports broadcasted on various channels expressed moderate and neutral position towards the covered topics. Positive or negative coverage of a certain subject depended on the contents of a particular event that was covered. In this respect it is possible to say that the most bias was observed on Rustavi 2, in the stories broadcasted during the main news release.

During the period from August 18 until September 18, inclusive, main news releases of the monitored TV channels covered many topical and important issues in connection to the events taking place in the country. These were: terminated broadcasting of the Channel 9 and the related events, candidacy for the CEC chairperson and Zurab Kharatishvili's political center, migration of members of the Georgian Dream to the party Democratic Movement – United Georgia, removal of minaret in the village Chela, issue of Salome Zurabishvili's registration at CEC and the events developed about it, events of Syria and Georgians presently being there, Prime Minister's press-conference, President's trip, issue of the Prime Minister's resignation, anonymous calls on bombs in various institution, expensive helicopters purchased by the former authorities, Prime Minister's visit to Baltic countries, Vano Merabishvili's trial, events developed at the Public Broadcaster, etc.

Activities and campaigns of presidential candidates were also actively covered during this period. However, according to the allocated time, the presidential candidates are not found among the top five subjects on any of the channels. The most time, as compared to other subjects, and also with a big difference, was allocated to the government on all the channels (except the Adjara TV). Other subjects among the top five ones were: the Coalition Georgian Dream, the United National Movement, the President and the Prime Minister.

### **Channel One of the Public Broadcasters**

During the period of August 18 until September 18, inclusive, we could see extensive, analytical and balanced reports in the main evening news releases of the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster. Some topics were discussed for several days in the main news

releases and were covered in depth. For example, such topics were the events developed around the Channel 9 and removal of the minaret in Chela village.

However, it should be pointed out that there were also other reports, where the lack of analytics and in-depth coverage was felt. This trend was especially observed since September. There were cases when quite important details were missing from some reports, which were covered on other channels. Despite the balance was often observed in such cases and opinions of various sides were represented, the stories did not provide comprehensive information. Such tendency made the news dry and superficial. We can provide an example of the news broadcasted on September 11 about Davit Bakradze's visit in Zugdidi, where some part of the local population met him with a big artificial phallus placed on a donkey. This detail was neither shown nor mentioned in the main news release of the Channel One. There were several other incidents in connection to Davit Bakradze's meeting with population during subsequent days, but none of them was shown, either.

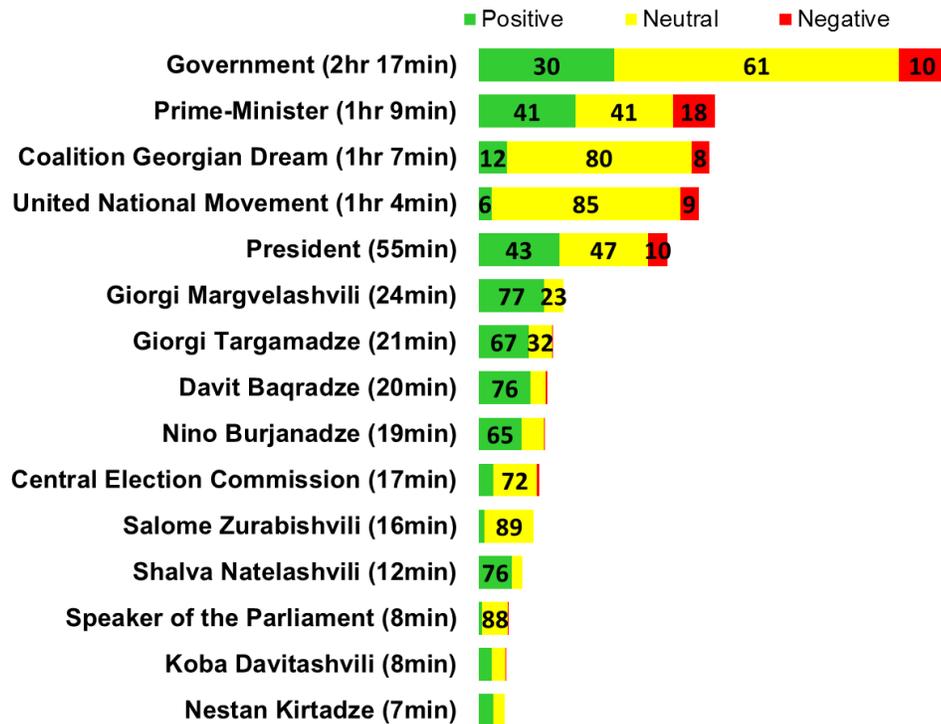
Social issues were often covered during this monitoring period. In-depth discussion and coverage was provided for the topics such as: polluted environment, situation in prisons, problem of single mothers, problem of schools in villages, etc.

As for the time allocated to the subjects, there is an eye-catching allocation of quite much time (23%) to the government, as compared to other subjects during this period. However, it is also noteworthy that the same trend was observed on all the other channels except Adjara TV. Coverage of President's activities, his speeches and statements increased in September. The chart of direct and indirect speech shows that despite much more time (12%) was allocated to the Prime Minister in total, than to the President (9%), the share of the President's direct speech (58%) is clearly exceeding the share of Bidzina Ivanishvili's share of direct speech (22%).

Although none of the presidential candidates were found among the top five subjects based on the time allocated to them, still the time was equally dedicated to them. It should be pointed out that the reports about the presidential candidates, if not considering certain exceptions, were very similar to one another with timing, contents and style.

As for the tone of coverage of presidential candidates, positive tone prevails for all of them, which is at some extent due to the coverage of their campaign appearances, statements and direct speeches. The biggest share of positive tone was observed for Giorgi Margvelashvili (77%) and Davit Bakradze (76%) among the candidates.

## Time allocated to the subjects on GPB according to the tone (%)



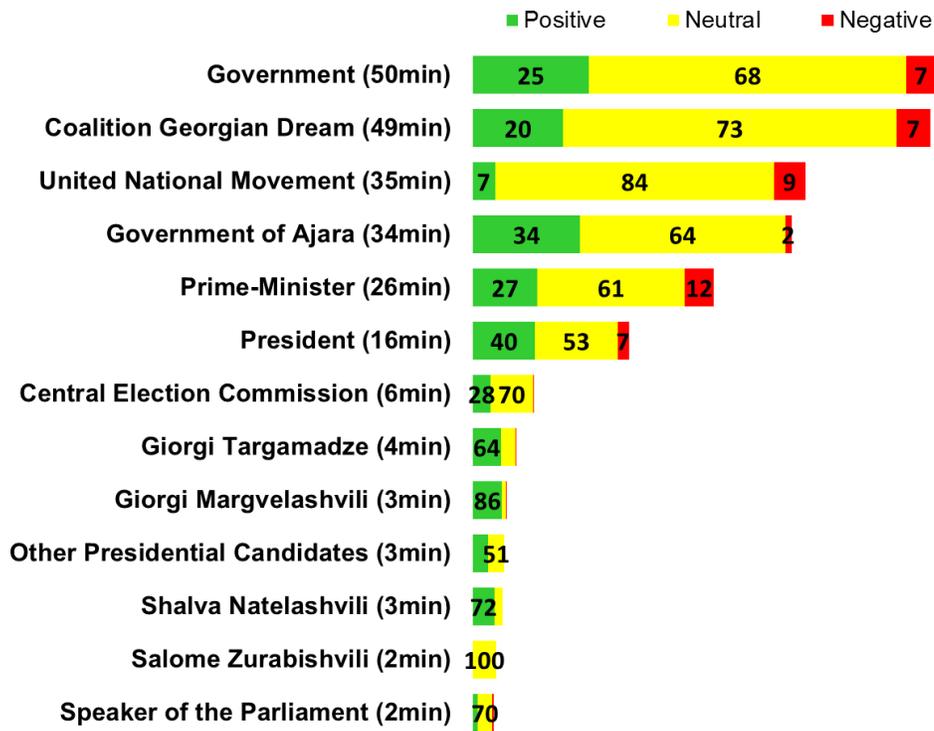
### Adjara TV

Adjara TV provided more frequent coverage of central news during August 18 – September 18. There was a good coverage provided for the following topics: closure of the Channel 9, statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the issue of Syria, press-conferences of the Prime Minister. Social topics and regional problems were covered actively as before. The journalists would go to various structures of the local government and ask questions about the existing problems. Consequently, the local population was able to get concrete answers.

However, in some cases the news items were incomplete in main news releases from the viewpoint of information provided therein. Only the facts were stated and there was no background of the issue or additional information.

Unlike regional issues, there was less coverage of election campaigns of presidential candidates. They were covered when their activities had to deal with Adjara. As for the tone of subjects on this channel, in general the share of positive tone was more prevalent than the negative one. Interestingly enough, less positive coverage was reported for the United National Movement compared to other subjects, and there was relatively less negative coverage for the government of Adjara.

### Time allocated to the subjects on Ajara TV according to the tone (%)



### Rustavi 2

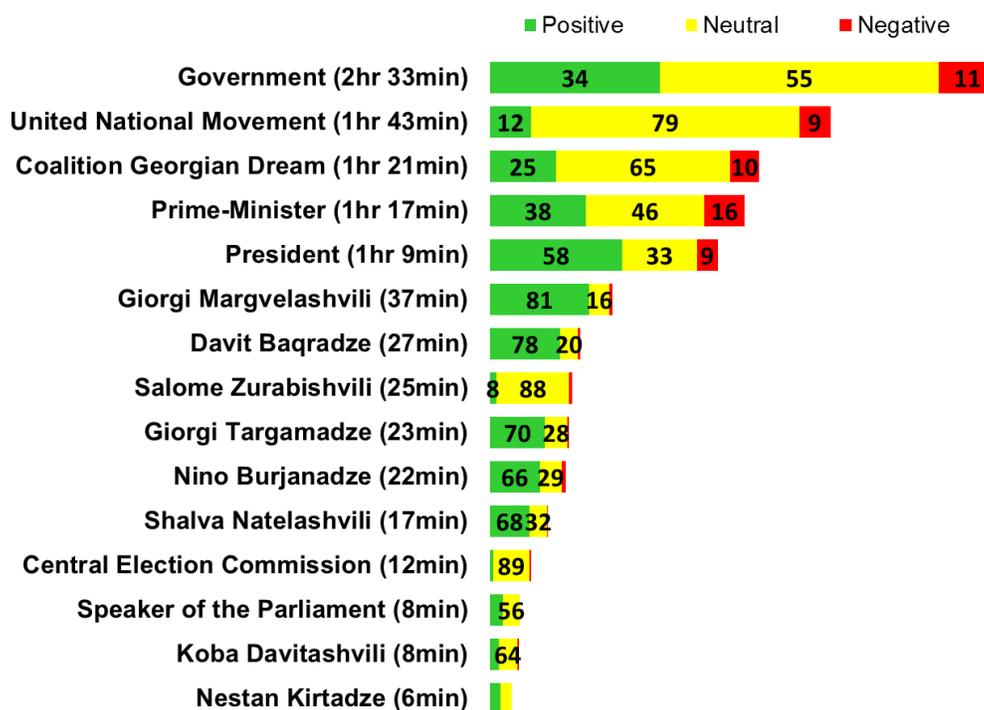
Informative and balanced news reports were observed in main evening news releases of Rustavi 2 during this period. However, there was a quite evident special attitude towards the President. Despite his activities and speeches were quite extensively covered, and often without shortening them, the reports about the President mostly left positive impression about him (58% share of positive coverage). Other than the President, the same trend was observed in case of Davit Bakradze, presidential candidate of the United National Movement (78% share of positive coverage), and for the former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili as well. There were quite extensive and

positive stories made about them. It is noteworthy that there were also some cases when the President was presented with some criticism in the story. For example, Kakha Kaladze's follow-up to the President's statement in Khelvachauri.

On the background of the President and representatives of the former authorities, the present government and the Prime Minister were often covered in a more negative context. Despite all the activities of the government were regularly covered – visits, new initiatives, meetings, etc. – which left positive impression on them, often the overall impression about the government would be still negative at the end of the program due to the contents of subsequent news. At some instances a story, which was positive or neutral at first glance, would finally leave a negative impression about a particular subject because of the respondents and journalist's text provided in the story. In some cases, the same trend was observed in case of Giorgi Margvelashvili, presidential candidate of the Georgian Dream.

As for other presidential candidates, all of them were regularly covered in main evening news releases, and none of them was ignored. There was no trend of bias observed when covering their activities and meetings with voters. Positive share of their coverage time was quite high, which in most cases was revealed due to the candidates' campaign, their speeches and direct speech.

## Time allocated to the subjects on Rustavi 2 according to the tone (%)



There were some cases observed during this monitoring period, when one and the same news was covered on various channels from absolutely different angle. A good example of it is the coverage of one of the topical issues in September, which was related to the purchase of two French helicopters (Super Puma Plus) by the former authorities; however, the present government is going to sell them. The story was basically constructed on the statement of Giorgi Karbelashvili, former deputy minister of economy. According to him, the previous government was trying for a long time to purchase these helicopters. It was very important for the country, because of the helicopters are to be used for military purposes and they have a capacity to cope with the Russian military ship Mistral. As he stated, the present government tries to sell them under the influence of the Russian authorities. In a nutshell, the story leaves the audience with a negative impression about the present authorities, which is going to sell a significant military asset; and a positive impression about the previous government, which has left a significant military asset to the country.

The audience, however, would get a negative impression on the former authorities and the President after watching the news prepared about the same topic on Imedi. The

news said that it was not reasonable to purchase these helicopters at such an expensive price (55 million Euros) and that its cabin was arranged in accordance with the President's taste. Now the Ministry of Economy was trying to sell them, in order to purchase more helicopters with that price, which would be more useful for the country.

## **Imedi**

Like other monitoring periods, we again encountered short news reports on Imedi in August, where the respondents balance was not often observed, and the analytics was also missing. There were cases when the fact was delivered for a few seconds only, without any comment. However, starting from the beginning of September, the number of extensive, analytical and balanced stories increased. The topics were mostly exhausted and analyzed well. Competent opinions of several sides were discussed about the given issue. For example, the issue of removal of the minaret in the village Chela was well covered. However, there was some news that provided only the fact without any further probing or analysis by the journalist. Consequently, the issue was not fully discussed and at the end the audience could not get full and exhaustive information.

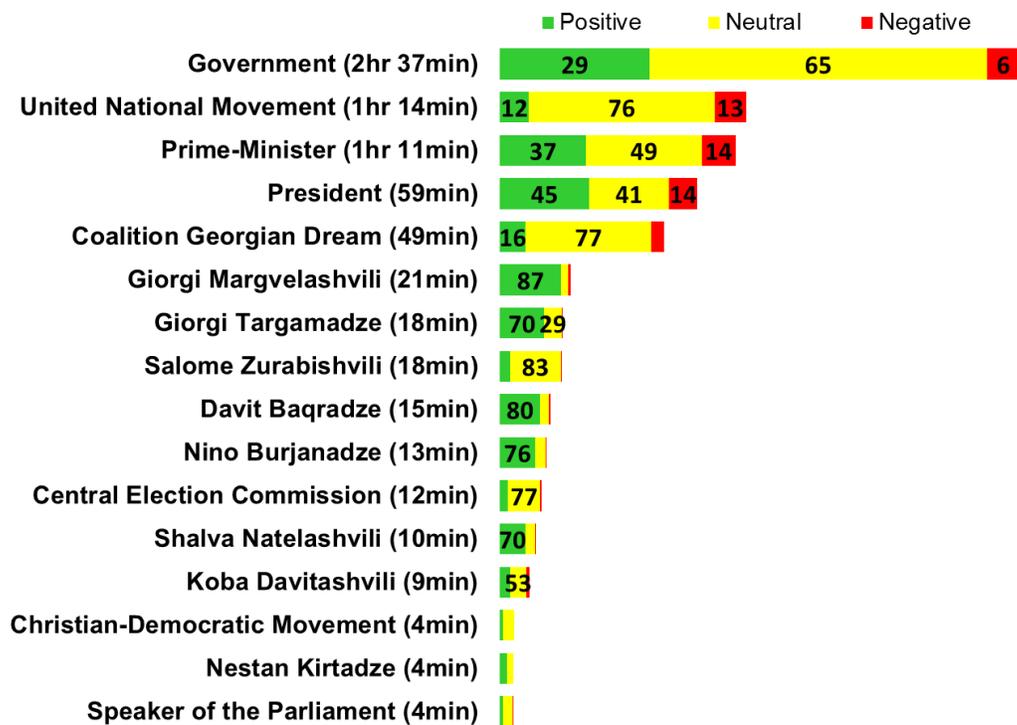
There were some cases observed during this monitoring period, when one and the same news was covered on various channels from absolutely different angle. A good example of it is the coverage of one of the topical issues in September, which was related to the purchase of two French helicopters (Super Puma Plus) by the former authorities. The audience would get negative impression about the former authorities and the President from the news broadcasted by Imedi. It was mentioned that it was not reasonable to purchase these helicopters at such an expensive price (55 million Euros) and that its cabin was arranged in accordance with the President's taste. Now the Ministry of Economy was trying to sell them, in order to purchase more helicopters with that price, which would be more useful for the country.

However, this story was prepared on Rustavi 2 so that it left positive impression about the former authorities and negative impression for the current one. The story was constructed on the statements of Giorgi Karbelashvili, former deputy minister of economy. According to him, the previous government was trying for quite a long time to purchase these helicopters and it was very important, because these helicopters are to be used for military purposes and they have a capacity to cope with the Russian military ship Mistral. As he stated, the present government tries to sell them under the

influence of the Russian authorities. In a nutshell, the story leaves the audience with a negative impression about the present authorities, which is going to sell a significant military asset; and a positive impression about the previous government, which has left a significant military asset to the country.

As for presidential candidates, almost all the presidential candidates were covered in equal conditions on Imedi from August 18 until September 18, inclusive. The events developed around Salome Zurabishvili, as a likely presidential candidate, were actively covered. As for the coverage tone, the candidates had quite high rate of positive coverage, which was due to their activities, speeches and statements. Among them, highest rate of positive coverage was observed for Giorgi Margvelashvili – 87 percent, which was the highest indicator not only among the presidential candidates, but also among all the monitoring subjects on Imedi.

### Time allocated to the subjects on Imedi according to the tone (%)



### Maestro

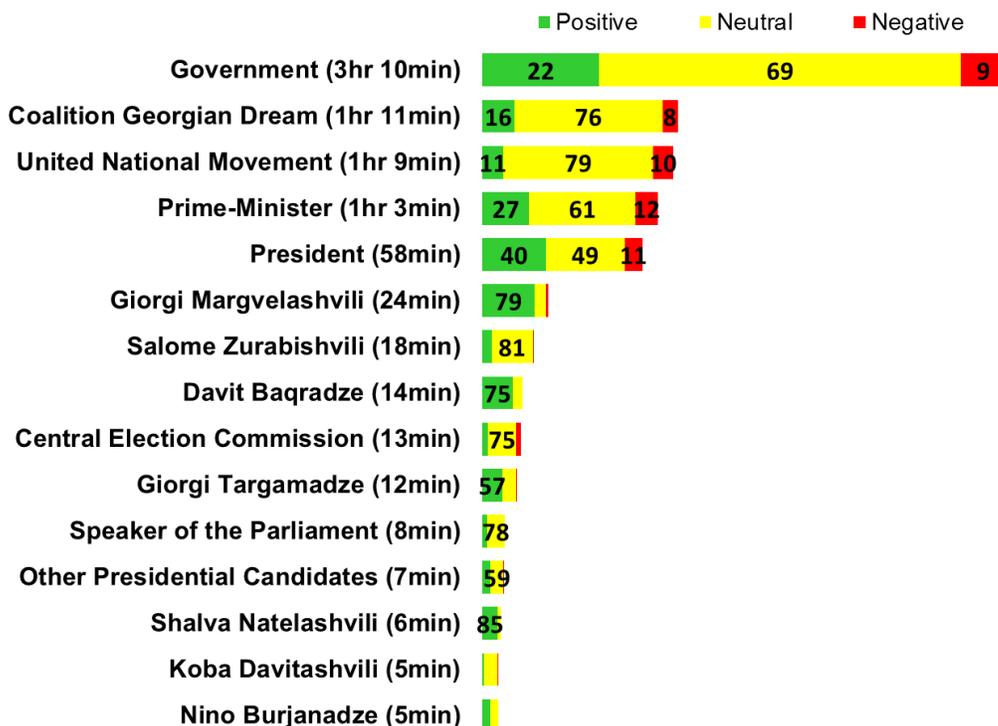
Maestro reduced the timing of its main evening news releases to 30-40 minutes during this monitoring period. The news was mostly covered neutrally from August 18 until

September 18, inclusive. The news reports broadcasted in the news program mostly provided different opinions about this or that issue and the analytics was also felt in the stories. Some topics, for example, shutdown of the Channel 9, restoration of Abkhazian Railway and social topics were covered exhaustively and objectively. However, there were cases when the news was based only on one source and the audience did not have an opportunity to hear a different opinion or analysis of an independent expert.

In total, there was no bias to any of the political forces observed on Maestro. The subjects were quite often presented positively and there was little criticism or negative coverage during the last month. It was also evident that the United National Movement had less positive tone than the government, the Prime Minister and the Coalition Georgian Dream. However, the President was presented positively during 40% of time allocated to him, thanks to his speeches and activities.

Positive coverage was especially eye-catching in case of the presidential candidates. Margvelashvili, Bakradze, Natelashvili, Targamadze and others were mostly presented positively while covering their campaigns. However, the candidate of authorities got the most time than other candidates.

## Time allocated to the subjects on Maestro according to the tone (%)



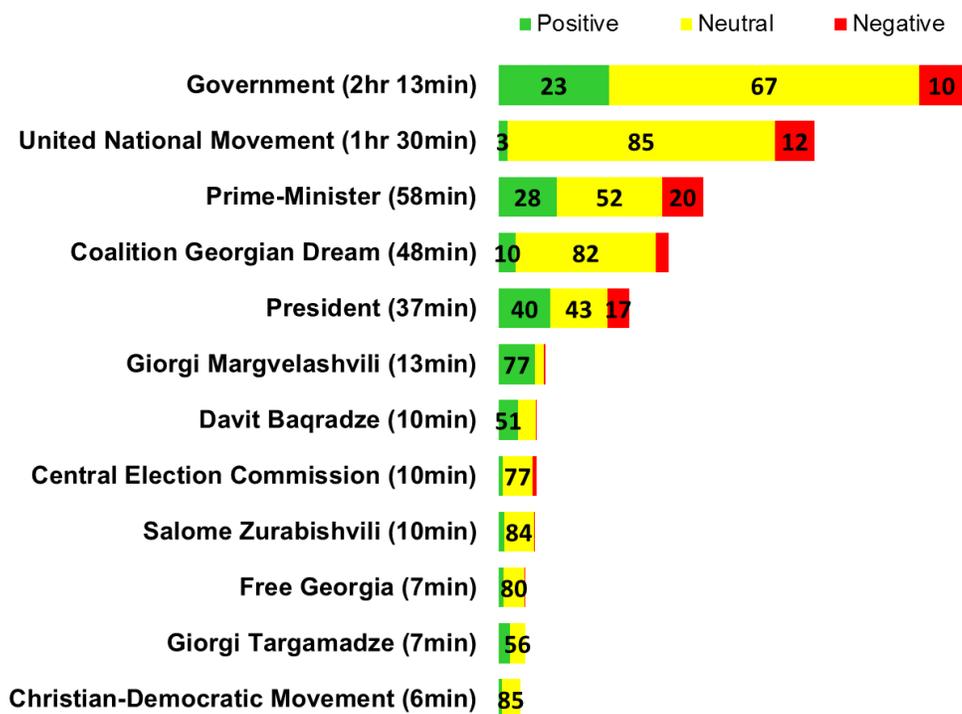
### Kavkasia

Kavkasia provided mostly neutral coverage of the news in its main evening news releases from August 18 until September 18, inclusive. However, often the news reports were short and did not contain complete information. In addition, there was a lack of diversity of opinions and analytics. Despite this, some issues, for example the topic of removal of the minaret in Chela village, was covered quite extensively and exhaustively, and the balance was observed as well. All the sides were represented. There was also a follow-up coverage after disassembling the minaret, with evaluations of the sides.

Kavkasia covered the main campaign activities of presidential candidates, but did not cover each of their visits in the regions or any other small activity. The biggest attention was paid to the campaigns of Margvelashvili, Bakradze and Targamadze. Election campaigns were mostly covered in a positive context. However, it is noteworthy that the candidate of the authorities had the biggest share of positive coverage compared to other candidates.

It is interesting that diverse tones were observed on Kavkasia when looking at the subject coverage tone. Out of the main subjects, the biggest share of negative coverage was reported for the Prime Minister and the President. However, these subjects were also presented positively with a quite high rate as well. There is a noteworthy case of the United National Movement, to which less share of positive coverage was provided than to other subjects, and which was mostly presented with neutral tone. Besides, the share of negative and positive tone observed while covering the subjects, mostly derived from the comments of respondents.

### Time allocated to the subjects on Kavkasia according to the tone (%)



Again, technical problems occurred very often on Kavkasia. Besides, there are no name and position indicated for the respondents shown in the stories, which sometimes complicated to identify them and caused misunderstanding among the public.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings identified during the period of August 18 – September 18, inclusive, it is possible to say that now the TV companies are actively covering the presidential candidates and their campaigns. The news about the presidential candidates was covered every day on all the channels. Adjara TV was an exception in this respect, where the time was allocated to candidates only in case if their campaign took place in Adjara. Despite this, none of the candidates is found among the top five subjects on any of the channels according to the allocated time.

The monitored TV channels basically covered all the important news in their main news releases. However, in some cases the channels covered some news from different angle and with different contexts in accordance to their news policy. This is what happened, for instance, in case of the events developed around two expensive helicopters purchased by the former authorities. Besides, there were several cases when the details of campaigns of Giorgi Margvelashvili or Davit Bakradze were covered differently. In addition, in some cases a certain channel would not show some important detail in connection to the event covered in the news, which the audience would be able to see on other channels. There were slight inaccuracies in the provided information as well.

According to the allocated time, still the government, the President, the Prime Minister, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement remain among the top five subjects. To sum up, it is possible to say that the majority of channels are not characterized with bias to any political force during this period. Often the positive or negative impression about a particular subject derives from the contents of the covered story. Mostly the news is balanced and neutral, but sometimes this is reflected on the quality of the news. The news is delivered to the audience in a dry and superficial manner.